

THE BELLS OF MARIEMONT

The Mary M. Emery Memorial Carillon, an instrument of 49 bells, was the gift of Miss Isabella F. Hopkins in memory of her sister who founded the Village of Mariemont.

The original 23 bells and the tower were dedicated in 1929 to the youth of the Village. These heavy bells, at the lower end of the musical scale, came from the foundry of Gillett & Johnston in Croydon, England. In 1969 an additional 26 bells were added to create a full concert instrument of 49 bells in a chromatic arrangement spanning just over four octaves. These bells were cast by Petit & Fritsen in Aarle-Rixtel, Holland and installed by The Verdin Company of Cincinnati. The largest bell in the combined group weighs nearly 4,800 pounds and the lightest is 19 pounds. Bell composition is approximately 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin, an alloy that has been known as "bell bronze" for hundreds of years.

In 2008, the carillon was renovated with a new playing keyboard, new sealed ball bearing playing action and new cast iron ball clappers throughout. There is now also a *practice keyboard*, duplicating the dimensions and construction of the new playing keyboard, but sounding accurately-tuned metal sound bars rather than the bells, permitting the carillonners to practice privately. These improvements were made by Meeks, Watson & Company, Bell Founders and Carillon Builders, of Georgetown, Ohio.

No electrical assistance or amplification of any kind is used during regular concerts. The bells compose a true carillon that is completely touch responsive to give the carillonner full capability for every musical expression from a gentle whisper to a thundering fortissimo. He plays at a keyboard located in a small room below the bells. Each key is a strong wooden lever connected to its bell clapper above by a wire linkage and 'bellcrank' transmission action. The bells are rigidly mounted on the steel framework and the clappers are pulled against the inner bell surface to create the musical tones. *Return springs* are used behind the clappers of the smaller bells to return the keys to the *up* position after striking, while for the larger bells, *counter springs (helpers)* are used to lighten the touch.

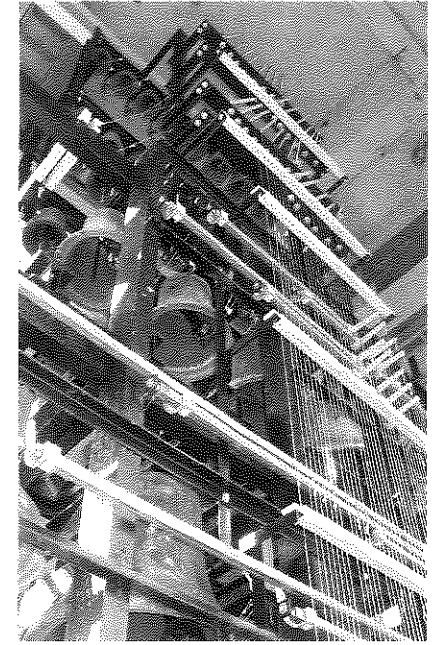
There are 186 such true carillons on the entire North American continent. (Much of what is heard from towers today as "bell music" is the result of amplified recordings or electronic tone generation, neither of which qualify as genuine carillons.) The Emery instrument is one of the very few that is housed in a free-standing tower surrounded by a park area. Ideal listening conditions are found in the park at a distance of three to five hundred feet from the tower base.

Regular recitals are given by the carillonners each Sunday throughout the year and on principal holidays. Fourteen of the 49 bells are provided with external electric strikers operated from a computer which automatically plays a vesper hymn at 9 PM each evening. Four bells are automatically struck with externally-mounted gravity hammers to play the Westminster Chime melody at 8:00 A.M., 12:00 noon, and 6:00 P.M. every day throughout the year.

The administration and maintenance of the bell tower is carried on by the Thomas J. Emery Memorial.



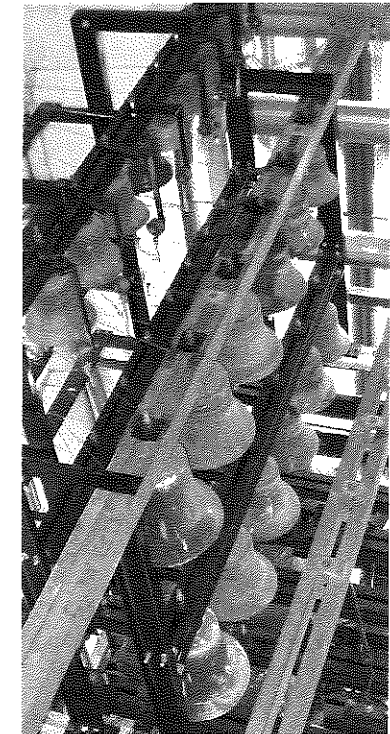
New transmission bar action (bells 1-21)



Showing new radial action at top (22-49)



The 2008 playing keyboard with bench drawn away, showing pedals. The keys are struck (actually a light, quick pressure) with closed hands (not a tight fist) in playing; pedals are depressed with toes only; pedals are provided for the largest 25 bells, and are coupled to the manual keys. Adjusters are provided (on the pull rods, shown above the music rack) to allow adjustment of connections to compensate for temperature changes.



New arrangement for bells 22-49