

American Carillons

A Brief Introduction

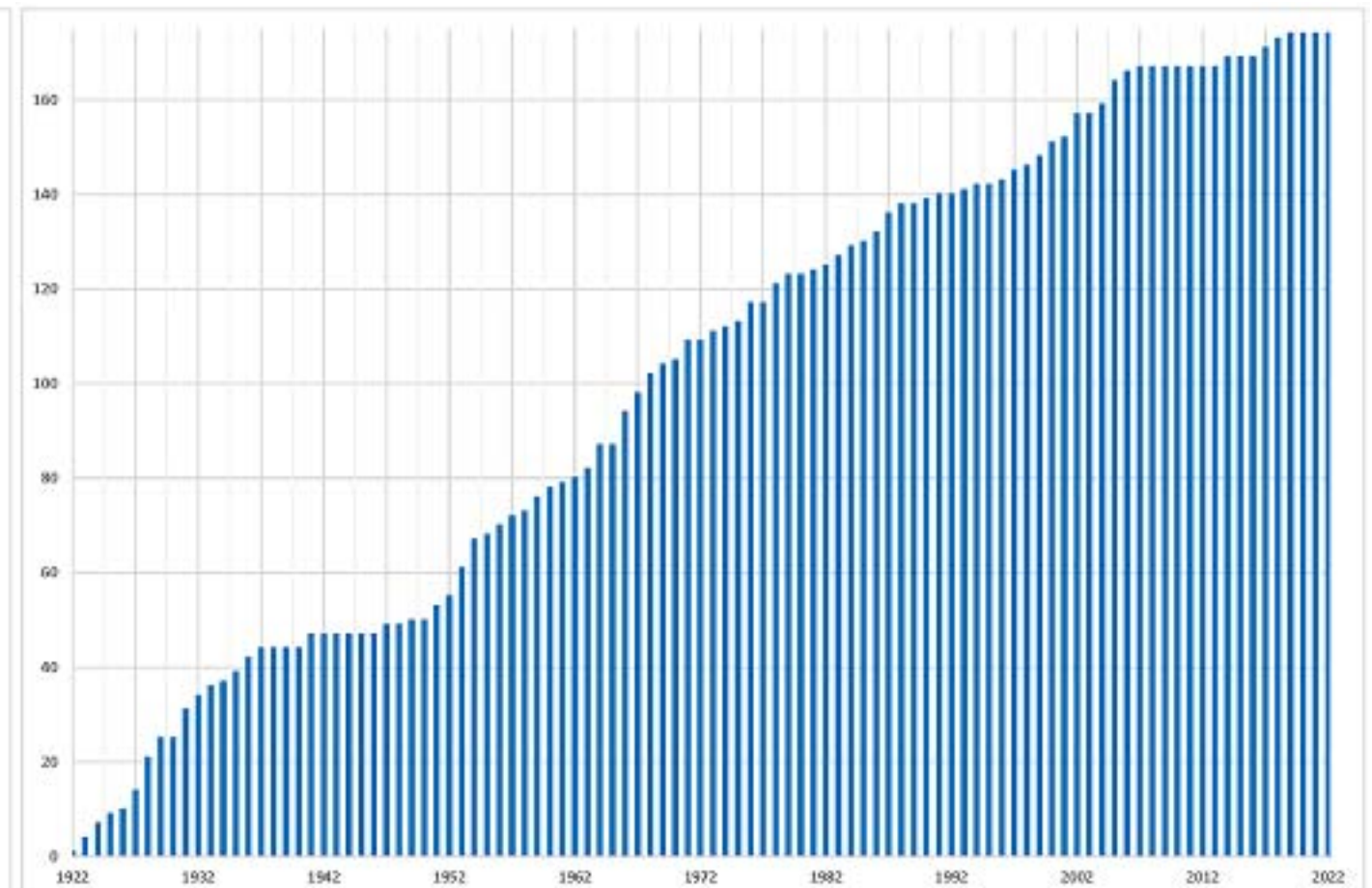
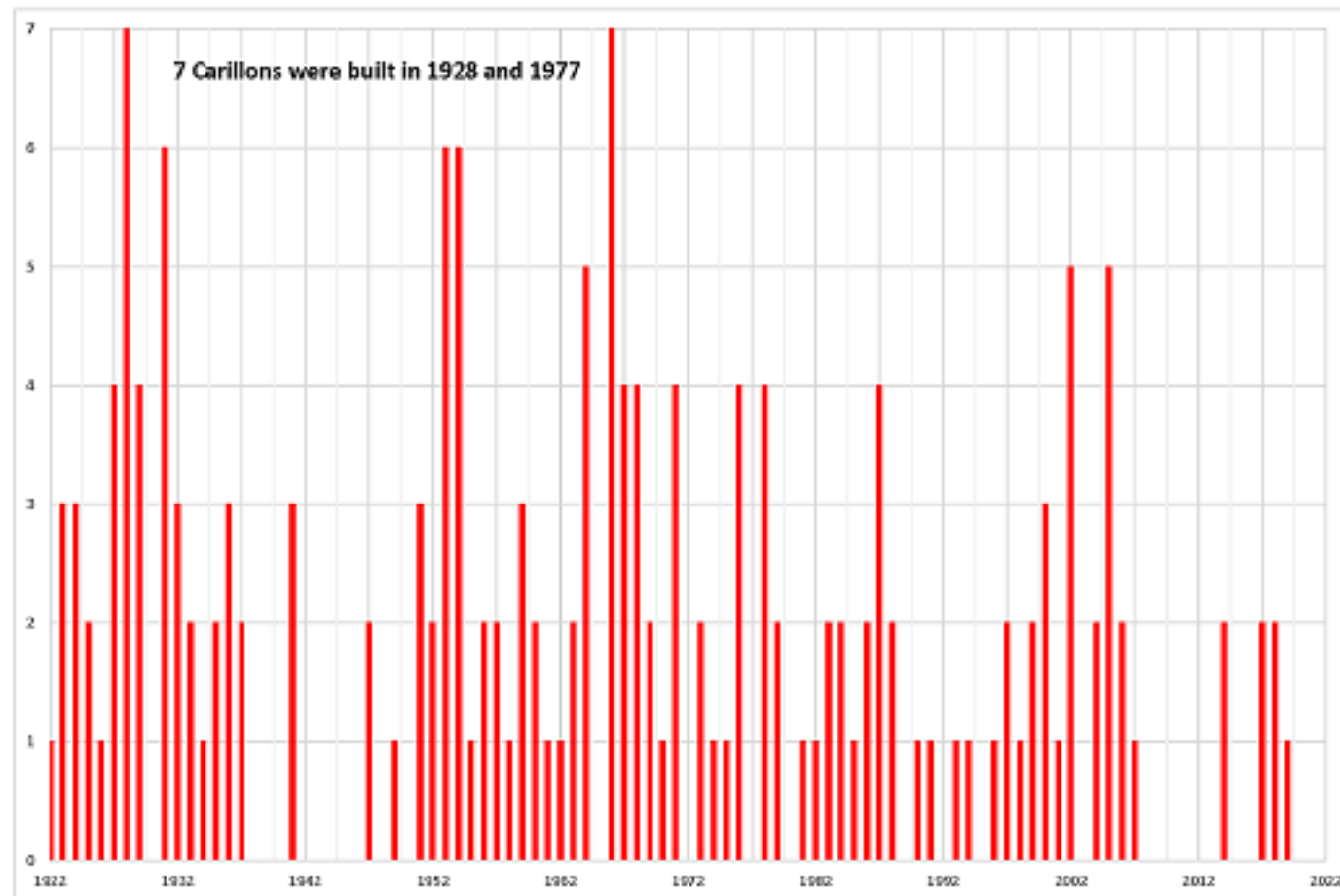
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S.BOERNER '19

