Creating Tradition: Change Ringing and the Myth of the 'Holy City'

Charlotte Hewitt Causey

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CREATING TRADITION: CHANGE RINGING AND THE MYTH OF THE “HOLY CITY”

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University and the College of Charleston

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Historic Preservation

by
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December 2013

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This thesis analyzes the recent creation of tradition surrounding church bells and bell towers in Charleston, South Carolina. Church bells have been a significant feature of Charleston’s aural landscape since the mid-eighteenth century when St. Michael’s hung a ring of bells in the tower that still dominates the intersection of Meeting and Broad Streets. The histories of four churches, St. Michael’s (1751), the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul (1811), St. Matthew’s Lutheran (1867), and Grace Episcopal (1846) affirms the important role that bells played for these congregations. The bells installed in these churches and the uses to which they were put indicate that change ringing, a method of ringing a set of bells in intricate patterns, is a new practice introduced during the repair and restorations that followed Hurricane Hugo in 1989.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all change ringing enthusiasts I have had the pleasure to meet and ring with every week for the past four years. It is their passion and fellowship that made this project possible.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great deal of gratitude to a number of individuals that assisted me throughout my thesis. Their direction, advice, and encouragement made the following work possible. I would first like to acknowledge and thank my thesis committee for their direction, advice, and patience as they guided me through the entirety of this thesis. Thank you to Carter Hudgins, Robert Russell, and Katherine Pemberton for pushing me and telling me to focus on what the research is telling me. Thank you for also reminding me not to fit a square peg in a round hole. Your comments and suggestions were greatly appreciated.

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Thank you to my family for the late night rides home from studio and for supporting me in all of my endeavors since day one. Thank you to Nicholas Smith for your constant thesis advice and unwavering support. Love you. Thank you to my friends for reminding me to stay focused and that I can do it.
My classmates deserve special recognition. I cannot imagine a better class; I am so proud to be a part of it.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Charleston, South Carolina calls itself the Holy City. The term is a recent invention, not a colonial or antebellum term that survived by word-of-mouth. It has blossomed into the city’s unofficial nickname. Charleston’s moniker as “the holy city” is an aspect of created myth, a facet of the historical identity the city and its citizens created in the modern era. Visitors and residents, for example, assume that the sound of the city’s church bells have always been a significant part of the city’s aural landscape. When the bells ring, they are understood to be a tie to the city’s colonial past. Charleston
church bells are indeed deeply rooted in the city’s sense of itself. The use of bells for change ringing, defined as the act of ringing bells in particular mathematical patterns “without disturbing the even flow of [the] ringing,” is, however, a new tradition which was created in Charleston within the past twenty-five years.¹

Charleston has had church bells for much of its history. St. Michael’s Church installed its first set of bells in 1764. As the city expanded in the antebellum period, new congregations built houses of worship, some of them equipped with towers and bells. Like St. Michael’s bells, these new additions to Charleston’s skyline and their bells called congregations to worship. Some congregations surrendered their bells to the Confederate cause during the Civil War and replaced them in the post-war era. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few congregations installed bells. In the second half of the twentieth century, some congregations replaced their bells due to the efforts of determined parishioners.² While the sounds of bells became more commonplace, none of the bells were used to ring changes. Hurricane Hugo in 1989 caused extensive damage to many of the city’s historic churches. Repairs to towers and bells opened a new chapter in the city’s bell history and marked the introduction of change ringing into Charleston.

This thesis analyzes the recent creation of tradition surrounding the church bells and bell towers of Charleston, South Carolina. It explores events that led to new interest in bells and bell towers from 1764 until 1920, and change ringing after Hurricane Hugo

² Four women from the St. Philip’s congregation approached the church vestry with the idea to bring bells back to church. Jack Leland, “Steeple Bells To Ring Again At St. Philip’s,” Charleston Evening Post, June 1, 1976.
in 1989. Four church case studies illustrate Charleston’s invented tradition: St. Michael’s Church (1752-1762), the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul (1811-1816), St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church (1867-1872), and Grace Episcopal Church (1846-1848). St. Michael’s Church was the first church to install bells in Charleston, hanging the first set in 1764. The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul replaced bells lost to war with change ringing bells in 2001. St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church provides a comparison of bells that were not specifically designed for change ringing. Installed in 1901, these bells were the first installed in the early twentieth century. Grace Episcopal Church constructed a separate change ringing tower in 1999, a new innovation of change ringing tower design in Charleston.

Four chapters are dedicated to the case study churches. Chapter I illustrates the different types of bells that have been a part of Charleston’s aural landscape. It will also identify the bell towers in Charleston and their public functions. Chapter II focuses on St. Michael’s Church, an Episcopal church. In the new age of change ringing following Hurricane Hugo, St. Michael’s provided the model other congregations followed. The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul is the focus of Chapter III. The bells of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church are the focus of Chapter IV. Finally, the bell history of Grace Episcopal Church is the subject of Chapter V. Its set of ten change ringing bells was installed in 1999.

Change ringing is a tradition of recent invention, perceived and understood to be older than it is. Because of the “Holy City syndrome,” the city is eager to assume that
everything that happens in Charleston is deeply rooted in historical precedence. This thesis defines the era in which change ringing became a part of the aural landscape.

Figure 1.2: View of the Charleston skyline from Patriots Point (Photo by author)

CREATING THE TRADITION

St. Michael’s Church, located on the corner of Meeting and Broad Streets, is the oldest church edifice in Charleston. Built 1751-1761, this church installed a ring of eight bells in 1764. Visitors and residents today associate the importance of change ringing with this historic church. They are right. Their timing, however, is off by more than 200 years.

The current tourism industry capitalizes on created tradition by branding Charleston as the “Holy City.” The industry clings to the idea of the city “as historic and
romantic,” an image preferred by residents and visitors alike. In this idealized image, facts blur and make an activity, such as change ringing, more attractive and notable. Change ringing is understood to be historic and is long standing rather than a new phenomenon that developed within the last twenty five years in Charleston.

Visitors and residents unconsciously create a false memory by placing significance on a practice that has existed in the United States for only forty years. This is not surprising in Charlestonians. The preservation movement of the 1920s and 1930s created a romantic past. Local artist Alice Ravenel Huger Smith’s paintings, for example, “exercised free use of artistic license and the privilege of selectivity in shaping a visual idiom of historic Charleston.” Bells, bell ringing, and change ringing especially, are woven into Charleston’s romanticized view or its past.

**BELLS IN CHARLESTON**

Bells in Charleston may be divided up into two sectors: the private and the public. Private sector bells include doorbells and servant bells. Doorbells aid in gaining access into a private establishment. Once inside, servant bells were used historically to call the household help to attention, ready to attend the needs of the homeowners and their guests. While doorbells are still used today, servant bells fell out of fashion.

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Fire bells served the city from the 1760s to 1953. Fire watchmen from a tall vantage point, such as the St. Michael’s Church steeple, scanned the city for the threat of flames. If a fire was spotted, the fire watchman lit a light in the direction of the fire, alerting residents in the immediate area. The watchman would then ring the fire bell, alerting firefighters and city residents to the fire. The Great Fire of 1861, for example, was just one incidence in which the fire alarm bell rang out, alerting the fire companies and the public to the danger.

Figure 1.3: Chalmers Street Fire Bell Tower (Photo by author)

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The church bell’s role as a fire bell diminished in the 1880s in Charleston when Moses Henry Nathan, Charleston’s fire chief, established a fire telegraph system.\(^8\) Fire bells developed their own identity separate from church bells as improved warning technology entered Charleston. One of Charleston’s few extant fire bell towers is located behind 116 Meeting Street near Chalmers Streets (Fig. 1.3). The tower, constructed in 1888, contains a 2,500 pound bell. Fire bells such as this one assumed the role as the primary fire warning system in Charleston, but their use was discontinued in 1953.\(^9\)

Church bells are the most prominent type of public bells and there are two different types of bell installations in Charleston churches: manually rung bells and carillons. The first form is for manually rung bells. Manually rung bells have been present in Charleston since 1764 when the St. Michael’s bell was installed. Their installation is specific for full-circle ringing. Full-circle ringing installation permits the bell to ring a full 360 degrees. This is necessary for change ringing.

There are thirteen identifiable components necessary for manually rung bells (Fig. 1.4 and Fig. 1.5). Made of wood or iron, the frame supports the weight of the bells. The bell is attached to the headstock, which is made of wood or metal. The headstock transmits torque from the wheel to the bell. The wheel is designed with a groove around its circumference for the rope, creating a pulley system. The bearing allows the bell to rotate, aided by the gudgeon. The rope is the controlling mechanism needed to ring the bell and passes through a garter hole on the wheel.\(^10\) This pulley system is effective and allows a

\(^{8}\) Ferrara, “Moses Henry Nathan,” 269.
\(^{9}\) Poston, *The Buildings of Charleston*, 190.
person to manually ring the bell from a separate room using a rope attached to the system (See Appendix D).

When the rope is pulled, the bell rotates in a 360 degree arc. At certain points, the clapper inside the bell strikes the sound bow, the thick lip at the mouth of the bell. The sound is a single strike on each pull of the rope and can be solitary in nature or part of a larger system. The stay keeps the bell from ringing out of control, meeting the slider at each pull of the rope. The slider glides along the runner board between two end stops and acts as a resting point for the bell when in the stand position (See Appendix D). Three bell

towers on the Charleston peninsula were designed for change ringing. St. Michael’s Church, the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul, and Grace Episcopal Church will be the focus of Chapters II, III, and V respectively.

Mechanized bells are similar to manually rung bells in that they are installed and hung in the same fashion. The primary difference is that mechanized bells do not ring a full 360 degrees and they hang down when at rest. A separate system consisting of hammers – or clappers – is strategically placed among the bells. Hammers strike the bell to create sound.\textsuperscript{12} Today, all church bells in Charleston are set up to ring electronically.

Carillons are an example of mechanized bells. A carillon is a musical instrument made up of bells that are arranged in a “chromatic sequence, so tuned as to produce

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concordant harmony when many bells are sounded together.”13 Carillon bells are tuned to ring a harmony unlike change ringing bells, which are individually melded to represent a diatonic major.14 Typically, carillons are rung through a keyboard. Clappers strike the bell, producing the desired sound. Carillons do not produce loud sounds like change ringing bells; therefore, a greater number of bells, such as the recommended twenty-four bells, is necessary to create the desired volume.15 St. John’s Lutheran Church on the corner of Clifford and Archdale Streets contains such a carillon.

THE COLONIAL TREATMENT

Charleston’s bell history began in the eighteenth century. The second St. Philip’s Church structure, located on Church Street, was described in 1776 as having “a cupola of 50 feet with two bells.”16 St. Michael’s Church installed bells twelve years earlier.17

Eighteenth-century primary source material, such as newspapers and church vestry minutes, regarding bells is scarce. For example, in 1791, the City Gazette reported that the bells of St. Michael’s rang out in honor of President George Washington’s visit to Charleston. Citizens “welcomed the chief magistrate of the United States with reiterated acclamations” including a “joyful peal” by the bells of St. Michael’s Church and a federal

15 Camp, Bell Ringing Chimes-Carillons-Handbells, 110.
17 St. Michael’s Church, which is the subject for Chapter II, was one of those churches. Please see Chapter II for more information.
salute by the Charleston artillery.\textsuperscript{18} This article focused more on George Washington’s trek from the shore to his residence as residents appeared more interested in him rather than the ringing bells. Pealing in 1791 had a different connotation than in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It was noise to express joy rather than a particular pattern. We cannot know, however, whether pealing in this manner was a standard or everyday occurrence as there was no record of witness reaction to this ringing.

The definition of peal suggests that change ringing is an invented tradition in Charleston rather than a reintroduction of a historic practice. To the colonists of the eighteenth century, a peal was “a tower instrument composed of multiple tuned bells” or “the act of sounding out.”\textsuperscript{19} The term was also interchangeable with ring and chime. Peals today are a specific type of performance associated with change ringing, consisting of at least 5,040 individual changes that do not repeat.\textsuperscript{20} Peals also take up to a minimum of three hours to complete.

Change ringing was not a common term in eighteenth-century England. It first appearance was in 1756 in a Kentish Post advertisement, referencing to a peal rung by youth in Leeds.\textsuperscript{21} Other references to change ringing in England were infrequent, suggesting that it was not a common practice in the eighteen century. As a result, the term was not common in America. There is indeed no record of change ringing in Charleston prior to 1989. Few churches managed to have bells in the first place.

\textsuperscript{18} The City Gazette, May 14, 1791.
\textsuperscript{19} Another definition was a “unit of performance, defined generally as an interrupted duration of ringing or tolling.” Lubken, 825.
\textsuperscript{20} Camp, Bell Ringing Chimes-Carillons-Handbells, 19.
\textsuperscript{21} Kentish Post, January 24, 1756.
Reasons for this may have been cost, need, weight on the structure, and ability to staff the bell.

