

Stillwater Christian Church Bell

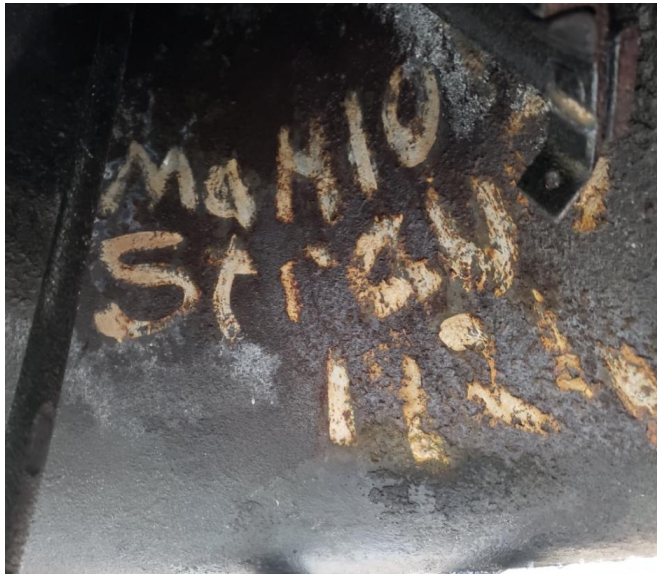
By Ralph Tompkins

For years in the little borough of Stillwater, PA, many remember the sweet sounds of the church bell pealing its 'Good Morning' on many a Sunday morn. But as time drew on, the sweet sounds of the bell were silenced due to aging and decay.

I am currently 63 years of age and only know the story by word-of-mouth. The story is as follows: the church bell was purchased from the C. S. Bell Co.* out of Ohio in 1924. The company created many types of bells, farmer's bells, school bells and church bells. The subject of our story was cast in 1921 and transported (I assume by train) to Stillwater, PA. Upon arrival, it was loaded onto a horse driven wagon (or truck) and moved to the location of the church building at 42 Wesley St., Stillwater, PA.



I am told the gentlemen who hoisted the bell to the belfry, by chains and pulleys, were Jay McMichael and Mahlon Strauch. Mahlon had painted his name and the date inside the bell. Mahlon was a local bread delivery man. Interestingly, he never attended Stillwater Christian Church!



"Mahlon Strauch 1924"



Mahlon Strauch - from The News from Back Home in Benton, PA archives

The church bell rang out for many years in that little church building. Wayne Bruce McMichael Sr., son of Jay McMichael, rang the bell as a child. Yet, as with many things, the bell rope and supports suffered the effects of time and the peeling ceased in 2013 for fear of accidental breakage.

When the church relocated to a new building in 2015, it was decided to move the bell to its new home. Using a modern forklift, the bell was carefully removed from the belfry and placed in a safe place until it could be refreshed, and a new housing could be constructed for it.

The bell underwent a renovation, and a new housing was fashioned to display it.

An interesting note: when the bell was moved to its new location, it was discovered that a pigeon had been using the bell in the old building for a refuge. When the bell was relocated, the pigeon relocated as well. We called her 'Belle' and fed her for many months before she found a mate and moved on.



Belle

Construction of a new pedestal was begun in October of 2019. (See photos at the end of article.) The bell was carefully placed on the pedestal and fastened securely. An enclosure was erected around the pedestal and a roof added to protect the bell from the elements. Belle was on hand to oversee the construction.



In 2019, Wayne Bruce McMical Sr., then 86 years old, was asked to ring the bell for the dedication ceremony. Accompanying him were his wife, Lois (Morgan) McMical, his son Wayne Bruce McMical II and grandson Wayne Bruce McMical III. The entire church turned out for this historic event.

Three Generations - Bruce McMical II, Wayne McMical III and Wayne McMical Sr. 2019

Several years later, in 2021, Mahlon's great-nephew, Marc Strauch, visited the

bell and was moved to tears when he saw his great uncle's name painted inside the bell. The sweet sounds reverberate once again over the town of Stillwater on Sunday mornings!

*C. S. Bell Co. started in 1858 in Hillsboro, Ohio by Charles Singleton Bell. Details can be found at <http://www.towerbells.org/HillsboroFoundry.html>



Present Day

A history of Stillwater Christian Church and the bell can be found at <https://sc.churchcenter.com/pages/history>



Marc Strauch and his niece Dena Snyder visiting the bell in 2021