Background

- Carillons have a long history in the low countries of Europe, especially Belgium and the Netherlands.
- Four early carillons were installed in the United States, of which three are still intact.



What is a Carillon?

- According to The Guild of Carillonneurs in North America a carillon is a musical instrument consisting of at least two octaves of carillon bells arranged in chromatic series and played from a keyboard permitting control of expression through variation of touch.
- A carillon bell is a cast bronze cup-shaped bell whose partial tones are in such harmonious relationship to each other as to permit many such bells to be sounded together in varied chords with harmonious and concordant effect.

William Gorham Rice (1856-1945)

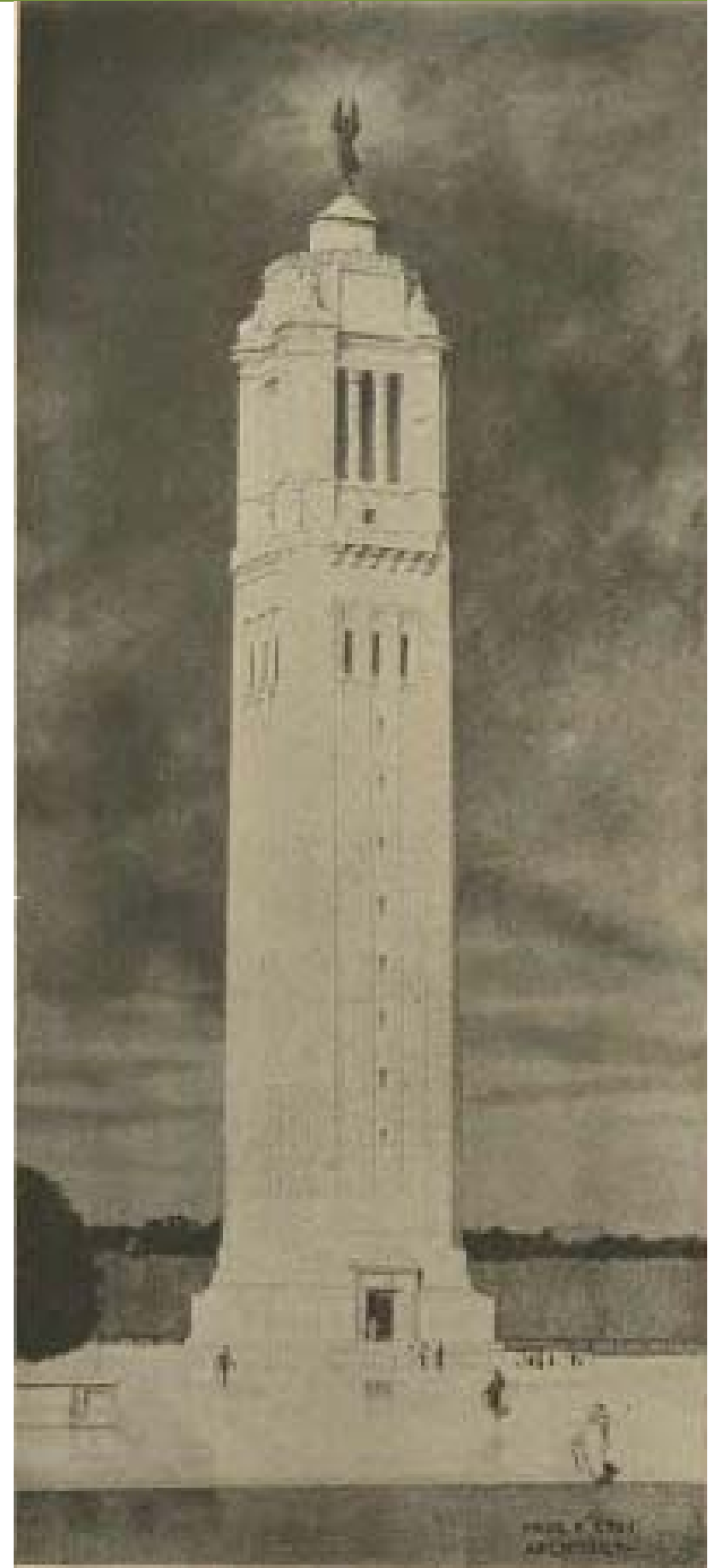
- A New York politician who often traveled to Europe with his wife, who got him interested in carillons.
- He wrote two books that introduced American readers to European carillons:
 - *Carillons of Belgium and Holland; tower music in the Low Countries* (1914)
 - *The Carillon in Literature: A Collection from Various Authors with Some Notes on the Carillon Art* (1915)