The nineteenth century did see an increased interest in bell installation. St. John’s Lutheran Church, built from 1816 to 1818, installed a bell in 1859.\textsuperscript{22} It likely functioned as a worship bell for the church, calling parishioners to service on Sunday. Presbyterian churches also installed bells in the towers as well. First Scot’s Presbyterian Church, a two towered design erected in 1814, installed a single bell in its north tower in 1833.\textsuperscript{23} Second Presbyterian Church, constructed from 1809 to 1811, installed a bell in 1821. Following damage by a fire, a second replacement bell was installed in 1850 and continued to ring there until the 1860s.\textsuperscript{24}

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\textsuperscript{22} St. John’s Lutheran Church is located on the corner of Clifford and Archdale Streets. Charles Fraser is credited with the steeple design for this church. Lilly, \textit{Historic Churches of Charleston}, 39.
\textsuperscript{24} Designed by James and John Gordon, the Second Presbyterian bell tower was over-built with thick brick walls. As a result, a bell tower – believed to be similar in design to St. Michael’s Church – was not fully realized. The construction of the church also exceeded its budget. Julia Coaxum, “Presbyterian Church Dedicating New Bell,” \textit{The News and Courier}, December 14, 1984.
\end{flushright}
1835 was a significant year in the St. Philip’s Church history. Fire destroyed the edifice on February 16 (Fig. 1.6). Construction on a new building began immediately in 1836 and concluded in 1838. The steeple, designed by architect Edward Brickell White was completed in 1850. Following the early examples of other Charleston area churches, St. Philip’s installed a ring of eleven bells later that decade.26

26 It is not known whether these bells were change ringing bells. They were likely similar in fashion to carillons in order to ring hymns and other songs. Poston, The Buildings of Charleston, 87, 88.
Two churches did not express the same interest in bells as other congregations in Charleston. The Unitarian Church included a bell in its original design. However, during the Gothic renovations of the church in the 1850s, architect Francis D. Lee removed the bell. The church has never replaced it.\(^{27}\) Another church, Grace Episcopal Church, which is located on Wentworth and Glebe Streets, rejected early requests in 1846 and 1847 to place a bell in its tower.\(^{28}\)

**BELL DECLINE**

The increased tempo in bell installations did not indicate that churches were suddenly interested in bells. Church vestry minutes, such as those as on Second Presbyterian, did not discuss bells in detail despite installing them on two separate occasions.\(^{29}\) Most towers installed a single bell.

On December 20, 1860, seven Southern states seceded from the Union, creating the Confederate States of America.\(^{30}\) The following year, on April 12, 1861, Confederate forces laid siege to Fort Sumter, marking the beginning of the four-year-long Civil War. Due to the shortage of readily available metal for artillery, the Confederate Ordnance

\(^{27}\) Francis D. Lee was the primary designer and architect on the project. Poston, *The Buildings of Charleston*, 340-341.

\(^{28}\) Grace Episcopal Church is discussed in further detail in Chapter V.

\(^{29}\) The Corporation did not discuss bells, or mention the word bell, in their meeting minutes from 1836 to 1857. It is likely that the second bell, which had been installed in 1850, was kept out of the meeting minutes for undisclosed reasons. Second Presbyterian Church Corporation, *Minutes of Meetings of Corporation, 1836-1857*, Second Presbyterian Church Records Box 2 0428.01.05, South Carolina Historical Society.

\(^{30}\) The Ordinance of Secession was signed at Institute Hall in Charleston. The building burned in the Great Fire of 1861.
Office asked Charleston churches in 1862 to donate their bells to be melted into cannon.\textsuperscript{31} As a result, numerous bell towers lost their bells. For example, on April 8, 1862, during the Second Presbyterian Church corporation meeting, the “President stated that the object of the meeting was to consider the propriety of tendering the Bell of the Church to the Confederacy to be cast into cannon.”\textsuperscript{32} The members of the corporation agreed to donate the bell. One week later on April 14, 1862, they received a letter from the Confederate Ordnance Office in Richmond, Virginia, accepting their offer and thanking them for their contribution.\textsuperscript{33}

The massive Charleston church bell requisition included bells old and new. St. John’s Lutheran relinquished their bell just three years after its installation in 1859.\textsuperscript{34} Other churches that surrendered their bells included St. Philip’s Church, First Scot’s Presbyterian Church, the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul, and St. Michael’s Church. Bells were sent to Columbia for safekeeping in one of its seventeen bank vaults. The plan was to melt down the bells for cannon and other military needs. Unfortunately, Columbia burned on February 17, 1865 as Union General William Tecumseh Sherman and his army headed north. Numerous church bells cracked and melted due to the heat of the fire.

\textsuperscript{31} St. Michael’s donated seven of their eight bells. St. Michael’s retained the tenor bell because it still functioned as the city’s fire bell. Please see Chapter II for further information.
\textsuperscript{32} Second Presbyterian Church Corporation, \textit{Minutes of the Corporation, 1858-1908}, Second Presbyterian Church Records BOX 2 0428.01.06, South Carolina Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{33} Letter from the Confederate Ordnance Office to the Association of Second Presbyterian Church, April 14, 1862, BOX 2 0428.01.06, Second Presbyterian Church Records, South Carolina Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{34} Lilly, \textit{Historic Churches of Charleston}, 39.
Some bells were damaged beyond recognition. Following the war, many towers did not have the funds to replace their bells and, as a result, remained silent for years.

**CLIMBING THE LADDER**

In Charleston’s post-war period, churches did not replace their lost bells, with the exception of St. Michael’s in 1867. The lack of money was a constant issue, even called embarrassments in the vestry minutes of the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul. Bells did not appear in the literature of the early twentieth century, except for the installation of ten bells at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in 1901. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was renewed interest in replacing the bells lost in 1862. In 1976, St. Philip’s Church replaced its bells. They installed four bells in the bell tower, just enough to ring Westminster Chimes, a melody used to mark the quarter hours (Fig. 1.7). These bells were mechanized. They were specific in function, serving the church on Sundays and chiming the hours during the day.

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36 St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church was the first church tower to include a ringing in the twentieth century. St. Matthew’s will be further discussed in Chapter IV.
37 While this was the first bell installment since St. Matthew’s, the bells were not change ringing bells. Jack Leland, “Steeple Bells To Ring Again At St. Philip’s,” *Charleston Evening Post*, June 1, 1976.
St. Philip’s new bells marked the beginning of an undeclared replacement movement. Other churches began considering replacing bells lost to the Civil War. Second Presbyterian Church followed next. The first bell, cast by the McShane Bell Foundry Co, Inc., in Glen Burnie, Maryland, was installed in 1984.\footnote{“Church Seeking To Replace Bell Melted in 1861, \textit{The Evening Post}, September 13, 1983.} It was 34 inches in diameter and composed of “ingot copper and East India tin, weighing a total of 800 pounds.”\footnote{Julia Coaxum, “Presbyterian Church Dedicating New Bell,” \textit{The Post and Courier}, December 14, 1984; \footnote{“Church Seeking To Replace Bell, September 13, 1983.} \footnote{J. Michael Simpson, ed., \textit{There Was Life Before NAG} (North American Guild of Change Ringers, 2000), 101.}

\section*{START OF SOMETHING NEW}

years after the bells arrived at the National Cathedral, the North American Guild of Change Ringers, also known as the NAGCR, was inaugurated on September 1, 1972.\textsuperscript{42} It was the first organization to recognize change ringing in North America. Today, four NAGCR towers are located in Charleston.

Hurricane Hugo, a category four hurricane, slammed into the South Carolina coast on September 21-22, 1989, causing $7 billion worth of damage.\textsuperscript{43} Charleston area churches were among some of the casualties of the storm, with repairs ranging from roof replacements to tower reconstructions to complete renovations.\textsuperscript{44} Hurricane Hugo, was also the catalyst for the latest era in the bell history of Charleston.

Churches in Charleston began renovations in the days following Hurricane Hugo. St. Michael’s Church underwent an extensive restoration, including the refurbishment of its eight bells under the guidance of Cummings and McCrady Inc, an architectural firm based in Charleston.\textsuperscript{45} Dan Beaman, the architect on the project, would later be instrumental in establishing change ringing in Charleston with installations at the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul and Grace Episcopal Church.\textsuperscript{46}

After the reinstallation of the St. Michael’s Church bells, other area church congregations replaced bells surrendered to the Confederacy in 1862. St. John’s

\textsuperscript{42} Simpson, \textit{There Was Life Before NAG}, 123-124.
\textsuperscript{44} Citadel Square Baptist Church, located at 328 Meeting Street, lost its steeple following the tornado of 1885. They sought to replace it following Hurricane Hugo, appealing to the public to help raise the necessary funds. “Public asked to pay for church steeple,” \textit{The News and Courier}, April 14, 1991; Poston, \textit{The Buildings of Charleston}, 610.
\textsuperscript{45} Chapter II goes into further detail regarding the St. Michael’s renovations following Hurricane Hugo.
\textsuperscript{46} Chapters II and V go into further detail regarding Mr. Beaman’s involvement.
Lutheran was the first church to replace their bell following St. Michael’s. In 1992, a 19-bell carillon system – named the Haymaker-Vogelgesang carillon – was installed, replacing the single bell relinquished in 1862. The Paccard Bell Foundry in Annecy, France cast the bronze bells for the church. This new system of mechanized bells was tuned to ring various selections by a keyboard played through the church pipe organ.\(^{47}\)

Presbyterian churches also followed suit. First Scot’s Presbyterian Church chose to install a recycled bell rather than cast a brand new one. This new bell had been donated by the St. John’s Parish Church in Preston, England. This particular bell was cast in 1814, a date that matched completion of First Scot’s Church. It was installed in the north tower of the church on May 21, 1999 to the delight of its congregation.\(^{48}\) Second Presbyterian Church added three more bells to their tower prior to major steeple repair in 2004. The four bells, now capable of ringing Westminster Chimes, chime the quarter hours as well as ring on Sundays for church services.\(^{49}\)

Change ringing began in Charleston when St. Michael’s and Grace Episcopal Churches were converted into change bell ringing towers in 1993 and 1999 respectively.\(^{50}\) In 2001, the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul also became a change ringing tower. With that, area change ringers started the biennial Ring Around Charleston, an event that draws change ringers from all over the world to teach, learn,

and hone their ringing skills. The first Ring Around Charleston event took place in February 2004.

In 2010, the Catholic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist installed a new ring of bells, three in all, during a major restoration of the building. It had been said that the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist had always been intended to include a ring of bells in its design since the first constructed church in 1851.\(^{51}\) Funding issues for a complete tower as well as a destructive fire in 1861 prevented that. There was also a rumor that Patrick Keely, who was the designer and architect behind the first and second cathedrals, did create plans for a complete tower.\(^{52}\) The building of the second Cathedral, constructed from 1890 to 1907, suffered from financial issues as well, further delaying the tower construction.\(^{53}\) Original plans for the church have been lost. It was not until 2007, the one hundredth anniversary of the current church building, that there was renewed interest in completing the tower. In that year the Cathedral underwent a $7 million renovation began. The long-term project called “for a steeple to be added to the Cathedral’s roof on its south side facing Broad Street.”\(^{54}\)

The discussion for a ring of bells at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist renewed itself during the renovation work of the structure. The Catholic church’s vestry

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\(^{53}\) The Ball for the Bells was the main fundraising effort for new bells. Adam Parker, “Cathedral seeks ringing endorsement for steeple,” *The Post and Courier*, November 16, 2008.

purchased three bells from the Christoph Paccard Bell Foundry in Annecy, France. After being blessed by Bishop Robert Gugliamone on October 16, 2009, the bells were lifted into the tower and installed a month later. The bell tower was completed in March 2010, marked by the placing of the copper-clad cross on the top of the tower (Fig. 1.8). While the new bells at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist are not change ringing bells, they do add to the aural landscape of Charleston.

Figure 1.8: Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (Photo by author)

56 Adam Parker, “Cathedral’s new bells to get bishop’s blessing,” The Post and Courier, October 15, 2009, 1B; Taylor, “Cathedral’s new bells,” The Catholic Miscellany, 5.
Visitors and residents may still consider the sound of change-ringing bells as a historic tradition, associating it with the age of some of Charleston’s oldest churches. Early primary sources don’t discuss change ringing well which shades towards suggesting that maybe there was change ringing as we understand it today. As a result, change ringing interest is young and not historic as previously believed in Charleston, South Carolina.
CHAPTER II: TREBLE’S GOING, SHE’S GONE: ST. MICHAEL’S CHURCH

St. Michael’s Church is the oldest church edifice in Charleston. On June 14, 1751, the South Carolina General Assembly passed the act for “dividing the Parish of St. Philip, Charleston and for establishing another parish in the said town, by the name of the Parish of St. Michael.” Charleston had grown too large for one church. Another parish was needed to accommodate the city’s growing population. The act also called for the “building of a Church…in the said Parish.”¹ The cost of £30,000 was divided between

the commissioners for the building of the church and the amount collected from pew subscriptions. The highest subscribers had the first choice of pew, followed by the second highest, and so on.²

Construction on St. Michael’s Episcopal Church began the following year in 1752. The cornerstone laying ceremony took place in February 1752. A number of dignitaries attended the ceremony, including the Royal Governor James Glen and other members of his majesty’s “Honorable Council.” The plan for the new church followed “one of Mr. Gibson’s Designs” and “will exhibit a fine Piece of Architecture when completed.”³ The new design would also feature a steeple that was going to be bigger than St. Philip’s. The St. Michael’s steeple would also “have a fine Set of Bells.”⁴ Samuel Cardy was chosen as the builder of the church.⁵

Soon after the 1751 Act of Establishment, The South Carolina Gazette ran an advertisement, calling for a “large quantity of Bricks, Lime, fresh water Sand, Cyprus and Pine Timber, Plank, Boards, and Laths.”⁶ These were some of the necessary supplies for the building of St. Michael’s Church. Carpenters and bricklayers were also asked to help build the church, all under the guidance of Samuel Cardy.⁷ Other necessary

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³ There is ongoing debate on who Mr. Gibson was. Some people believe that Mr. Gibson was actually James Gibbs, who designed St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, England. The South Carolina Gazette, February 22, 1752.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Cost estimate papers, supply orders, and labor record sheets associated with the construction of St. Michael’s include Samuel Cardy’s name. These are all located in the St. Michael’s Church Records at the South Carolina Historical Society. Kenneth Severens, Charleston Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny (Knoxville, T.N.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 10.
⁶ The South Carolina Gazette, June 17, 1751.
materials included slate, nails and bolts, glass, ironware, and sundry items.  

