

## The College Bell

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What better way to “ring in the New Year” than with a keepsake about the College Bell! People on campus, and nearby, are familiar with the sounds that resonate from the tower of Anderson Hall through an electronic operated carillon, but that has not always been the case. When the original Bluemont Central College opened at the northwest corner of Claflin Rd. and College Ave. in 1860, a bell was sought for the tower to announce the beginning and dismissal of classes. Bluemont College While traveling in New England to raise funds for the College, Isaac Goodnow, one of Bluemont’s founders, was able to convince Joseph Ingalls, a 77 year old “venerable and noble philanthropist,” to contribute \$250 for such a purchase (“\$150 in the spring and the balance in a few months”). As part of the agreement, Goodnow promised Ingalls that his name would be engraved on the bell. Subsequently, Goodnow made arrangements with A. Menelly’s Sons of the West Troy Bell Foundry in New York to manufacture and transport a bell to Kansas. Weighing 513 pounds, the bell arrived by train and wagon and was raised to the top of the Bluemont College building on December 14, 1861, adorned with the following inscription: “Presented to Bluemont College, Manhattan, Kansas, by Joseph Ingalls Esq. Swampscott, Mass 1861.”

After Bluemont College was transferred to the state in 1863, and renamed Kansas State Agricultural College, Farm Machinery Hall was constructed in 1875 on what is now the K-State campus. Classes, along with the bell, were moved to that location (the building, in the vicinity of Cardwell Hall, was razed in 1963). The bell was relocated to the tower of Anderson Hall when construction on the central section was completed in 1882 (see photo taken in 1882 before the south wing was completed in 1884). For 83 years the bell was rung by employees of the college to announce classes, events, and special occasions (when and why the bell tolled varied over the years). The bell had a history of receiving uninvited visitors who wanted to leave graffiti or play pranks, such as wrapping cloth around the clapper so it could not be heard or turning the bell upside down and filling it with water (once a fire had to be started beneath the bell when the water froze!). The most notable episode occurred when five members of the class of 1905 (including Harry Umberger who became Dean of the Division of College Extension in 1919) played a “clapper caper” and took it from the bell. According to college lore, the next morning was the only time the bell rang late after a custodian climbed the tower to bang on it with a hammer! Another



**Anderson Hall, 1882**

clapper was installed but the original remained in the family of one of the pranksters until it was returned home in 1995. K-State's Facilities Planning office transferred the clapper to the University Archives in December 2006!



### **The Clapper**

In 1920 a poem by Dr. R. G. Robertson of the class of 1866 was published in *The Industrialist*, a campus publication, which reflected the sentiments of many K-Staters over the years. The last verse of the poem, "The Old College Bell," reads:

How oft I long to listen  
To its silvery tones once more;  
To hear its echoes ringing  
As I did in days of yore;  
Tho' far from Alma Mater,  
Her fame I love to tell—  
May she always keep on ringing  
That dear old College Bell.



**Bell Tower,  
Anderson Hall, 1980s**

To the disappointment of those who carried the same feelings as Dr. Robertson, the bell was silenced in 1965 when the first electric carillon was installed in the tower of Anderson Hall. The bell did ring once more in 1985 upon the death of Milton Eisenhower, president of K-State, 1943-1950. Otherwise, except for pigeons and an occasional visitor who left their name on the bell, it remained forgotten on its perch overlooking campus until 1993 when an inspection of the building after a lightning strike reminded university officials of the bell's existence. Jerry Carter, university architect, and others, sought a solution to bring the bell out of hiding. In 1995, through the generosity of the family of Richard Hause, the College of Education, and its dean, Michael Holen, the bell was removed, cleaned, and installed on four historical lamp posts on the

grounds immediately west of Bluemont Hall; it was dedicated during K-State's Open House in April 1996. The bell did not relocate without a struggle. It took a crane to carefully hoist the heavy bell out of the Anderson Hall tower after it was opened to allow such a maneuver, and it wasn't easy to clean the 134 year old copper bell with its layers of patina! The lamp posts, a gift of the class of 1912, were brought out of storage and refurbished for their new role. Richard Hause was a faculty member in the College of Education for 29 years and it was determined that his association with education and Bluemont Hall, and the symbolism of a bell ringing to call students to school, made the [new location](#) of the historical bell an appropriate one.

Today, while the carillon rings, the College Bell stands as a visible reminder of the university's rich heritage, and in honor of those who brought the bell to Manhattan and kept it ringing for over 100 years.

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*Sources: College Bell vertical file in the University Archives containing newspaper and magazine articles, and documents; photograph of Bluemont College courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.*