National Peace Carillon

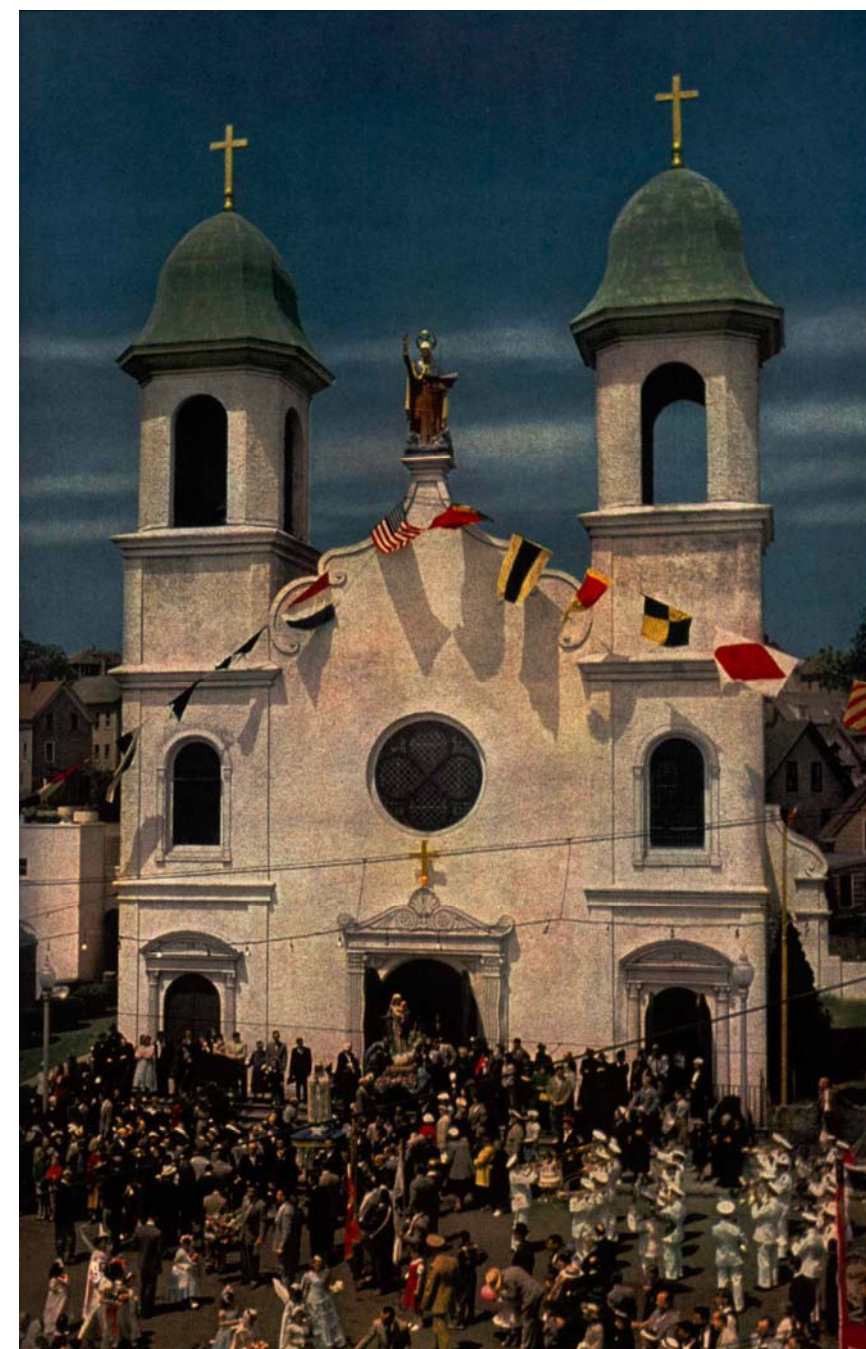
- Proposed by James Marion Shull shortly after World War I ended in November 1918.
- His idea was to make the bells from captured German cannons.
- Despite enormous efforts and national press coverage, it was never built.