Construction began in 1752.

Steeple construction began in July 1753. In all, St. Michael’s spire contained eight levels (Fig. 2.2). The steeple itself occupies the upper six levels. The first, second, and third levels constituted the main structure of the church, from the bottom of the sanctuary to the base of the belfry, which held the bells. The clock level contained four clock faces. The arcading level, also described as the lantern level, included Georgian arched openings. The tower level and the weathervane levels constituted the remaining levels of the steeple.

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9 Construction on the South Carolina State House – the Charleston County Courthouse today – started at the same time as St. Michael’s. As a result, construction on the church slowed in 1753 when the State House’s cornerstone was laid. Workers that had been working on the church were called to work on the State House, which was completed in 1756.
Figure 2.2: The Eight Levels of the St. Michael's Steeple, East Elevation

Samuel Cardy planned eight openings for the belfry level of the steeple. He prepared centrings and frames for each of them. He also included four windows in the third level. Eight were originally planned windows for what would be the clock level. Four windows were placed on this level instead as well as a balustrade. The remaining spaces, which pointed in the cardinal directions, were left blank for clock faces.

Money was a concern for the commissioners building St. Michael’s Episcopal Church. In a plea to the General Assembly, Samuel Prioleau – the clerk for St. Michael’s – wrote:

But that your Memors. are unable to carry on & to compleat the building the said Church as all the money given by the Gen. Assembly…Yr. Memors. take leave further to represent that a much greater Sum of money is necessary to finish the same.

In September, the General Assembly pulled £3,500 out of the Beacon Fund, money designated for harbor signals, because the steeple was going to serve as a navigational point and harbor signal. Work continued at a slow pace and did not fully resume until February 1756.

St. Michael’s held its first service in February 1761 when Rev. Robert Cooper spoke from the pulpit for the first time to a crowded congregation in a church not yet

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12 An English term, centerings are “temporary wood framing prepared to serve as a form and support for the construction of a masonry arch.” Lounsbury, *An Illustrated Glossary*, 67.
13 Williams, *St. Michael’s Charleston*, 141-142.
15 This was signaled by the carving of the banisters for the arcading level. The cypress ball – covered in copper – was completed as well as work on the roof for the steeple. Jeremiah Theus worked on the vane and the lightning rod, stationing them on the top of the steeple. Six thousand shingles were cut and added in January and February 1757. After more work, the steeple was essentially completed in 1760. Nelson, *The Beauty of Holiness*, 47.
complete. After the completion of additional woodwork and paving of the church, St. Michael’s Church was officially completed in 1762.

A grand design for its time, St. Michael’s steeple rose above the low skyline of the city. Clearly influenced by James Gibbs’ St. Martin-in-the-Fields, St. Michael’s “seized upon the new design source as a way of bettering the celebrated design of the older church.”

BELL INSTALLATION

On January 6, 1762, St. Michael’s Vestry, along with the residents of Charleston, “were desirous that a Subscription should be opened for a Ring of Bells and an Organ.” Their request was the first recorded interest in church bells in Charleston. The vestry inquired about the necessary costs to purchase a ring of bells, writing a letter to London merchant Charles Crockatt in 1762. Mr. Crockatt became their London contact for bells. A second letter to Mr. Crockatt in February 1763 stated:

Mr. Deas has taken the earliest opportunity of Laying before us your much esteamed favour to him. Dated 25th of October Last with Messrs. Lester and Packs List of the great variety of Tenor Bells which they have cast since the year 1738.

20 “February 21, 1763 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.
The exact costs were not listed; however, the letter indicated that the St. Michael’s Vestry was choosing the Lester and Pack Bell Foundry of England to cast their bells.\textsuperscript{21}

The vestry continued to discuss the bells and exchange letters with Mr. Crockatt. In June 1763, the vestry purchased bills of exchange equal to two hundred pounds sterling, a down payment for the bells.\textsuperscript{22} On September 18, the Vestry asked Mr. Crockatt to place the bell order, stating:

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We therefore Sir, beg Leave to desire you will be Pleased to Order Messrs. Lester & Pack to Cast a Ring of Eight Bells, And Mr. Aynsworth Thways to make a Thirty Hour Clock.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{center}

In that same letter, Captain Muir and the owners of the ship \textit{Little Carpenter} offered to bring the bells from London to Charleston. The vestry agreed, and “were of Opinion they should be sent for without loss of time.”\textsuperscript{24}

The Lester and Pack Bell Foundry order included all of the parts and pieces necessary for a ring of eight bells. Costs and the weights of each component were listed. In total, the order, which also included the bell frame, cost St. Michael’s vestry £681 sterling.\textsuperscript{25}

Residents of Charleston were concerned that the total weight would be too much for the steeple.\textsuperscript{26} The vestry, noting those concerns in a regular meeting on February 1,\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The Lester and Pack Bell Foundry is now known as the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. They have been in business since 1570. Please see \url{http://www.whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk/} for more information about their business and history.
\item The vestry was also planning to purchase a clock and organ along with the ring of bells. “February 14, 1762 Meeting,” \textit{Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.}
\item “September 18, 1763 Meeting,” \textit{Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.}
\item “September 12, 1763 Meeting,” \textit{Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.}
\item “October 26, 1763 Meeting,” \textit{Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.}
\item Francis S. Rodgers, “The Bells of St. Michael’s,” Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
1764, expressed an opinion that they should have ordered six bells instead of eight bells. The vestry pressed Charles Crockatt about amending the order. The change was never made and the ring of eight bells arrived on July 15 on the ship *Little Carpenter* under Captain Muir’s guidance.

The next challenge for the St. Michael’s Vestry was bringing the bells ashore. They discussed their options in a regular meeting on July 17. In that meeting, the vestry instructed a Mr. Braund to bring them to the church and safely store them until the bells could be installed.

A few days later, on July 19, 1764, the vestry sought proposals from local tradesmen for building the bell frame and installing the bells. The vestry had indicated early on that they wanted a Mr. Baker to do the job and that a Mr. Lockwood would be in charge of fixing the clock. However, the vestry hesitated, “thinking it most eligible to gett as many Proposals as they could from different Tradesmen, rather than Agree with one Particular Person.” On August 1, the vestry officially chose Baker for the job. He had estimated the cost at no more than £700. He hoped that the expense would be smaller by the completion of the task; however, he believed that the cost should be determined by the day-to-day work. The vestry approved of his measures and ordered Baker “to go about the frame with all expedition.”

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27 “February 1, 1764,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.; “July 17, 1764 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s; “July 19, 1764 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s; “August 1, 1764 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s.
28 *The South Carolina Gazette*, October 1, 1764-October 8, 1764.
29 “July 17, 1764,” Minutes of St. Michael’s.
30 “July 19, 1764 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s.
31 “August 1, 1764 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s.
The vestry struggled to pay for the installation of the bells. They had “expended all of the subscription...[on] the bells and clock only.” They began exploring other options including taking out another subscription to cover the installation of the bells and clock. This subscription would also cover obtaining an organ. Final costs were never disclosed.

On September 21, 1764, the bells of St. Michael’s rang out for the first time for the baptism of Betsy Bramfield. Their second ringing occasion was of a more solemn note. The bells tolled for the funeral of Mrs. Martha Grimké, wife of Frederick Grimké.

THE BRITISH ARE COMING!

St. Michael’s bells were barely seven months old when, on March 22, 1765, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act. When the news of the Stamp Act reached Charleston, the bells of St. Michael’s Church sounded disapproval of the act. Like at a funeral, the bells “rang muffled all day” as opponents of the act lowered a coffin into the ground inscribed “AMERICAN LIBERTY.” On May 6, 1766, the bells rang out when the news of the Stamp Act repeal reached Charleston. On the morning of the first anniversary of the passage of the act on March 18, 1767, the bells rang out, kicking off a day of revelry. The bells commemorated the repeal annually until the tradition was

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33 The vestry wrote a letter to David Deas and Egerton Leigh, Esqrs on August 15, 1764 discussing these plans. “August 16, 1764 Meeting,” *Minutes of St. Michael’s*.
34 Betsy Bramfield was born on July 16, 1764, the day after the St. Michael’s bells arrived.; Rodgers, “The Bells of St. Michael’s,” 2.
35 *The South Carolina Gazette*, October 1, 1764-October 8, 1764.
36 *The South Carolina Gazette*, October 19, 1765-October 31, 1765.
37 *The South Carolina Gazette*, March 16, 1767-March 23, 1767.
discontinued when the British, led by Major Peter Traille, confiscated the bells after British occupied Charleston in 1780.

The bells continued to ring for worship on Sundays, annual celebrations, and to mark the hours. On June 28, 1777, the bells rang on the first anniversary of the Battle of Fort Sullivan, an American victory on June 28, 1776. The tradition is continued today every June 28 which is known as Carolina Day.

The tallest point on Charleston’s skyline, St. Michael’s steeple was the ideal watch tower during the American Revolution. A member of the City Guards watched from the arcading level for enemy threats. During the British Siege of Charleston in 1780, Peter Timothy, printer of the South Carolina Gazette, was the watchman. Using his spyglass, Timothy observed British activity from his birds-eye perch. He wrote down his experiences in a journal:

Every Ship now has come to Anchor, except the Transport ashore. They really make a most noble appearance, and I could not help admiring the Regularity and Intrepidity with which they approached…but tis Pity there are not Friends!

St. Michael’s height above Charleston also made it an ideal fire watch tower. A watchman observed the city from above, keeping an eye out for fires. He was also charged with noting the direction of fire by placing a light in its direction. Following this action, the watchman would ring the tenor bell, the official fire bell for the city, to alert

38 The South Carolina and American General Gazette, July 3, 1777.
39 It is listed in the church by-laws for St. Michael’s bells to ring in commemoration of the Patriot victory; Walter J. Fraser, Jr., Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 149.
40 Fraser, Charleston! Charleston!, 159.
citizens and firemen to the threat. One such occasion was the Fire of 1778. On January 15, 1778, fire broke out at a bake house near the north end of Union Street.\textsuperscript{42}

The alarm was specific to the type of alert. The Charleston City Council designated what type of ringing would constitute each alarm. If a fire was spotted, two or more of the bells would chime the alarm. The tenor bell would ring “singly” in the case of a riot.\textsuperscript{43}

The view from St. Michael’s was unparalleled, but the white steeple was too visible on the Charleston skyline, making it a target for the British. To combat this flaw in design, the steeple was painted a dark color. Unfortunately, the dark steeple made it more visible on the skyline on a sunny day. The British “declared…that this device had the exactly contrary effect to that intended, and drew attention to it like never before.”\textsuperscript{44} The steeple was not severely damaged during the Siege of Charleston in 1780. One shell struck the steeple, however, “and, glancing, sheared off one of the arms of the statue of Pitt” at the intersection of Meeting and Broad Streets.\textsuperscript{45}

The St. Michael’s bells became prisoners of war following the Patriot surrender at the Siege of Charleston. Major Peter Traille of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Battalion of the British Royal Artillery confiscated the bells from the tower, claiming them as his “military right.”

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser}, July 13, 1784.
\textsuperscript{45} Williams, \textit{St. Michael's Charleston}, 29 & 44.
Michael’s Church fought the claim, stating that since the bells were privately owned, they did not qualify as spoils of war under the “articles of Capitulation from Capture.”

The campaign by the St. Michael’s vestry to retrieve their bells began in 1782. The vestry pleaded with the British commanding general, reiterating that the bells did not qualify as spoils of war. In a letter to British Major General Alexander Leslie written October 17, 1782, the vestry argued:

the Bells of a Church are Vested in the Parishioners. Your Memorialists apprehend those of St. Michael’s Church, should be restored as the Private Right of the Inhabitants, secured to them by the Capitulation.

Response to this first letter was slow. As a result, the vestry wrote a second letter, this time to Sir Guy Carlton, commander of all British forces in America at that time, in New York on April 28, 1783. The response from Sir Carlton’s secretary on his behalf was more prompt, acknowledging receipt of the vestry’s letter on May 18. This letter arrived with papers pertaining to the return of the bells, including correspondence from Major Peter Traille on why he could not return them. He was persuaded that:

no person under my Command would presume to meddle with private Property, or in any manner infringe Lieut. General Leslie’s orders on that Subject.

In a letter dated January 29, 1783, twenty of Charleston’s “principal inhabitants” took out a bond for 600 guineas to be paid over a period of six months. One month before the British evacuation of Charleston, the vestry had paid only 240 guineas on the

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46 “October 17, 1782 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.
47 Ibid.
48 The secretary enclosed letters dated January 28th, 29th, 31st, and March 15, 1783 that discussed the acquisition of the St. Michael’s bells. “May 18, 1783 Meeting,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Church.
bond. British forces removed the bells from St. Michael’s with the consent of Earl Cornwallis and Brigadier General James Paterson, the subordinate commander at the Siege of Charleston and sent the bells to England.\textsuperscript{49} Money might have been the common denominator for the quick transportation.

