

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S: Some Trivia

- adapted from an article by Warren Harbeck (2006)



Each weekend in Cochrane from St. Mary's-on-the-south-hill we hear the pealing of bells harkening Christ's flock "to come and join the feast." The three bells featured in the bell tower of our new Parish Centre have a history. Here are some trivia about the bells:

- The **top bell is bronze**, weighs approximately **145 lbs**, measures **18 inches across** the bottom, and is **tuned to G**. It was **cast in France about 1903** by the Robert & Jean Boller foundry.
- The **middle bell**, also bronze, weighs **220 lbs**, measures **21 inches across** the bottom, and is **tuned to E**. It was **cast in France about 1903** by the Georges & Fancisque Paccad foundry.
- Our parish acquired the top and middle bells about 20 years ago and kept them in storage until the construction of the new St. Mary's, which opened in March 2007.
- The **bottom bell** is a newcomer to our parish. It is bronze, weighs **400 lbs**, measures **26 inches across** the bottom, and is **tuned to C**. The McShane foundry of **Baltimore, Maryland cast it in 1905**.
- While some of **the historical details** of the first two bells are unclear, the same cannot be said about **the bottom bell**. It was originally installed in **St. Peter's and St. Paul's RC Church in Ladywood, Manitoba**. The wooden church was torn down and rebuilt with brick in 1936, where the bell continued in service till the church was decommissioned a few years ago and the property, including the bell, put up for sale. We are the fortunate buyers of this bell.



A final note about **the bell tower itself**. It rises over **75 feet from base to top of spire**, **one of the highest freestanding bell towers in Alberta**. The three bells are rung with ropes from the Gathering Area—an activity particularly favored by children with some help from their strong dads—or by a group of eager altar servers before Mass.