Tiffany Ng (MM'08) wrote in her 2015 doctoral dissertation that "Since 1919, every American carillon has been built in the imposing shadow of a carillon proposed as a memorial and monument to peace, to be built in Washington, D.C. from World War I shrapnel collected from around the world."



Our Lady of Good Voyage

- This small church in Gloucester, Massachusetts was the first modern carillon in the United States when it was dedicated on July 23, 1922.
- John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was an early visitor and later installed two of the largest carillons in the country, including the one played by Alex Johnson '18.



Carillons in the 1920s

- Twenty-five carillons were built in the U.S. by 1930, including seven in 1928.
- All but two of these used bells made in Europe, with the Meneely Bell Foundry in Watervliet, New York providing bells for the other two in Connecticut and New York.

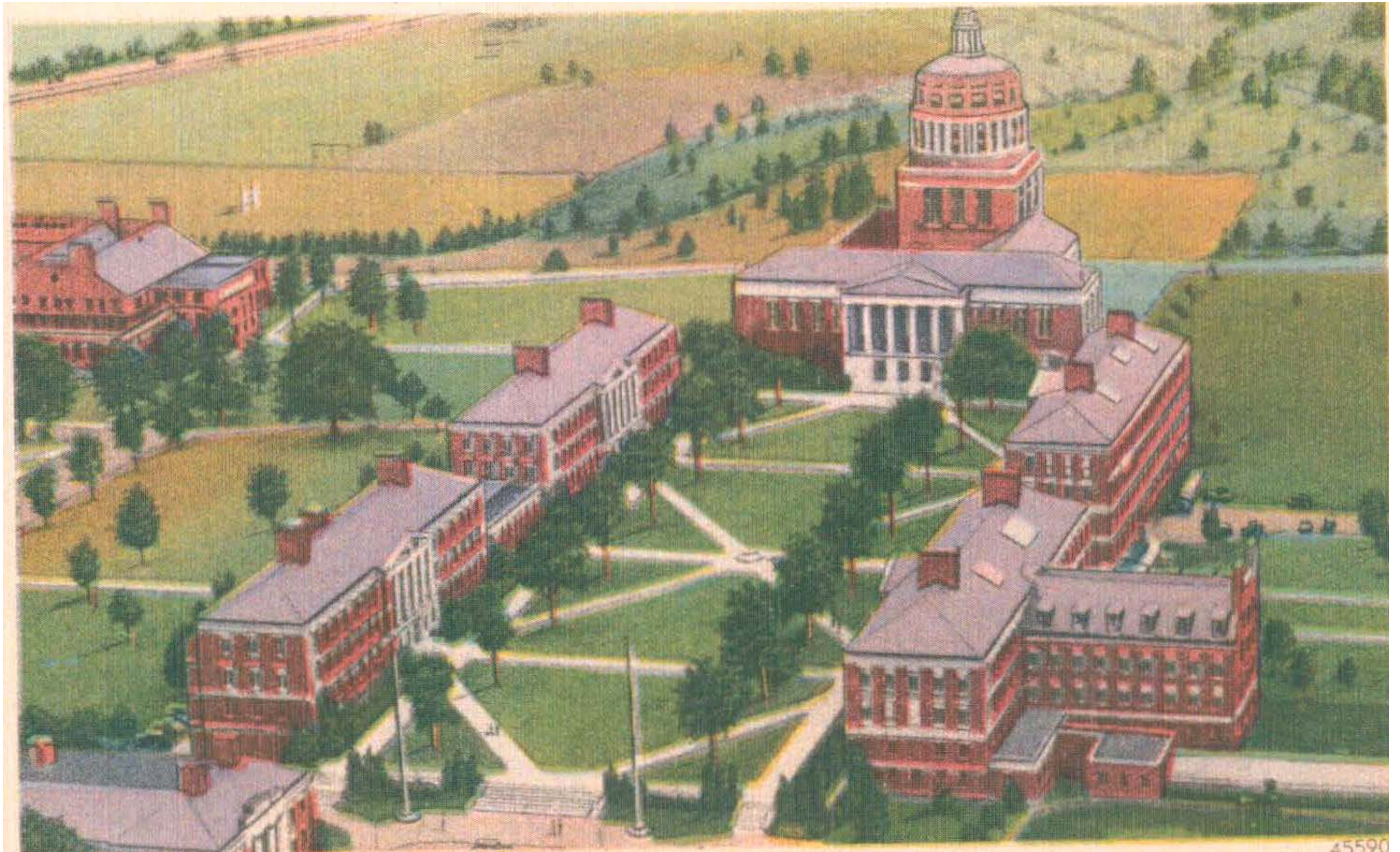
A New River Campus for Men

- The University of Rochester embarked on a project to build a new Medical School and Hospital, which opened in 1925.
- An agreement was made with the adjacent Oak Hill Golf Club to build a new golf course in Pittsford in exchange for land to build a new River Campus for Men.
- The largest building on the new campus would be a library with a dome that was seen as an ideal location for a carillon.