In May 1783, the Chapman and Mears Bell Foundry, the former Lester and Pack Bell Foundry which cast the bells in 1764, purchased the bells from the British Government. A merchant from Charleston, Mr. Emanuel Rhynier, then purchased six of the bells. British merchant Paul LeMesurier purchased the other two. In August 1783, Mr. LeMesurier shipped the bells to Charleston on the ship \textit{Lightning}. News about their impending arrival reached Charleston in October 1783 and was reported in \textit{The South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser}.\textsuperscript{50} Mr. LeMesurier sought payment from the St. Michael’s vestry for the bells, a request largely ignored until December 1787. While vestry minutes at the time discussed a subscription to repay Mr. LeMesurier, a request from Mr. Rhynier was not mentioned and had perhaps been lost.\textsuperscript{51}

The bells’ arrival on November 21, 1783 was a great surprise to the St. Michael’s vestry and to Charleston’s citizens alike.\textsuperscript{52} Their first official act upon their return celebrated the anniversary of the British evacuation of Charleston. The Marine Anti-Britannic Society requested that the bells ring in commemoration of the event. The

\textsuperscript{49} The bells left on the \textit{Flora} and were consigned to Robert Grant in London. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} There was a small excerpt in this paper about their impending arrival on the \textit{Lightning}. \textit{The South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser}, October 28, 1783-November 1, 1783.
\textsuperscript{52} Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 263-264.
celebration was “ushered in by a Peal from the Bells of St. Michael’s Church,” followed by a dinner and patriotic toasts.53

LARGE AND IN CHARGE

During the 1790s, the bells recognized political celebrations and social occasions on a regular basis. For example, the bells rang in celebration of George Washington’s birthday on February 13, 1792.54 The article about Washington’s birthday did not specify details about the ringing. It was likely that bells simply rung in no particular pattern, following the eighteenth-century definition of peal. The vestry reacted to this frequency of ringing. In 1794, they decided, on the City Council’s suggestion, that:

the BELLS of St. Michael’s Church shall not...be rung but for the usual services...on Sundays, Prayer days & also the warning Evening Bell by desire of the City Council also in cases of Fire55

During the winter, the evening bell rang at seven and nine o’clock while, during the summer, it rang at eight and ten o’clock.56

The vestry continued to assert control over the bells, dictating who was responsible for them during the designated ringing times. On February 27, 1803, the vestry laid out the rules for the clerk, organist and sexton of St. Michael’s Church. The

53 There is no evidence to indicate that this was an incident of change ringing. According to the colonial definition of peal, it was likely that the bells were sounded out in no particular pattern. *The South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, December 16, 1783-December 18, 1783.
54 *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, February 13, 1792.
56 Kershaw, *History of the Parish and Church of St. Michael*, 70.
sexton was in charge of ringing the bells “in the Manner and at the Times heretofore used by the Church, and at no other time whatsoever.”  

City Council, like the St. Michael’s vestry, exercised authority in order to protect Charleston during instances of fire. Since the large tenor bell at St. Michael’s was the official fire bell, their authority overlapped with the vestry’s authority. According to the ordinance of the State of South Carolina regarding fires, the “commanding officer in the city guard” was responsible for alerting the public to fire threats by “beat of drum” and “ringing of bells.”  

The initial warning consisted of one bell ringing for a few minutes. Following the alarm, the watchman held out a lit lantern away from the tower, much like the arrow on a compass. The light pointed towards the direction of the fire threat, assisting firefighters in identifying the fire’s location. All of the bells, following the initial warning, rang for at least twenty minutes. The large tenor bell tolled after the alarm. As a result, the St. Michael’s tower and bells were considered as “contributing to the welfare and the protection of the citizens.”

The vestry understood the priority of maintaining the bells and the frame as part of its ecclesiastical and civic responsibilities. On November 3, 1811, the vestry Committee on Buildings inspected the timber framing and the bells to identify any necessary repairs. The members examined the bells, “sounding [them] with a Hammer” and found they were sound. They found that the timber bell frame needed repairs on two

57 “Rules for regulating the Duties of the Officers of St. Michael’s Church with a Table of Fees,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Church, February 27, 1803, 167-170.
58 The Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, March 10, 1787.
59 Mr. Williams provided further detail about the fire alert system in Charleston, including how the message was relayed to the proper authorities. Williams, St. Michael’s Charleston, 276-277.
of its sills on the north and south sides as well as one of its braces on the south side. The inspectors also spotted substantial decay on the bell wheels.\textsuperscript{60} Later inspections by the vestry included examining the steeple and the soundness of the bells and their frame.\textsuperscript{61}

If anything was indicative of the delicate power of St. Michael’s bells, it was the fire of 1838. A violent fire broke out on March 28, 1838, spreading across King, Meeting, and Market Streets.\textsuperscript{62} The bells of St. Michael’s rang so vigorously that the first, known as the treble, and the second cracked and had to be recast to be in top ringing order again.\textsuperscript{63} The trip across the Atlantic Ocean back to the original foundry was the first of many trips St. Michael’s bells made throughout the nineteenth century.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, St. Michael’s bells served dutifully, ringing for worship services on Sundays and chiming the hours. Washington McLean Gadsden, born a slave in 1824, was the first solo chimer, serving from 1837 to 1898 (Fig. 2.3). He used a chiming clavier to play hymns and tunes. The keys, or levers, were attached to each of the bells’ clappers with chiming cords, and were pushed down to create sound. Gadsden played tunes like “Home Again,” “Carolina,” and “Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush” as well as familiar hymns.\textsuperscript{64} The St. Michael’s Vestry received Mr.

\textsuperscript{60}“Special Meeting of the Vestry & Wardens of St. Michael’s Church, held on Sunday the 3\textsuperscript{rd} November 1811,” \textit{Typescript copy of minutes, 1759-1869: Typescript Copy of the Vestry Minutes, 1799-1816}, St. Michael’s Church Records, South Carolina Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{61}“Special Meeting of the Vestry, Thursday the 18\textsuperscript{th} November 1813,” “Special Meeting of the Vestry, Sunday the 5\textsuperscript{th} day of December 1813,” & “Regular Meeting of the Vestry, September 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1814,” \textit{Typescript copy of minutes, 1759-1869: Typescript Copy of the Vestry Minutes, 1799-1816}.


\textsuperscript{63}St. Michael’s Church has posted on their website that the first two bells were recast in 1838 likely following the fire. Kershaw, \textit{History of the Parish and Church of St. Michael}, 61 & “Clock & Bells: The Bell Tower of St. Michael’s Church,” St. Michael’s Church, http://www.stmichaelschurch.net/about-us/history/bells/ (accessed January 30, 2013).

\textsuperscript{64}Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 304.
Gadsden’s resignation letter on September 22, 1898. They then granted him a pension of $5.00 per quarter for his retirement beginning on October 1. He died ten months later on July 20, 1899.

Figure 2.3: Washington McLean Gadsden Chiming the Bells

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65 St. Michael’s Church Vestry, “Special Meeting of the Vestry, 22nd September 1898,” Minutes of St. Michael’s Vestry from Easter 1895 to May 30, 1903, St. Michael’s Church Records 0320.00 Box 18: 0320.09 (M) 01 (1895-1903), South Carolina Historical Society.
66 Mr. Gadsden’s name was mentioned one time during his 61 year service in the December 29, 1898 vestry minutes.
THE CIVIL WAR

On December 20, 1860, 169 delegates came together at Institute Hall on Meeting Street to sign the Ordinance of Secession. Charleston erupted in celebration, firing Roman candles and ringing of bells. During the war years that followed, St. Michael’s white tower stuck out on the city skyline, making it an ideal marker for cannon fire. As a result, St. Michael’s blackened its tower again to make it less conspicuous.

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On December 11, 1861, the large tenor bell at St. Michael’s rang loudly around 9:00 that evening, alerting the city to a fast-moving fire. The fire watchman used a red lantern, “suspended from a pole extending in a northeasterly direction from the steeple.”

Low tide, substantial wind and no rain meant that the fire would create a larger, longer

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line of destruction. The fire eventually destroyed 1300 houses and caused $5,000,000 in damage.\footnote{Marie Ferrara, “Moses Henry Nathan and the Great Charleston Fire of 1861,” \textit{The South Carolina Historical Magazine}, Vol. 104, No. 4 (Oct. 2003), 276.}

Six months later, following the Battle of Secessionville in June 1862, the Confederacy requested that all churches in Charleston relinquish their bells to the war effort.\footnote{St. Michael’s bells chimed “Home, Sweet Home” in honor of those who died as a result of the battle. Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 278.} Metal was a precious commodity and bells were the largest sources of it in the city. St. Michael’s Church surrendered seven out of their eight bells, sending them to Columbia. The eighth, and largest, bell remained behind in order to continue alerting the city to fire threats.\footnote{The Clock and Bell Fund St. Michael’s Episcopal Church Committee, “History of St. Michael’s Clock and Bells,” October 1992.}

The church tower resumed its duty as a wartime watch tower following the firing on Fort Sumter. Confederate signal officers observed Charleston and its surrounding areas from their post, constantly looking out for Union troop movements. Augustine Smythe of the Confederate Signal Service was one of the watchmen. He recorded his experiences, writing:

\begin{quote}
the stunning thunder of the big bell shakes the steeple. Such a cracking and a shaking as this old steeple does when they ring it is a caution…\textbf{I have grown used to it; but it is not the most comfortable feeling I have ever had…}\footnote{Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 279.}
\end{quote}

Union bombardment of Charleston began on August 22, 1863. Lt. Charles Sellmer and Company D of the 11$^{th}$ Maine fired the first shots on the city, aiming their...
cannon towards St. Michael’s tower.\textsuperscript{74} Ironically, the watchman at the tower called out “Past twelve o’clock; and all’s well!” when the first shot “went howling up Meeting Street.”\textsuperscript{75} The lone bell at the tower rang out, alerting citizens to “Yankee shells.”\textsuperscript{76}

St. Michael’s bell tower was a constant target of the shell fire during the bombardment. Union gunners aimed their cannon towards the tall spire as it was the most visible point on the Charleston skyline. According to a recollection of the bombardment by the St. Michael’s vestry, the bell tower “was made a lookout station for the Confederate General.”\textsuperscript{77} From his post at the tower, Confederate officer Capt. T. S. Hale counted the number of fired Union shells from his post at the tower. He also noted where they landed, prepared to ring the alarm if any fires were spotted in the city’s vicinity.\textsuperscript{78}

**BEGINNING TO STAND STRAIGHT AGAIN**

The vestry acted immediately to reclaim their bells after the end of the Civil War. The first objective was locating the bells. Mr. G. R. Pringle reported to the vestry on December 10, 1865 that “two of the Bells, cracked were in Columbia, and he heard that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[74] Burton, \textit{The Siege of Charleston}, 254.
\item[75] Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 280.
\item[77] “December 3, 1865 Meeting,” \textit{Minutes, December 1865-April 1878}, St. Michael’s Church Records Box 17, South Carolina Historical Society.
\item[78] Burton, \textit{The Siege of Charleston}, 257.
\end{footnotes}
four others were in Macon, Georgia.” The Chairman of the vestry wrote a letter to Macon about the bells following the report. There was no response.79

A man named Mr. Henry Cheves came across the bells following the burning of Columbia. They were still located in temporary sheds on the South Carolina State House grounds. Unfortunately, the bells’ condition was horrid. The bells had “not been burned, but were smashed with a maul.” Also, two of the seven bells were missing from the set.80

St. Michael’s vestry laid out a plan for acquiring the bells in Columbia one month after their discovery. The goal was to ship the bells to the Mears and Steinback Bell Foundry in England to get them recast and ready to be rehung in the belfry. Mears and Steinback melted the remaining bell metal and used the 1764 molds were used to recast the new bells.81 The order also included bracing for the new bell frame.82 Subsequent letters between the vestry and the bell foundry fleshed out order detail and pricing. Mears and Steinback promised that “the new bells should be as far as practicable, identical in tone, with those made by Messers. Lester & Pack in 1764.” They also recognized the value of these bells to the citizens of Charleston.83

St. Michael’s bells returned to Charleston in February 1867.84 They were, however, not immediately brought to the church. Import duties had been enforced since the end of the Civil War and the start of Union occupation. Bells were no exception, and

84 The Charleston Daily Courier, February 14, 1867.
the Collector of the Port required $1,588.65, paid in gold, for the bells. A large sum to collect, the vestry set out to raise funds to pay the import duty and bring St. Michael’s bells back home. The vestry wrote to the Collector of the Port, stating:

Will be much obliged if you would intercede for us with the Secretary of the Treasury and ask him to allow them to come in free of duty. These bells are the property of St. Michael’s Church but are a guide to the whole city…[they] will be the only bells here as all of the Churches have lost their bells.  

Local churches and area citizens recognized the significance of St. Michael’s bells and assisted the church in raising funds to pay the Collector of the Port. Contributions came from area churches, prominent citizens, area businesses and institutions, and from as far away as Augusta, Georgia. Once the duty was paid, the bells were rehung in St. Michael’s tower. “Home Again” was an appropriate tune for the first ringing of the bells since 1862. The familiar ringing elicited emotional responses as the bells returned to their previous roles, calling people to worship, chiming the hours, ringing of the evening bell, and the ever watchful fire alarm bell.  

The 1870s were relatively uneventful for St. Michael’s bells. The bells performed the regular duties required of them. For once, times were peaceful. April 1879 changed that quickly. The tenor bell cracked while ringing for a fire alarm. The vestry was reluctant to send the bell overseas to be repaired and recast because of the costs involved and the length of its potential absence. After inquiry, foundries in the United States

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85 All of the church bells in Charleston except St. Michael’s tenor bell were donated to the Confederate war effort. Williams, St. Michael’s Charleston, 288.
86 On March 18, 1867, a large concert was held at the Citadel Square Baptist Church, in which any money raised would go towards paying the bells’ import duty. The money took only a month to raise. Williams, St. Michael’s Charleston, 290-291.
87 The Charleston Daily Courier, March 22, 1867 & March 23, 1867.
encouraged the St. Michael’s vestry to send the tenor bell back to Mears & Steinback. The tenor bell left Charleston in January 1880 and returned the following February. The process to recast, rehang, and pay off expenses was essentially the same as it was more than ten years previously. The bells had remained in their current shape to this day.\textsuperscript{88}

The first St. Michael’s by-laws passed in April 1876. The by-laws officially designated appropriate ringing times, much like the regulations passed in 1794. It was no surprise that the bells would ring for church purposes such as ringing on Sundays. Specific times, unless they interfered with worship services, were listed for holidays such as June 28\textsuperscript{th} (Carolina Day), July 4\textsuperscript{th}, December 25, and December 31. Good Friday and Easter were added to the list the following year. Confederate Memorial Day (celebrated on May 10) joined the list in 1892. Other ringing occasions included funerals of important public officials and high-ranking officials in the church. The bells were also required to toll for “the death of the rector or assistant minister of any P[rotestant] E[piscopal] Church in this city…without bells of its own.”\textsuperscript{89}

Advances in fire alarm technology changed the role of St. Michael’s bells in the 1880s. Warning alerts needed to be faster, louder, and more accurate. The St. Michael’s bells had long served the community – in tandem with St. Philip’s Church and Second Presbyterian Church – as the fire alert system in Charleston. Unfortunately, they were now outdated. Charleston City Council approached St. Michael’s with an idea. They

\textsuperscript{88} The vestry was initially concerned about the import duty they would have to pay for the bell once it made its round trip to England and back. An import duty was enforced, paid by loan, and reimbursed again by the U.S. government using federal dollars. Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 298-299.

wanted to place a new – but separate – bell in the steeple to ring for fire alarms. St. Michael’s accepted the initial proposal, sharing some of the same concerns for the bells as the City Council. They believed the tenor bell was delicate and feared it would be damaged again if rung for a fire.90

Plans changed, however, and the City Council proposed building a fire tower entirely separate from the St. Michael’s tower. The bells of St. Michael’s Church relinquished their fire bell responsibilities on September 7, 1882 when the new fire tower – with a new bell – was ready for duty. From that day forward, the bells of St. Michael’s never again rang for a fire alarm.

The bells, however, never lost their position in recognizing important dates and celebrations. They rang on holidays such as Carolina Day, Independence Day, Christmas, and Easter. The bells also rang in celebration for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Other ringing occasions include greeting a fellow Mears and Steinback bell, the Liberty Bell, in 1901, and for George Washington’s birthday every February 22.91

Nothing prepared Charleston for the Great Earthquake of 1886. On August 31 of that year, the ground violently shook as a strong earthquake rattled the city. St. Michael’s Church suffered significant damage. Residents feared that the structure would fall at any moment when daylight revealed visible cracks alongside the steeple. It had sunk eight

90 Following an investigation of the tenor bell in the St. Michael’s belfry, there is an imprint on it that indicates that the tenor bell had been recast again after 1866. Besides the imprinted date, there is no information to explain the reasoning for the recast.

91 The bells also tolled for the deaths of Kings Edward VII and George V. 1877 was the only year that the bells did not ring for George Washington’s birthday as the President at the time asked them to refrain from celebrating in their own way. Williams, St. Michael’s Charleston, 301.
inches into the ground and had separated from the main structure. But, how were the bells? The bells shook and rang as the earthquake ravaged Charleston that day. As the seismic waves hit St. Michael’s, “the bells rang for the last time that night, and the handsome bell tower clock stopped at 9:51 p.m.”

Figure 2.7: Earthquake Damage Inside St. Michael's Church (Beesley, *Beesley's Illustrated Guide*, 15)
Like the congregation of the church, the bells experienced relative stability and peace during the early decades of the twentieth century. The 1890s by-laws dictating the appropriate ringing occasions were the same and still in effect during this time. The role of bell ringer was the only change. Responsibility lay with two people: the sexton and the chimer who rang the bells according to the by-laws.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{93}Ringing was relegated to these two men because of overall disuse of the bells during the early half of the nineteenth century. Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 304.
The bells were electrified for the first time in the 1940s. Clappers were originally controlled through the chiming clavier’s rope system, preventing the bell from ringing in a full circle. This new electrified system was controlled from a keyboard next to the organ. When played, hammers, located at the bells’ soundbow, struck the bells (Fig. 2.10). As a result, the organist took over the bell ringing at St. Michael’s from the sexton and the chimer. The newly electrified bells rang for the first time on Christmas Eve in 1946.94

THE WINDS ARE A'BLOWING, THE STORM'S A'COMING!

No one expected that September 21-22, 1989 would become a major turning point in St. Michael’s history. Category 4 Hurricane Hugo struck the city with force, causing great destruction. No building was spared from the storm’s wrath. Three days after the storm hit, a group of men climbed into the belfry and rang the bells. They physically “pulled the clappers” in order to ring each bell. Their action was a significant reminder
to the citizens of Charleston that together, they weathered the aftermath of the storm and returned to normal life.\textsuperscript{95}

Prior to Hurricane Hugo, the St. Michael’s Church vestry had hired George T. Fore and Associates, preservation consultants from Raleigh, North Carolina, to conduct a conditions assessment of the church. It was incomplete when the storm hit, but revised after the storm, revealing “deterioration of the steeple and the roof exacerbated by the hurricane.”\textsuperscript{96} The vestry hired local firm Cummings & McCrady Inc. to perform the renovation work at the church. Dan Beaman was the architect on the project. One of the tasks for the team was realigning the upper section of the steeple, which had not been plumb since the 1886 Earthquake. The steeple’s wood columns were cut in order to realign it.\textsuperscript{97}

Early on in the inspection process, it was discovered that the wooden timbers embedded in the steeple masonry were rotten. In order to make the proper repairs, the weight of the bells needed to be taken off of the timbers. The Rev. Richard Belser, the minister of St. Michael’s from 1986 to 2006, saw the opportunity when the bells were removed to have them restored. During this process, Dan Beaman recalled a newsreel from childhood that showcased bell ringing. Years later in 1977, Mr. Beaman met Alex Viola at the evensongs at Grace Church during Royal Music Week. Mr. Viola told Mr. Beaman about change ringing and gave him the contact information for Richard Parsons.

\textsuperscript{95} Williams, \textit{St. Michael’s Charleston}, 390.
\textsuperscript{96} An insurance snag slowed the work at the beginning of the renovation process. Repairs were expected to begin February 1992. Kerri Morgan, “Renovation of steeple is nearing,” \textit{The Post and Courier}, January 21, 1992.
\textsuperscript{97} Dan Beaman, Interview by author, Charleston, S.C., February 13, 2013.
Mr. Beaman contacted Mr. Parsons in Hendersonville, North Carolina, who gave him the contact information for Alan Hughes and the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England. Mr. Hughes told Mr. Beaman that their foundry was the original foundry that cast the St. Michael’s bells in 1764 and that they still had the original plans. 98

The bells returned home to Charleston in June 1993 after their restoration at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The citizens welcomed their return, hearing them for the first time since 1989. 99 On July 4, 1993, eight ringers rang a peal of Grandsire Triples, celebrating the bells’ return to their original form (See Appendix D). 100

<table>
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<tr>
<th>BELL-NAME</th>
<th>CAST BY</th>
<th>CAST DATE</th>
<th>WEIGHT (LBS)</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
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<td>509</td>
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<td>Mears &amp; Steinback</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Mears &amp; Steinback</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mears &amp; Steinback</td>
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<td>1359</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
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Table 2.1: The Bells of St. Michael’s Church

The newly tuned bells brought a new tradition to St. Michael’s Church after Hurricane Hugo. Change ringing became the new focus for the bell tower. In 1993 and

98 Ibid.
100 A peal consists of a minimum of 5,040 individual changes. This was the first peal on the St. Michael’s bells since their return.
1994, new ringers began training under the tutelage of tower captain Dan Beaman and English ringers.\footnote{Dan Beaman, Interview by author, Charleston, S.C., February 13, 2013.} Since 1995, C. J. Cantwell has been the tower captain at St. Michael’s Church.

The Ring Around Charleston event was established in 2004 by area ringers to promote the art of change ringing in Charleston. The city’s three change ringing towers and Stella Maris Roman Catholic Church on Sullivan’s Island participate in this biennial event. It draws close to 100 ringers from all over the world. Master ringer Alan Regin, from England, said that Ring Around Charleston is “a chance to try and infuse people and develop ringing over here.”\footnote{Anthony Miller, “Rare bells ring in the Holy City,” \textit{Live 5 WCSC}, Feb. 19, 2010, http://www.live5news.com/Global/story.asp?S=12014415, (accessed March 16, 2013).}

In June 2011, master ringers Ron Warford and Yvonne Cairns arrived in Charleston to teach the art of change ringing to the public. They held handling sessions as well as ringing practices for those interested in change ringing. Quarter peals were also conducted at St. Michael’s Church, the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul, and Stella Maris Roman Catholic Church, which is located on nearby Sullivan’s Island.\footnote{Adam Parker, “Bells are ringing: Master change ringers coming from England to teach at churches in the Holy City,” \textit{The News and Courier}, June 19, 2011.} On June 28, 2011, a band of six ringers rang a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor in honor of the Patriot victory at the Battle of Fort Sullivan.

Since Hurricane Hugo, change ringing has become significant in Charleston due in large part to St. Michael’s Church. Its tower was the first tower after Hurricane Hugo
to be refurbished into a change-ringing bell tower. St. Michael’s was the example the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul and Grace Episcopal Church followed.

Figure 2.11: Looking Down on the St. Michael’s Bells (Photo by author)


CHAPTER III: CALLING 2 TO 1: CATHEDRAL OF ST. LUKE AND ST. PAUL

As the nineteenth century progressed, more churches were built as the city expanded beyond its original boundaries. For example, Second Presbyterian in Wraggsboro and the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul in Radcliffeborough rose to serve new neighborhoods. Some, St. John’s Lutheran Church and the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul among them, followed its lead and included bells. Most of these churches installed single bells meant to ring on Sundays and for other worship-related services.
The Cathedral, in particular, reflected new antebellum congregations’ attitudes towards bells.¹

The vestry of St. Michael’s first addressed the need for a “Third Church” for Charleston Episcopalians as early as 1806.² Early discussion centered on the great need for another Episcopal church in the city as St. Michael’s and St. Philip’s congregations were growing. This discussion led to the creation of the Cathedral building committee in 1810, the same year the congregation formed. The new committee chose bricklayers James and John Gordon, who designed and built the Second Presbyterian Church in Wraggsboro at the same time, to design the new structure.³ The Gordons envisioned a steeple for the Cathedral like the one rising at Second Presbyterian.

![Figure 3.2: The Thick Walls Above the Cathedral Belfry, February 2013 (Photo by author)](image)

¹ The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul will be referred to as the Cathedral throughout this chapter. Prior to 1949, the Cathedral was known as St. Paul’s Church, Radcliffeborough. It merged with St. Luke’s Church in 1949.
² St. Paul’s Church, *History of St. Paul’s Church, Radcliffeborough* (Charleston, S.C.: Lucas & Richardson, 1878), 4-5;
The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul was called a “Temple…to the Worship of God” when its cornerstone was laid on November 19, 1811.\(^4\) Completion of its tower, however, plagued the church. The intended tower was never finished because “the heavy load of the tower caused the main walls to split.”\(^5\) The base tower was later capped with a Gothic-style parapet. On March 28, 1816, the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of South Carolina consecrated the new Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul.\(^6\)

**THE BELL YEARS**

In 1821 after the completion of the building, the Cathedral acquired four of the five bells from the St. George’s Church in Dorchester. In 1844, the Cathedral donated one of those bells to St. John’s Church, Winnsboro. Three bells remained in the tower. Three surviving rope holes in the change-ringing room ceiling revealed their location.\(^7\)

Like other area church bells, the Cathedral bells rang for services on Sundays. In 1854 the church revised its use of its bells. That year, the Cathedral donated one of their bells, a new “400 pound bell in lieu of the four old Dorchester bells” to St. Paul’s Church in Summerville.\(^8\) Sometime after that year, the Meneely Bell Foundry of Troy, New York recast the three remaining bells into a single ringing bell. The single bell was hung in the tower and assumed its role as a worship bell (Fig. 3.3).\(^9\)

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\(^4\) *Charleston Times*, November 20, 1811.
\(^6\) *Charleston Times*, March 30, 1816.
\(^7\) Wray Lemke, interview by author, Charleston, SC, December 12, 2012.
\(^9\) The frame and the wheel for the single bell are still located in the tower. Wray Lemke, interview by author, Charleston, SC, December 12, 2012.
THE CIVIL WAR

The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul surrendered its remaining bell to the Southern cause in 1862. Unfortunately, General William Tecumseh Sherman entered Columbia in 1865. The Cathedral lost its records and its bell was damaged when the city burned.¹⁰

Some vestry minutes survived from 1863. Most of these meetings focused on keeping the church open for Charleston Episcopalians.¹¹ One meeting in particular on

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¹¹ As Union forces and the Siege of Charleston threatened the lower half of the peninsula, churches located in that area closed. This left congregations – such as St. Michael’s and St. Philip’s Churches – homeless. The Cathedral kept its doors open during the remainder of the war.
April 4, 1863 discussed the handing over of the Cathedral silver plate and church records. The bell of the church was mentioned briefly when the minutes indicated that the vestry had a receipt in hand for the bell:

Dr. Wragg also mentioned that he held the recpt. Of Maj. Huger of the Ordinance Department for the bell of St. Paul’s Ch[urch] to be paid for by the Confederate Govt.\textsuperscript{12}

The meeting minutes following the April 4 meeting did not mention the bell’s location. It was likely stored alongside other Charleston area bells. From 1862 to 1865, the Cathedral bell and seven of the St. Michael’s bells may have shared close quarters while in storage. It is possible that when the St. Michael’s bells were recycled for a recasting in 1866, pieces of the Cathedral bell were mixed into the new bells.\textsuperscript{13}

Financial issues plagued the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul following the Civil War. The Cathedral never could acquire the necessary funds to replace its lost bell, calling their struggle “financial embarrassments.” The vestry struggled to raise money for recasting the bell. The first mention was at a vestry meeting in 1871. On February 1\textsuperscript{st}, the vestry secretary recorded:

Mr. H____ submitted information…in reference to a Bell for the Church, which on motion of Mr. Hanckel was received as information to be called up at a future meeting.\textsuperscript{14}

There was no further mention of bringing the bell back to the Cathedral and, as a result, the tower stood silent well into the late twentieth century.