Early Carillon Investigations

- George Eastman, who had a strong interest in music, took the lead in contacting every bell foundry in the U.S. and Europe in late 1926.
- Much of this correspondence is in the library's Rare Books collection.
- Although the proposals received were not particularly expensive, the cost to modify the library tower to house them was unknown.
- Eastman had already donated several million dollars to the University, and a decision was apparently made to only include a single bell.

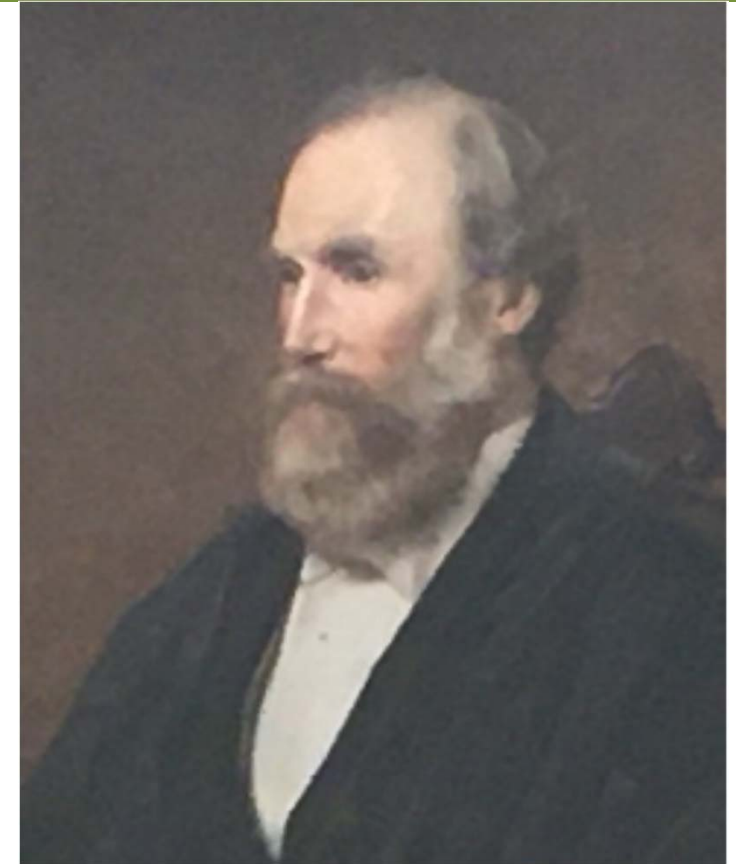
Rendering of Proposed Campus



45590

Arendt Willem Hopeman (1843-1928)

- Born in the Netherlands, came to Rochester in 1868.
- Founded the A.W. Hopeman & Sons Construction Company, which built the River Campus buildings.
- Shortly after his death in February 1928, his three children donated a chime of bells to be installed in the tower of the new library, along with a lantern to house the bells.
- The bells were cast by the Meneely Bell Foundry in Watervliet and weighed 34,850 lbs.



Hopeman Chime

- The Meneely bells, which cost \$29,095, were installed in October 1929.
- They were played during the summer of 1930 and dedicated when the new campus opened in October.



John Rothwell Slater (1872-1965)

- Slater came to the University of Rochester in 1905 as an assistant professor of English.
- In 1908 he became a full professor and head of the English Department, a position he held until his retirement in 1942.
- He was the first University bellman and taught many students to play the chime.
- He also collected and composed chime music.



Hopeman Chime

- The 17 bells were played from a modified piano keyboard that was connected to electric solenoids on each bell.
- The bellmen (and they were all men until 1955) could not vary the force of the stroke.
- Despite this limitation, a good bellman could produce quality music for the audience.

Bellman's Society

- Made their public debut on May 16, 1954.
- The Men's and Women's Colleges merged on River Campus in October 1955.
- That same month five women tried out for the Bellman's Society:
 - Norma Izard '57
 - Maureen Buschman '59
 - Juliette Herman '59
 - Donna Rauch '59
 - Ann Palko '59

Two New Bells

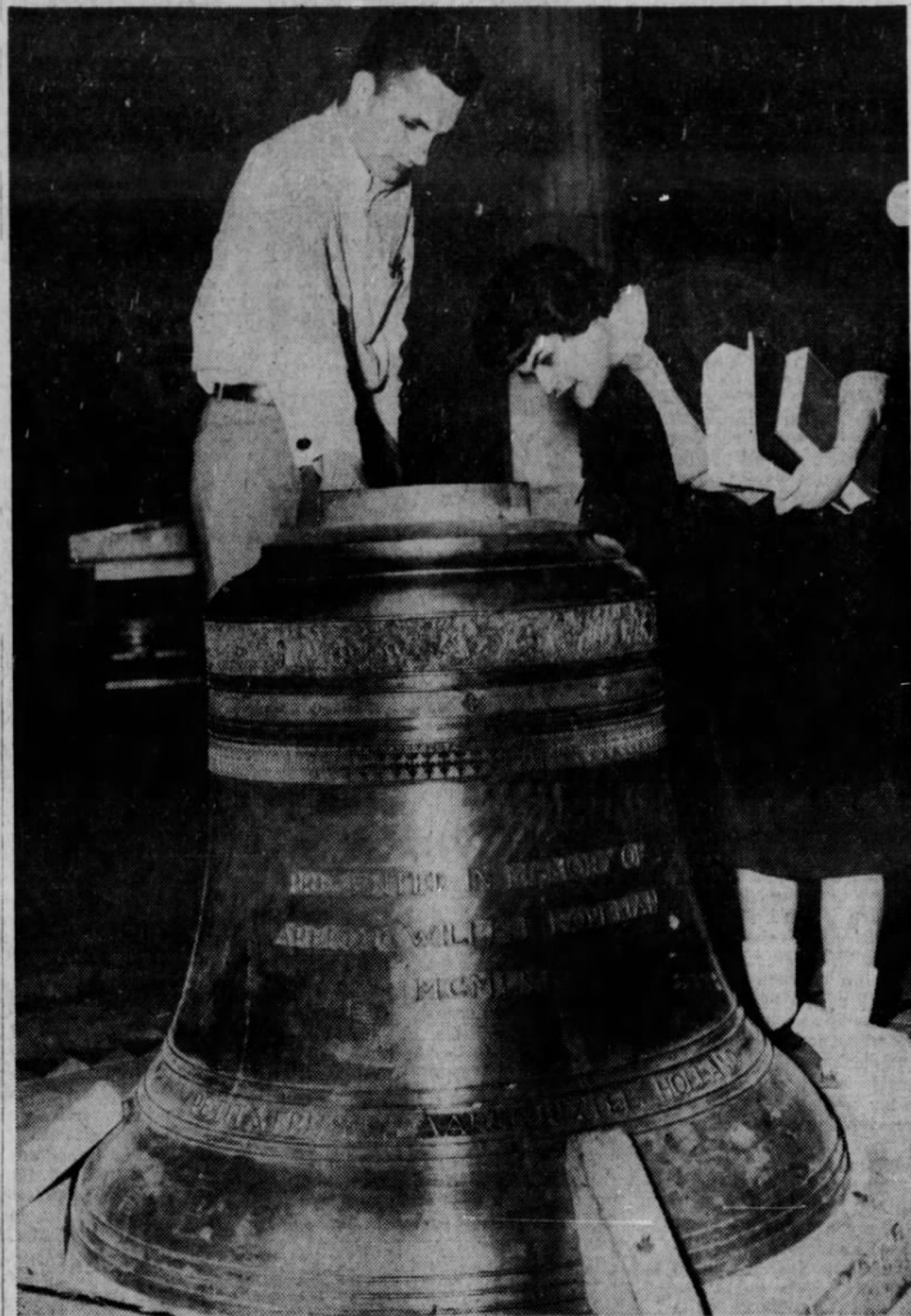
- Another gift from the Hopeman family paid for two new bells that were installed in 1956 and to establish an endowment for the continued operation of the instrument.
- The two new bells were cast by Petit & Fritsen in the Netherlands.



NEW NOTE—Leo Carroll directs operations as 1,870 pounds of F sharp bell swing upward into the Rush Rhees Li-

brary at the University of Rochester to augment the Hopeman Chimes. A lighter bell also was hoisted into place.

Two new bells on display in lobby of Rush Rhees Library



F SHARP—That's the note which will be produced by this new bell slated for mounting in the Hopeman Chime in the

Rush Rhees Library at UR River Campus. Viewing it are students Donald Slocum and Hinda Manson. Bell is from Holland.

A New Carillon

- A 1973 study revealed that the 1930 chime was beyond repair or tuning.
- The Hopeman endowment had grown enough by 1973 to replace the 19-bell chime with a 50-bell carillon.
- The new bells were cast by the Royal Eijsbouts Bellfoundry Ltd. of Asten, Holland, and weighed 6,668 lbs, much less than the original Meneely chime.
- Six of the Meneely bells were donated to Christ Church on East Avenue.

New Carillon

- The 50-bell carillon cost \$39,022, with an estimated \$20,650 to be recovered from the metal in the old bells, for a net of \$18,372.
- Extras included a Westminster encoder for four bells, an hour strike coder and a playing cabin.
- The new carillon was dedicated on December 9, 1973 by Arie Abbenes, city carillonneur for Eindhoven, Asten and Tilburg in Holland.
- It is one of seven carillons in New York State and the 112th installed in the United States.

Inspecting the bells



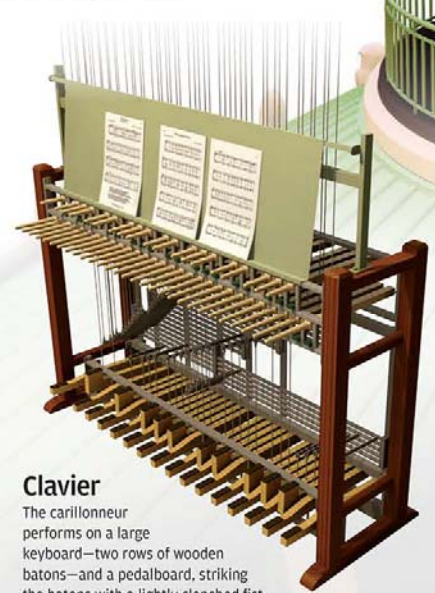
Hopeman Memorial Carillon

Rochester's bells are a gift of the Hopeman family in memory of Arendt Hopeman, the founder of the company that oversaw construction of the River Campus. Installed as a chime in 1930, the bells in Rush Rhees Library are now one of just seven carillons in New York. Carillons evolved in the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France, beginning in the mid 17th century. A resurgence of interest came in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and planners of the River Campus set their sights on bells at Rochester. Today, thanks to resurgent student interest, carillon music is an increasingly familiar sound on campus.