\textsuperscript{14}“February 1, 1871,” \textit{Records and Proceedings of the Vestry of St. Paul’s Church}.
THE NEW TOWER IN THE MODERN AGE

The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul bell tower was quiet in the twentieth century. Most congregations struggled to maintain strong membership so raising enough funds to replace a single bell was difficult. There were larger priorities – such as repairs following the Earthquake of 1886 – that required more attention. Bells were pushed aside.
The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul was among the churches which restored their bells following Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Vestry meeting discussions addressed securing new bells in the 1990s. The Keltek Trust of the United Kingdom had assisted churches acquire bells since 1997. The Cathedral contacted the Keltek Trust inquiring about a set of bells for their church. The Keltek Trust, in fact, did have a ring of six bells

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15 The author was not allowed access to the most recent vestry meeting minutes. However, it is very likely that bells were brought up at vestry meetings following Hurricane Hugo.

16 See the Keltek Trust website for more information about their charity. Their mission is to help churches by “recycling redundant and surplus church bells.” http://www.keltektrust.org.uk/index.html.
in need of a home. No longer able to care for its bells, St. Paul’s, Mirfield in Eastthorpe, Yorkshire, England, removed their six bells in 1996. Five of the six bells, which would be entrusted to the Cathedral, were originally cast by the John Taylor and Co. Bell Foundry in 1882. The sixth, a tenor bell (Fig. 3.6), was cast by the same foundry in 1880.

![Image of a bell with the John Taylor and Co. logo cast into it.](image)

**Figure 3.6: The Tenor Bell with the John Taylor and Co. Logo Cast into the Bell (Photo by author)**

In a letter to the Keltek Trust, Rev. William N. McKeachie wrote that it was the church’s intent to raise “the monies necessary to purchase” the bells. He inquired about the history and the condition of the bells as well. Dave Kelley of the Keltek Trust responded, stating a list of strict rules for the Cathedral to follow should they acquire the

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bells. For example, the trust expected the bells to “form part of a peal hung for full-circle ringing” as well as ringing for Sunday services for “at least 30 minutes duration per week.” Subsequent letters stated that the Keltek Trust intended to sell five of the bells and donate the tenor bell to the Cathedral, if the church satisfied their stipulations.

The Cathedral could not receive the old St. Paul’s bells without formal conformation of the Keltek Trust’s stipulations. Since paying the remaining balance took some time, formal confirmation took time as well. The Cathedral promised to confirm their compliance once the remaining balance was paid in full. By July 2000, the remaining debt was paid and the Cathedral confirmed that it was willing to comply with the Keltek Trust’s stipulations. The bells were set to arrive in Charleston during Holy Week on April 12, 2001.

Preparations for their arrival began in March 2001. The Cathedral tower underwent necessary renovations in order to house the new bells. Renovations included prepping the tower for the bell frame that was to hold the new bells when they arrived. Eayre & Smith Co. Ltd installed and hung the bells.

Eight new bells arrived at the Cathedral bell tower in May 2001 (Table 3.1). They were left on display for the congregation and city citizens to view during the Spoleto Arts Festival that year. Six of the bells came from St. Paul’s Mirfield in the United Kingdom. These bells had a blue-green patina to them. The two bells, and the

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20 The author has been asked by the Keltek Trust to not publish specifics – including the final costs – regarding the payment process.

21 Rev. William N. McKeachie to David Kelly of the Keltek Trust, July 10, 2000, Facsimile.
lightest of the set, were cast by Netherlands-based Eijsbouts Bell Foundry in 2000. These two bronze bells were shiny in appearance. George and Harriett Williams donated the two bells to the Cathedral in memory of two of their ancestors Serena and Ellen. “Thou Hast Perfected Praise” was inscribed on the treble bell (Fig. 3.7-left). “Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings” was inscribed on the ‘2’ bell (Fig. 3.7-right). The bells were hung that July. On Veterans Day that same year, the public heard the bells for the first time. The Cathedral held a dedication service for the bells. A commemorative peal was also rung, following the dedication service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELL</th>
<th>CAST BY</th>
<th>CAST DATE</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treble</td>
<td>Eijsbouts</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eijsbouts</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>F#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>John Taylor &amp; Co.</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: The Bells of the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul

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23 Bob Smith of Earye & Smith claimed that the patina did not hurt the sound. However, there is a noticeable difference in sound from the two Dutch bells and the six English bells. Also, the bells arrived the Thursday prior to the publication of the source. Dave Munday, “The bells are back in town: Original bell melted during the Civil War,” The Post and Courier, May 25, 2001.
24 Dan Beaman, email message to David Kelly of the Keltek Trust, November 12, 2001.
25 Ibid.
Figure 3.7: The Treble and ‘2’ Bells in the Cathedral Belfry, February 2013 (Photos taken by author)

Figure 3.8: Seven of the Eight Cathedral Bells, February 2013 (Photo by author)
Since the introduction of change-ringing bells, the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul has brought the English art to a wider audience. It is one of four towers in the Charleston vicinity that hosts the biennial event Ring Around Charleston. It also introduced recycled bells to the community, rendering change ringing more affordable for congregations considering bells for their church.

Figure 3.9: Ringers at the Cathedral Ringing Practice (Photo by author)
CHAPTER IV: DIFFERENT USE, DIFFERENT APPLICATION: ST. MATTHEW’S LUTHERAN CHURCH

The twentieth century marked the start of a new age in the bell and bell tower history of Charleston, South Carolina. Towers that had lost their bells during the Civil War were still mute. The city still struggled to regain its economic footing. Few congregations installed a new ring of bells because of prohibitive costs. St. Matthew’s
Lutheran Church was different. St. Matthew’s installed the first set of new bells in the twentieth century. These new bells were not designed to ring around 360 degrees.\(^1\) Instead, they were carillons, chimed using a hammer system controlled through playing the church organ. It also took the effort of a group of determined women to bring the bells to the tallest spire on the Charleston city skyline.

**THE GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**

The current St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church structure was not the first home for this predominantly German congregation. They first worshipped in a church located on Hasell and Anson Streets from 1840 until their new church was completed in 1872. John Henry Devereux was the architect for the new St. Matthew’s Church. Scholars have, however, speculated that the Rev. Louis Mueller helped designed the new church.\(^2\) In January 1867, the St. Matthew’s Church Council purchased a property on the west side of King Street facing Marion Square.\(^3\) On December 26, 1867, the cornerstone for the new St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church was laid at the new location.\(^4\) At its completion, St. Matthew’s Lutheran measured “64 feet by 157 feet deep” and was “capped by a tower

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\(^1\) St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church has also been known as St. Matthew’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church. For this paper, it will be referred to as St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church.
and spire that extend[ed] 297 feet above the sea.” It was the tallest building in Charleston.\footnote{Hallman, \textit{History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod}, 167.} The church was formally dedicated on March 28, 1872.\footnote{“New German Church,” \textit{The Charleston Daily Courier}, March 28, 1872.}

![Figure 4.2: St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, ca. 1900 (Image courtesy of the Charleston Museum)](image)

**“OUR MOST INTENSE WISH”**

St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church was no more than twenty-five years old when its congregation first discussed bells. Several women of the congregation spoke fondly of the bell at Bethany Chapel and Cemetery on the Charleston Neck that greeted those entering their “last rest.” They also inquired about the lack of bells at the church, saying:

> The steeple has been arranged for chimes, but the bells are lacking to complete the building…will it ever come to pass that we shall hear the ringing of bells from that beautiful steeple?

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\footnote{Hallman, \textit{History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod}, 167.}
\footnote{“New German Church,” \textit{The Charleston Daily Courier}, March 28, 1872.}
These ladies claimed that it was their “intense wish” to see bells placed in the steeple. As a result, these vocal women organized the Bell and Clock Society.\(^7\)

Mrs. E. H. Jahnz, Mrs. J. H. Ostendorff, Mrs. C. Wulbern, and Mrs. J. Rugheimer were the officers of the organization and were the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer respectively. Mr. E. H. Jahnz oversaw their operations and acted as the Bell and Clock Society’s business manager. This group charged themselves with obtaining a ring of bells and a clock for St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church.\(^8\) Mrs. J. H. Ostendorff corresponded with the church’s architect John Henry Devereux about placing bells in the 297 foot steeple. Mr. Devereux responded:

\begin{quote}
I have the pleasure to reply to your inquiry as to the placing of the Bells and Clock in the German Church Tower, designed and constructed by me, and have to advise you that you can place both bells and clock, with safety.\(^9\)
\end{quote}

His letter confirmed that the steeple was capable of handling the proper weight for bells.

The “intense wish” the women expressed suggested these bells would going to function primarily as worship bells and timekeepers. At this time in Charleston, towers were either silent or rang for service on Sundays. St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church would be no exception to this pattern. Its bells would follow the religious function that had been established in the city since 1764. The same should be said for the church’s civic role as a timekeeper. St. Matthew’s Lutheran’s position along Upper King Street would serve

\begin{footnotes}
\item[7] W. A. C. Mueller and the Church Council, The History of the Efforts to provide Chimes and Tower-Clock for St. Matthew’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Charleston, S.C., U.S.A., St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church Archives, 47.
\item[8] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
the surrounding community by chiming the quarter-hours and hours. It was closer in proximity and hearing distance for those citizens living north of modern-day Calhoun Street than St. Michael’s bells.

Fundraising was necessary for St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in order to pay for the clock and bells. The Bell and Clock Society planned for a bazaar to be held on December 9, 1897 as their opportunity to “market” the bells to fellow parishioners. The local German newspaper Deutsche Zeitung advertised the bazaar. Other fundraising efforts included selling Bell-Coupon Books and personal contributions from church members and other citizens.\textsuperscript{10}

St. Matthew’s Ladies Society was the first congregational group to volunteer to purchase a bell. They paid for the largest bell which became known as the “Ladies’ Bell. Its strike, in particular, was supposed to recall the “ceaseless labor and the noble results” of the organization. The Young Men’s Society and the Young Ladies Society also paid for a bell each. Other bells were given in memory of Otto F. Wieters, C. D. Franke, the Rev. L. Mueller, Johann Henry, Meta and Lena Thiele, and Wilhelm Brünjes. The two remaining bells were purchased by the Bell and Clock Society. Each of the bells was inscribed in German with the respective organization officers and memorials.\textsuperscript{11}

The St. Matthew’s Church Council acknowledged the existence of the Bell & Clock Society in their quarterly meeting on July 12, 1901. In recorded minutes, the

\textsuperscript{10} $1,035.20 was raised from selling the bell-coupon-books. Mueller and the Church Council, \textit{The History of the Efforts}, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Archives, 47-48.

\textsuperscript{11} Each bell’s inscription is translated into English in Mueller’s \textit{The History of the Efforts}. The officers for the Ladies’ Society, the Clock and Bell Society, the Young Ladies’ Society, and the Young Men’s Society are also listed. The cost for each of these bells was not listed. Mueller and the Church Council, \textit{The History of the Efforts}, 50-52.
members of the council felt that this organization would benefit from supervision from
council members. They named members E. H. Jahnz, C. G. Ducker, F. Wieters, J. H.
Beckroge, and F. G. Gerard to a committee that would accomplish the task.12

Certain alterations needed to be made before the bells could be installed in the
church steeple. Mr. H. D. Schumacher and his crew of workmen made improvements
that would transfer the sound of the bells to the outside. Other changes included
stabilizing areas of the tower. The steeple was expected to handle the weight of ten bells,
the largest weighing 2,550 pounds.13

On July 17, 1901, the Bell and Clock Society placed the order for “ten bells
pitched in E flat” with the Meneely & Co. Bell Foundry of West Troy, New York. Their
contract stipulated that the bells should arrive by November 1st “in complete order.”
Expectations were high for these new bells. St. Matthew’s Lutheran expected their bells
to be of the same quality as those of a Grace Church in New York. When the ten bells
arrived in Charleston, they were left out for exhibition for church members, city citizens
and strangers to admire until their installation.14

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12 The St. Matthew’s Church Council meeting minutes were originally recorded in German. Also, it is
likely that the Bell and Clock Society was recognized at an earlier meeting; however, those minutes have
not been translated into English. St. Matthew’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church Council, trans.,
“Quarterly Meeting of Church Council, July 12, 1901, “St. Matthew’s German Evangelical Lutheran
Church Council Meeting Minutes, October 1900-October 1911,” St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church Archives.
13 Mueller and the Church Council, The History of the Efforts, 50.
14 Mueller and the Church Council, The History of the Efforts, 49-50; There was no evidence found
suggesting why they chose the bells at Grace Church as their model bells. They were likely popular bells at
that time. Music at Grace Church in New York, “The Bells of Grace Church,” Grace Church in New York,
On November 3, 1901, the ten new bells rang out from the St. Matthew’s steeple for the first time. *The News and Courier* detailed the bell dedication service in an article on November 4.\(^{15}\) The bells pealed out “O Come All Ye Faithful” at the service.\(^{16}\) The Rev. W. A. C. Mueller, the minister at St. Matthew’s Church, led the service, thanking the Bell and Clock Society for their tireless efforts:

> our church was until now without bells, although it was the original idea of...the builders of the church to have bells and a clock. We are now indebted to energetic and indefatigable Bell and Clock Society...for their work that has been brought to completion.\(^{17}\)

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\(^{15}\) Mr. H. Nutting raised and installed the bells the day before the dedication service. “The Gift of the Bells,” *The News and Courier*, November 4, 1901.

\(^{16}\) In this use, peal means to sound out or to ring.

The Annual Congressional Meeting of the church on January 5, 1902 recognized the women of the Bell and Clock Society for their hard work. The council members expressed their enthusiasm over the new bells:

Our steeple now contains a “Glockenspiel” of ten bells and a beautiful clock…An accomplishment of this magnitude can only be rewarded from above.

The minutes of this meeting also revealed that the new bells and clock cost the church $7,000.00, a hefty sum in the early twentieth century.¹⁸

To properly manage and maintain the bells, the St. Matthew’s Church Council resolved to form a committee of “three elected members to supervise the bells and clock of the steeple.” Mr. E. H. Jahnz, the business-manager for the Bell and Clock Society, was elected chairman of the committee. His responsibilities included establishing funeral ringing fees as well as hiring employees to wind the clock and ring the bell. Mr. Henry Ruus was the first bell ringer.¹⁹

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¹⁸ A glockenspiel is a percussion instrument with tuned keys arranged in the same fashion as a piano or keyboard. St. Matthew’s, trans., “Annual Congressional Meeting, January 5, 1902,” St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes.
STEEPLE BELLS TOLL OWN DEATH KNELL: THE FIRE OF 1965

1965 started off like any other year. St. Matthew’s members and city citizens alike listened to the bells chime the hours and ring for worship on Sundays. These familiar patterns collapsed on the night of January 13. Fire broke out at the church just before 7 p.m. Firemen battled the blaze but struggled to contain it as their equipment could not reach the highest points of the fire.\textsuperscript{20} The crowd watching the blaze feared that the steeple was going to fall. One spectator even said that he “had seen a four inch crack in the masonry wall near the clock” while other spectators had seen nothing.

Flames raged throughout the building. At 8:10 p.m. the bells “rang out twice, two separate, distinct and clear peals” as if in the “throws of final agony [sic].” Moments

later, a single clang rang out from one bell, the last note they would ring that night. The 
sounds were eerie and foreboding, as if they were predicting the steeple’s imminent 
collapse. At 10:15 p.m., the bells and steeple fell into a “brilliant funeral pyre,” 
disintegrating into King Street. Fire Chief Fred C. Stokes summed up the feelings of 
shocked Charlestonians:

…this is a tragic loss to our city…It was a magnificent structure 
admired by young and old for generations. The steeple’s 
disappearance from our skyline certainly takes away from the 
uniqueness and antiquity of our skyline.

The Rev. A. James Laughlin, Jr. and the Church Council soon decided to rebuild the 
church. Rev. Laughlin stated, “We will rebuild. We don’t know just when, but we will 
rebuild.”

MOVING FORWARD

The Rev. Laughlin and the St. Matthew’s Church Council stayed true to their 
word and rebuilding efforts began soon after the fire. A new steel frame for the sanctuary 
roof was raised by October 1965. By March 1966, the steeple was in the final stages of 
rebuilding.

Following the fire of 1965, the church sent its ten bells to the I. T. Verdin 
Company in Cincinnati, Ohio for refurbishment. They returned to Charleston together

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Topples Spire, Sweeps Sanctuary,” Charleston Evening Post, January 14, 1965 & Stewart R. King, 
22 John All, “Heights, Bells’ Weight: Church Fire Posed Unusual Hazards,” Charleston Evening Post, 
January 14, 1965 & Aaron G. Clark, “We Will Rebuild: Church Council Makes Decision,” The News and 
with three new bronze bells. On March 24, 1966, the thirteen bells returned home to the belfry in the St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church steeple. The workman reinstalling the bells even “sounded a short chime” from them, much to the delight of the spectators watching the bells ascend the steeple.\(^{23}\) A player roll system was also installed next to the organ.

The player-roll system, considered antiquated at the time, involved the use of punched paper rolls, each roll for a specific hymn. When the organist played the keys on the keyboard, a relay panel converted signals which moved pistons. These pistons powered the bell clappers, which would strike the bell when a key was pressed. The punches on the paper roll determined which of the thirteen bells chimed.\(^{24}\)

Rebuilding the steeple proceeded with the installation of three sections, beginning on March 25, 1966. The first section, weighing 17 tons, was carefully placed over the belfry level. The second section was placed on top of the first section. The third and final section completed the rebuilding process on March 29, 1966.\(^{25}\) The congregation resumed regular services on June 12, 1966.


BEYOND THE FLAMES

The years following the church’s rebuilding were uneventful for St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church. It reclaimed its title as the highest point on the Charleston skyline. The bells continued to ring for religious occasions as well as chime the hours during the day. Though Hurricane Hugo did cause some damage to the sanctuary, the steeple remained relatively intact.
The bells continued to play hymns through the church organ. Hymns were transcribed onto player rolls which could then be chimed using the bells. Some of the general hymns included “The Church’s One Foundation” and “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” Unfortunately, the system that used these player rolls to chime the bells failed in 2001. In 2003, a key part, called the relay panel, was replaced, and the player roll system was reactivated.

In 2008, the Christoph Paccard Bellfoundry from Annecy, France, refitted St. Matthew’s bells. The largest bell, weighing 3,500 pounds, was reset to swing. According to Mr. Christoph, “A swinging bell throws its voice.” Now, the bell’s ringing would also be visible across Marion Square for passersby to view. The Rev. James Blalock, the rector at St. Matthew’s, believed that the new setting would “add another dimension” to marking celebrations and the hours with ringing. The bell’s refurbishment was the first phase of a three-year renovation project for St. Matthew’s.

The installation of these bells at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church reflected interest in establishing the church’s civic presence. While St. Matthew’s bells are not change-ringing bells, they are capable of ringing recognizable tunes and melodies. St. Matthew’s bells represent the first steps towards renewing the prominence that bells once had in Charleston prior to 1862.

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26 “List of Automatic Player Rolls For Steeple Bells,” 1968, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church Archives.
28 The steel supports of the bell frame was replaced by Brush Construction. Jill Coley, “Towering Task: Bells Plucked from Lutheran church on their way to get new strikers, voice,” The Post and Courier, July 2, 2008.
CHAPTER V: CELEBRATING LIFE IN THE FACE OF DEATH: GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Grace Church hung bells in the style necessary for change ringing in 1999. Unlike St. Michael’s and the Cathedral, Grace Church built a change-ringing tower designed separately from the main church structure. The public could now view the
tower band pull on the ropes and see the swinging bells at the same time.¹ Grace’s efforts
marked a new development in the art of change ringing in Charleston. The separate
glass-framed structure is representative of a likely new direction for churches whose
towers limit the number of bells.

**BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP**

Built 1846-1848, architect Edward Brickell White designed Grace Church.² Early
church vestry minutes described the construction process. One meeting in particular, on
March 1, 1847, discussed the vestry’s anxiety regarding a tower for the church. This
same meeting also provided the first mention of a bell at Grace:

Resolved that the building committee communicate with the
Council and lay the plans of the Church as adopted by the Vestry,
before them, and inform them of their anxiety to erect the Spire,
and inquire what and they will give; the Vestry allowing them to
place a Bell upon it and give the control of it to Council.³

If there was going to be a bell at Grace, the Vestry argued it should dictate its use, not the
Charleston City Council. This reluctance demonstrated the changing role of bells during
the nineteenth century.

Discussion on the spire continued at the May 5, 1847 vestry meeting. The vestry
repeated its concerns regarding City Council’s desires to control use of the tower. If the

¹ The St. Michael’s Church bells are also visible to the public through cameras mounted in the belfry. The
image is transmitted to a television monitor in the narthex. The bell images are only transmitted when the
bells are in use for service ringing or for special occasions such as the opening for the Spoleto Arts Festival
or Carolina Day.
² E.B. White also designed the French Huguenot Church, located on Church Street.
³ “Meeting of the Vestry, March 1, 1847,” *Vestry Meeting Minutes, 1846-1876*, Grace Church Records,
South Carolina Historical Society.
builders erected a steeple, did that mean that, regardless of their reservations, City Council could obtain control? There was a solution. A plan was laid “for the building of Grace Church without the Spire but with a foundation for a Spire.”\(^4\) The vestry minutes also called for a Mr. Brown to erect the tower.\(^5\) Following the early 1847 vestry meetings, it was likely that construction plans commenced on schedule, with the laying of the cornerstone on July 7, 1847.

Discussion of the bells ended after these early 1847 vestry meetings until 1848. Grace Church vestry was not willing to relinquish control to the Charleston City Council. However, the City Council refused to take no for an answer. On January 3, 1848, Mr. Rhett of the Grace Episcopal Church Building Committee was charged with being the liaison between the church and the City Council. The issue at hand was placing a fire bell in the Grace Church tower. If the vestry was going to agree to this proposal, they expected the City Council to agree to stipulations of their own:

\[
\text{the City Council will pay to this Vestry a sum not less than One Thousand five hundred dollars and agree to keep the Spire in repair as long as the bell shall remain there.}\]

\(^6\)

The responsibility was to be laid in the hands of the City Council with a few reservations. City Council and the Grace vestry got what they wanted, and Grace Church did not have to relinquish full control.

The City Council responded to Mr. Rhett and the vestry’s stipulations with conditions of their own. The vestry convened a second special meeting on January 29, 1848.

\(^4\) “Meeting of the Vestry, May 5, 1847,” Grace Church Records.
\(^5\) Mr. Brown is only mentioned in the vestry minutes.
\(^6\) “Special Meeting of the Vestry, January 3, 1848,” Grace Church Records.
1848 to answer and address them. Specific conditions or an agreement were not listed. However, it was likely that the City Council was unwilling to pay the vestry. They felt that the Grace Church vestry should hold responsibility for the general upkeep, not the City Council. As a result, the Vestry promptly declined the city’s offer, refusing to place the fire bell in their tower.\(^7\)

The struggle over the fire bell unfolded like a game of tug of war. Churches exercised more control over their bells. This was a break from their political and civic functions commonly seen and heard during the eighteenth century. Grace Episcopal Church did not want to cede control of their church to the city. They believed that they should function as a separate institution, free to make their own decisions.

The City Council continued to fight the decision made by the Grace Church vestry. In a special meeting of the vestry held on February 16, 1848, a communication from the City Council was read to the vestry. The City Council essentially asked what it would take for the vestry to consent to hanging the fire bell. The vestry declined - yet again – City Council’s proposition.\(^8\) There was no further mention of bells at Grace Church for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

**BRINGING UP THE BELL**

Bells were not discussed again at Grace Episcopal Church for almost one hundred and forty years. Adding a bell to the Grace Church tower, according to Dan Beaman,\(^7\)

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7 "Special Meeting of the Vestry, January 29, 1848,” Grace Church Records.
8 "Special Meeting of the Vestry, February 16, 1848" & “Special Meeting of the Vestry, February 17, 1848,” Grace Church Records.
typically entered the vestry meeting discussion in tandem with the arrival of a new minister.9 The movement to place a bell in the tower arose again at a vestry retreat in the late 1970s. The Grace Church vestry discussed twelve goals they wanted to achieve for the church, ranging in topic from the budget to church services. A thirteenth goal was placing a bell in the church tower.10

On November 20, 1984, a Dr. Jervey reported to the vestry that two brothers Mr. Thomas Thornhill and Mr. Van Noy Thornhill had offered a gift of $10,000 towards the installation of bells in the church steeple in honor of their parents. Vestry members agreed that bells would be “a fine addition” to the church. However, there were concerns regarding the stability of the steeple to handle the weight of bells. Mr. Beaman and another member thought that the steeple would be able to handle electronic struck bells.