Bells

The carillon has 50 bells, while the chime eventually had 19—but the carillon is much lighter. The largest single bell in the chime weighed 7,800 pounds; the carillon's bells weigh a total of 6,668 pounds. The carillon's unique selection of bells was a matter of cost, available space in the lantern, and optimizing the weight of the bells for each of the eight girders.



Clavier

The carillonneur performs on a large keyboard—two rows of wooden batons—and a pedalboard, striking the batons with a lightly clenched fist. A carillon's unique sound is the product of "overtone"—audible pitches caused by small vibrations. Like other instruments, the carillon moves from the fundamental pitch to an octave overtone, a fifth, and a superoctave. Unlike other instruments, the carillon's overtone then moves to a minor, not a major, third. The prominent minor third makes the carillon seem "out of tune" to some—but it's also the hallmark of the instrument.



Rush Rhees Library

The lantern atop the library's signature dome was built to house the bells of the Hopeman Memorial Chime. The carillon's bells, installed in 1973, now fill the same space.

Lantern

The bells are isolated in the dome's lantern, a boon to students seeking quiet in the library. Because the bells are sealed off from the rest of the dome, however, carillonners must listen to themselves play through the use of microphones. Bellmen in earlier days relied on the simpler mechanism of an open window.

The lantern is partly cut away to show the interior and bells.

Transmission Wires

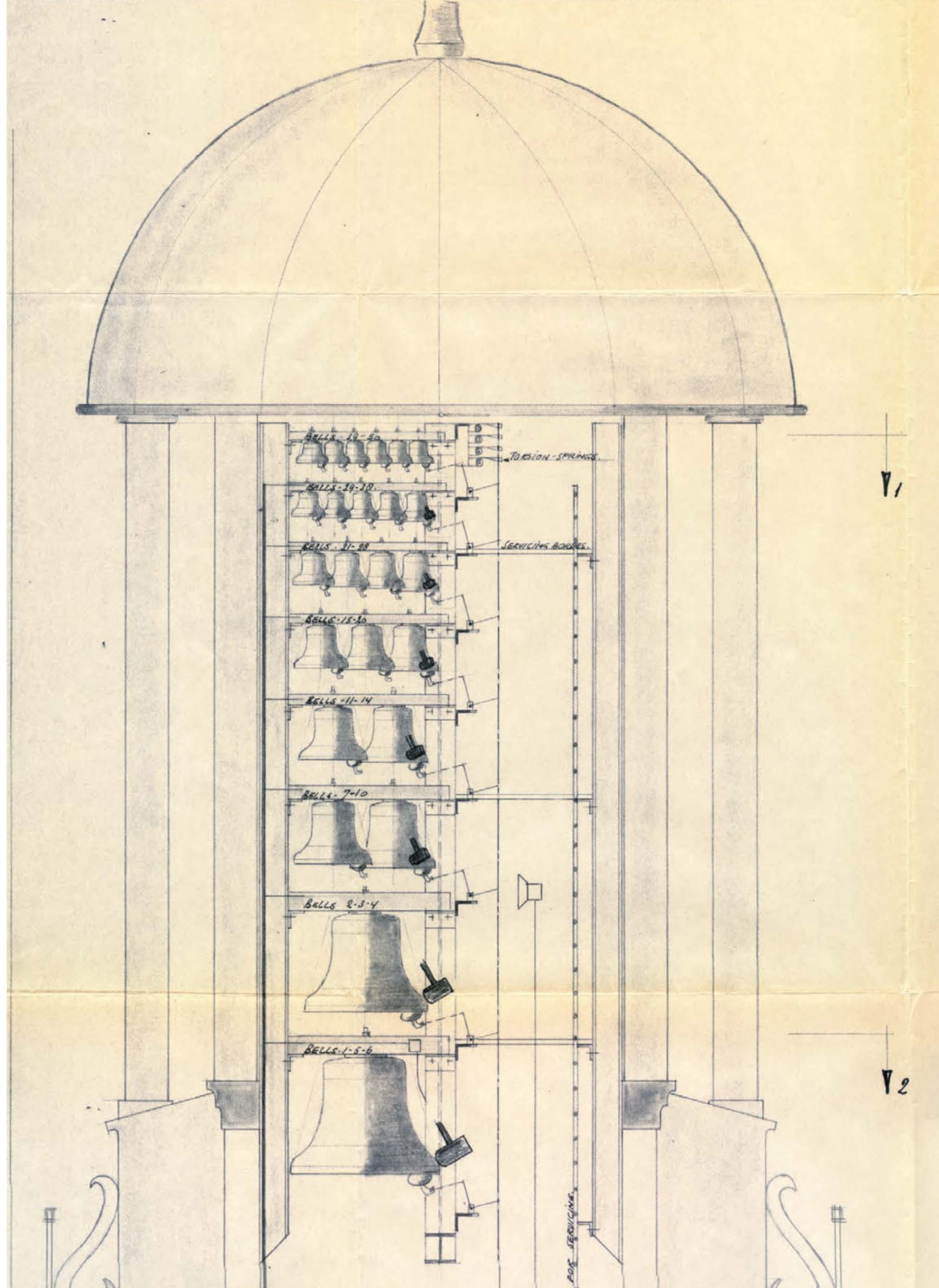
Carillon bells are stationary; only their clappers move. Wires run from the keyboard and pedalboard to the clappers.