The Thornhill gift would not fund the cost for entire set of bells. In fact, the amount would likely only cover the cost of “one good bell.” Additional funds for extra bells would need to come from either donations or memorial gifts. Bell installation commenced the following year. One bell was purchased with the Thornhills’ generous donation.11 Wiring for the bell was installed in August. On December 17th, the bell installation’s date was announced for December 19th at 8:00 a.m.12

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9 According to Dan Beaman, there was bell discussion in the 1940s; however, no primary source materials back up the statement. Dan Beaman, interview by author, Charleston, SC, December 12, 2012.
11 Additional funds came from the undesignated funds account and memorial gifts.
On December 19, one bell was installed in the Grace Church steeple (Fig. 5.2). The new bell, cast by the Paccard Bell Foundry in Annecy-le-Vieux, France, weighed 1,983 pounds and was cast in bronze and tin.\textsuperscript{13} The new bell rang the hours and for worship services, mirroring the original purpose of church bells in Charleston since the eighteenth century. The new bell at the church, following the example of other area bell towers, was mechanized, controlled from a console next to the organ.

Figure 5.2: Installation of the Thornhill Bell at Grace Episcopal Church, December 19, 1985 (Photo by Wade Spees, Charleston Evening Post)\textsuperscript{14}

HURRICANE HUGO & THE COLUMBARIUM

Four years after the Thornhill bell installation, Hurricane Hugo hit Charleston. No building was spared. Like most churches, Grace too suffered extensive damage. Architect Dan Beaman of Cummings and McCrady, Inc. got involved with the project.

His contributions to repairing Grace would include construction of a tower that would include a ring of bells.  

Various ideas were considered regarding new bells at Grace Church. One idea was including the new bells in the steeple. However, there was no space for a ringing band. The idea of building a platform was quickly suggested as a solution. Concerns regarding the weight as well as ease of access quashed the platform idea.  

As Grace tried to find a way to hang a new set of bells, they were also dealing with another issue. Grace had long dealt with the fact that their property did not have the space for a graveyard. They soon thought of building a separate structure that would function as the official church cemetery. The columbarium was expected to house the cremated remains of church parishioners in individual niches. What would a place like this offer to Grace Church? By itself, the columbarium did not offer much, but it did provide the possible location for a set of change-ringing bells.  

Mr. Beaman was the designer for the project. He drew influence for the forty-foot- tall reinforced concrete tower from two English cathedrals: Lincoln Cathedral and Coventry Cathedral. The large grand entrance to Lincoln Cathedral provided the inspiration for the central window of the columbarium. The etched glass panes of the central window drew their designs from Coventry Cathedral. The columbarium also reflected the Gothic Revival style of Grace Church itself. The columbarium would not

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15 See Chapter II for more information about Mr. Beaman’s involvement with St. Michael’s Church after Hurricane Hugo.  
17 Robert Behre, “Grace Episcopal’s bell tower also serves as columbarium,” The Post and Courier, November 1, 1999.
compete with the tower of Grace Church because it is designed to be set back from the street and it is hidden by the nearby parish hall.

The columbarium was divided accordingly for ringing. The bells would be located in the attic while ringers pulling on ropes would ring from the ground floor (Fig. 5.3). People standing in Grace’s Garden of Remembrance would be able to view the full ringing process through the large central glass window.

Figure 5.3: Building Section of the Columbarium, Showing the Placement of the Bells (Image courtesy of Dan Beaman, Cummings & McCrady, Inc. Architects)
The eight bells purchased for the new bell tower were not specifically cast for Grace Church. Like the Cathedral, they were recycled from another church. The Church of Mary Magdalene in Enfield, England could no longer house its eight bells since they began negatively affecting the integrity of the church tower. As a result, the church decided to remove and destroy them. Mr. Beaman heard of their predicament and acquired the bells for Grace Church. The John Warner & Sons Bell Foundry cast the eight bells from the Church of Mary Magdalene in 1883 and were refurbished by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry of England.18

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### Table 5.1: Bells of Grace Episcopal Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELL NO.</th>
<th>CAST BY</th>
<th>CAST DATE</th>
<th>WEIGHT (LBS)</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
<th>INSCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treble</td>
<td>Whitechapel Bellfoundry</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>\textit{Sing to the Lord a new song. SOLI DEO GLORIA}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Whitechapel Bellfoundry</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>\textit{O praise God in the congregation of the faithful. Sarah Lucas Flint}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
<td>\textit{O praise God in His holiness; Praise Him in the firmament of His power.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>\textit{Praise Him in His noble acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>\textit{Praise Him in the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him in on the lute and harp.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>B-flat</td>
<td>\textit{Praise Him in the cymbals and dances; Praise Him upon the strings and pipe}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>A-flat</td>
<td>\textit{Praise Him upon the well tuned cymbals; Praise Him upon the loud cymbals.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1139</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>\textit{Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1453</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>\textit{Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>John Warner &amp; Sons</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
<td>\textit{As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{19}\) This information was obtained using physical examination by the author and from “The Tower Bells,” http://www.gracechurchcharleston.org/content.cfm?id=2064 (accessed March 5, 2013).
The old Church of Mary Magdalene bells arrived in Charleston in the first quarter of 1998. Trevor Bailey of Whitechapel assisted the project by installing the bells and their ringing mechanisms. When two lighter bells, cast by Whitechapel in 1999, arrived, the ring of ten bells was complete (Table 5.1 and Figs. 5.5 & 5.6). They were promptly hung in the new tower and Grace Episcopal then became the second change ringing tower on the Charleston peninsula.

The bells of Grace Episcopal Church follow the example first set by St. Michael’s Church in 1993. However, its separate bell tower, designed by Dan Beaman, is a new innovation in Charleston. With its tower, Grace Episcopal Church continues the new tradition of change ringing in Charleston while offering a new approach to make the practice accessible to churches without a tower.

![Image of bells](image.jpg)

Figure 5.5: Six of the Ten Bells Hanging in the Columbarium/Bell Tower (Photo by author)

20 There was a photograph taken of Mr. Bailey installing bell wheels at Grace Episcopal Church. Wade Spees, “Bringing in the bells,” The Post and Courier, April 17, 1998.
Figure 5.6: Left-The Treble and '2' Bells, Right- The '3' and '4' Bells (Photos taken by author)
Figure 5.7: The Grace Episcopal Church Columbarium/Bell Tower (Photo by author)
CONCLUSION

Charleston is eager to assume that everything that happens there is deeply rooted in historical precedence. The bell history of this city is extensive, dating to the installation of St. Michael’s Church’s bells in 1764. However, change ringing has only become imbedded in its history within the last twenty-five years, with Hurricane Hugo marking a new era of interest.

The myth surrounding the change-ringing tradition seized on two eighteenth-century newspaper reports. In 1783, *The South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser* reported that upon the anniversary of the British evacuation of Charleston, the St. Michael’s bells pealed out in celebration. When George Washington visited the city in 1791, the bells welcomed his arrival, ringing as he made his trek to the place of residence for his stay in Charleston. Due to these two reports, the modern definition for peal was intertwined with the eighteenth-century definition. The word peal, however, did not mean a performance of 5,040 changes during this time. It meant the act of sounding out instead.

Visitors and residents have romanticized the history to make change ringing appear more attractive and historic, weaving it into the city’s identity as a historic destination. Change ringing did not exist as it is known today until after Hurricane Hugo. The restoration work following the aftermath of the storm, led by Dan Beaman of Cummings & McCrady, Inc., brought the English art to St. Michael’s Church and to Charleston. It was not intentional, merely added on a whim due to Mr. Beaman’s prior interest. As a result, St. Michael’s Church became the leader for the change-ringing
tradition. It provided the example for other churches to follow, such as the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul and Grace Episcopal Church.

The bell history at the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul is not as consistent as that of St. Michael’s. Its role, however, is not diminished. The Cathedral brought recycled bells into the tradition, making it more financially possible for congregations to add change-ringing bells to their towers. The costs involved were not as steep as those for a new set.

Grace Church’s role as part of the era of significance for change ringing is connected to St. Michael’s Church through one individual: Dan Beaman. He, along with the rest of the vestry, made bells one of their goals for the church. Mr. Beaman designed a separate change-ringing tower, which also served as a columbarium for Grace. The design was innovative and is a feat yet to be matched in Charleston. Churches with insufficient towers, or no towers, could feasibly include change-ringing bells if a separate tower was constructed. Like the Cathedral, it installed recycled bells in its tower.

While the bells at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church are not change-ringing bells, they reflect interest in establishing civic presence. St. Matthew’s used its bells as clock bells, striking the quarter hours. These bells are set apart from the other case study churches in that they are capable of ringing recognizable tunes and melodies. St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church represents the first step in the first half of the twentieth century towards renewing the prominence that bells had in Charleston prior to 1862.

Change ringing in Charleston is a recent invention of tradition, rather than a custom with historical roots. It began with the St. Michael’s Church repairs in the
aftermath of Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and continued with Grace Episcopal Church in 1999 and the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul in 2001. As a result, Charleston promotes the tradition through the biennial event Ring Around Charleston. Charleston, South Carolina is now a leading change-ringing city in North America.
APPENDIX A: ST. MICHAEL’S CHURCH BELLS
Figure A.1: The Treble Bell
Figure A.2: The '2' Bell
Figure A.3: The '3' Bell
Figure A.4: The '4' Bell
Figure A.5: The 'S' Bell
Figure A.6: The '6' Bell
Figure A.7: The '7' Bell
Figure A.8: The Tenor Bell
APPENDIX B: CATHEDRAL OF ST. LUKE AND ST. PAUL BELLS
Figure B.1: The Treble Bell
Figure B.2: The '2' Bell
Figure B.3: The '3' Bell
Figure B.4: The '4' Bell
Figure B.5: The '5' Bell
Figure B.6: The '6' Bell
Figure B.7: The '7' Bell
Figure B.8: The Tenor Bell
APPENDIX C: GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH BELLS
Figure C.1: The Treble Bell
Figure C.2: The '2' Bell
Figure C.3: The '3' Bell
Figure C.4: The '4' Bell
Figure C.5: The 'S' Bell
Figure C.6: The '6' Bell
Figure C.7: The '7' Bell
Figure C.8: The '8' Bell
Figure C.9: The '9' Bell
Figure C.10: The Tenor Bell
APPENDIX D: BELL INSTALLATION AND CHANGE RINGING GLOSSARY
### BELL INSTALLATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bearing</td>
<td>These are fitted to the gudgeons and rest in housings on the bellframe either side of the bell, allowing it to swing. They may be plain brass, or ball or roller automotive-style bearings. The latter two are often self-aligning which will accommodate some frame movement or misalignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast</td>
<td>The process of pouring molten bell metal into a mold to produce a bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clapper</td>
<td>The metal rod which strikes the soundbow of the bell to make the sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>supports the weight of the bells; made of wood, iron or steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garter Hole</td>
<td>The hole that the rope passes through on the rim of the wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudgeon</td>
<td>The shaft that runs from the headstock to bearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headstock</td>
<td>attached to the bell and the wheel; transmits the torque from the wheel to the bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulley</td>
<td>Smaller, grooved wheels that help guide the rope, usually two per rope and located in a box below the bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rope</td>
<td>The controlling mechanism necessary to ring the bell, passes through the garter hole on the wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recast</td>
<td>Usually refers to replacing an existing bell with a new one, using the old bell metal. A new mold is made (not from the old) and the new bells are often cast as part of a batch. Inscriptions may be reproduced on the new bell and exceptionally casts may be made of parts of an old bell’s inscription/decoration and transferred to the new bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runner Board</td>
<td>The board with stops attached that supports and limits the slider’s travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>The tufted handgrip on the rope, used to pull at handstroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slider</td>
<td>slides across a track between two end stops on the lower part of the frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Bow</td>
<td>the thick edge of the mouth of the bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>A wooden bar attached to the headstock and pointing away from the bell. When the bell is set, the stay rests against the slider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tail end</td>
<td>The end of the rope, usually doubled back on itself, used to pull at backstroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheel</td>
<td>A bell hung for full-circle ringing is mounted on a headstock which is turned by a wheel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHANGE RINGING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backstroke</th>
<th>The part of a bell’s cycle of movements that is started by the ringer pulling on the tail end</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Ringing all the bells once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Chime      | v. to swing a bell through a small arc to make the clapper strike the bell.  
             | n. a group of bells hung for chiming rather than full-circle ringing                      |
| Cover      | The tenor bells rings at the back of every change                                           |
| Full-Circle Ringing | Bells hung for change ringing are swung, by the ringer using the rope, from mouth up to mouth up through a full circle |
| Handstroke | The part of a bell’s cycle of movements that is started by pulling on the sally            |
| Major      | A method on eight bells, with each bell making changes                                      |
| Method     | A agreed (and usually named) sequence of changes                                           |
| Minor      | A method on six bells, with each bell making changes                                       |
| Peal       | Consists of a minimum of 5,040 true changes, usually takes three hours                     |
| Quarter Peal | Consists of 1,260 true changes, usually takes about three quarters of an hour             |
| Set        | To let the bell come to rest in an up position, with the stay resting against the slider  |
| Tenor      | The bell with the lowest note in the ring, usually the heaviest bell                        |
| Treble     | The bell with the lightest note in the ring, usually the lightest bell                      |
| Triples    | Method that involves seven bells making changes while the eighth bell acts as the metronome |

OTHER TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carillon</th>
<th>A musical instrument made up of bells that are arranged in a “chromatic sequence, so tuned as to produce concordant harmony when many bells are sounded together”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glockenspiel</td>
<td>The German term for carillon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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