Cabin

The keyboard for the chime was in a small room at the outer edge of the dome, but the cabin that contains the carillon's clavier is suspended from the dome's ceiling, in the interior. That's why carillonners, unlike bellmen, require a microphone to hear themselves—there are no windows.

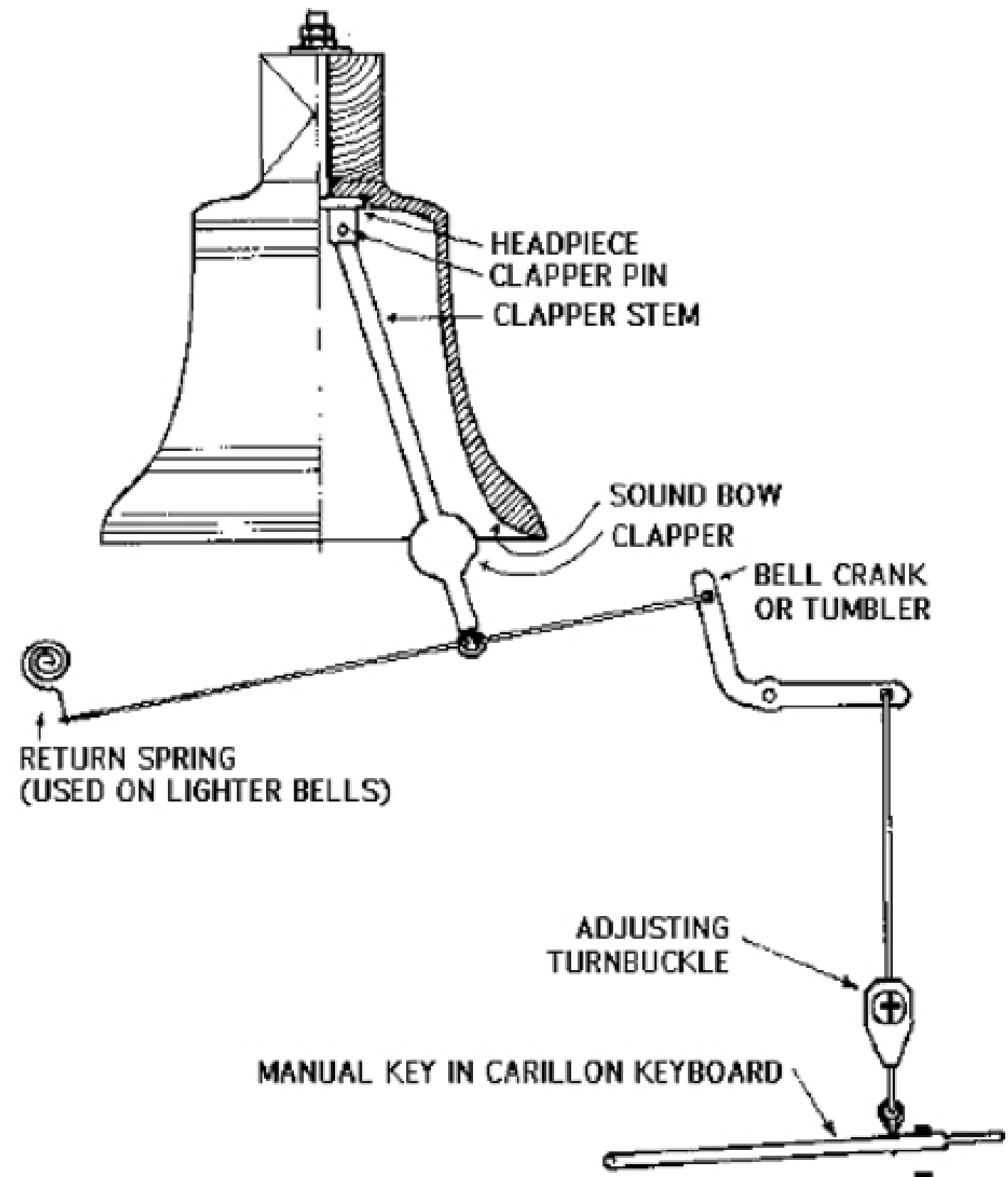
Bells in the Tower





Carillon Playing

- The carillon is played from a traditional clavier in a room just below the bells in the library tower.
- Each baton and pedal on the clavier is connected by transmission wires to a clapper on each bell.
- The force on the baton determines the loudness of the tone.





Transmission Wires



Thank you!

- Visit carillonhistory.us for more information!
- Includes many carillon resources and information on 177 traditional carillons built in the United States.

