
Ringers' Roundtable

*The Newsletter of
the Manitoba Guild of English
Handbell Ringers
Volume 26 • Issue 5
April 2022*

In the last issue, Volume 26, Issue 4 in March 2022, the history of handbells and chimes in Manitoba since the 1960's was printed and readers were asked to submit any additions, deletions and/or corrections to the editor. Upon further research by the editor are the following with specific items indicated in **bold print**.

HANDBELL GROUPS IN WINNIPEG CHURCHES

AUGUSTINE UNITED: The two octave set of Schulmerich Handbells was sold to St. Andrew's River Heights United Church in **1999**.

ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN: A **three octave** 50 year old set of Whitechapel Handbells was passed down to the minister's wife. Directors: Stewart Thomson and Margaret MacIver. This set was stolen by vandals and once recovered were unable to be repaired.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN: Larry Weckwerth used a **2 octave set of Schulmerich Handbells** for several years. Unaware if they are being used now.

FORT GARRY UNITED CHURCH: A 3 octave Schulmerich set was bought from Louise Enns at Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church. **Upon the death of Olga Friesen, her family had Morna-June Morrow service the bells and sold the fourth octave to Fort Garry United Church.** Current director is Helen Bergen.

KILDONAN UNITED CHURCH: Inherited the **two octave set** of Whitechapel Handbells from the estate of Vince Leah.

HANDBELL GROUPS IN RURAL MANITOBA CHURCHES

GIMLI LUTHERAN: **Since the passing of director Val Maier in 2021 and with the ongoing covid restrictions, the handbells are not currently being used.**

SCHOOL GROUPS IN WINNIPEG SCHOOLS

A great deal more information has been discovered with regard to handbells in Winnipeg School Division. What follows is an entirely new description although locations may have changed.

WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION: The Division has ten sets of two and three octave Schulmerich Handbells. The first set was purchased by Tec Voc High School in the spring of 1964 and used at the school by Fred A. Merrett assisted by Audrey Jones. Tec Voc Ringers were featured performers at two Canadian Music Educators' Association Conventions in Regina (1969) and Winnipeg (1981). They appeared with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Christmas Fantasy Programs and performed on Final Concerts of the Winnipeg Music Festival. In 1973, upon Fred's moving to Edmonton, Audrey assumed the directorship. The Tec Voc Ringers gave concerts in western Canada and the northern United States. Over the years they produced four LP recordings. Upon her retirement Audrey purchased the bells for use with three groups, McClure United Church Handbell Choir (formed November 1985), the McClure Place Ringers and the Tec Voc Alumni formed in February 1986.

Sargent Park School: Three octaves used by John Nelson, Jr. and Pat Claeys.

Laura Secord School: Three octaves used by Larry Weckwerth and Krista Janzen.

Montrose School: Three octaves used by Trish Penner, Crystal Hiebert, Joan Proudfoot, Jana Zens.

Robert H. Smith School: The school had two 2 octave sets used by Betty Friesen, Joyce Penner and Karen Mitchell.

Faraday School: Three octaves were used by Helen LaRue, Pat Claeys and another teacher.

Brock-Corydon School: A three octave set was used by Trish Penner, then fell silent for many years. In 2015 they were serviced and moved over to Grosvenor School where Joan Clark started using them.

Grosvenor School: A three octave set was moved from Brock-Corydon to Grosvenor in 2015 and Joan Clark started using them.

John M King School: A three octave set was used by Joan Franzen, Kim Lawrence and Lori Bodner.

Clifton School: Three octave set obtained through a \$10,000 CARRAS grant was used by Lori Bodner, Later, upon its dissolution, the University Women's Club purchased the 3rd octave of Schulmerich MelodyChimes for the school.

Earl Grey School: Rhona Sawatsky used bells here.

Kent Road School: A set of handbells was used by Barbara Pearce. Since her death in July 2015, it is unknown where this set of bells is being used.

Fort Rouge School: Lori Bodner directs handbells here.

Other schools in Winnipeg School Division that have used handbells include Isaac Brock, George V, Queenston and Shaughnessy Park Schools.

ST. JAMES-ASSINIBOIA SCHOOL DIVISION: The Division has **two 3 octave sets** of Schulmerich Handbells that have been used at Golden Gate, Lakewood, Lincoln, **Linwood**, Robert Browning and Strathmillan Schools.

***SEVEN OAKS SCHOOL DIVISION: The Division recently received a donation from Kildonan United Church, a two octave set of Whitechapel Handbells, formerly owned in the 1960's by the late Vince Leah. They are being used at Seven Oaks Middle School. (See article later on in this edition.)**

BALMORAL HALL BELLES: A four octave set of Schulmerich Handbells was donated to this exclusive private girls' school by a parent. **Three octave MelodyChimes were later added.** Past directors have included Barb Janz, Phyllis Ilavsky with current director being Dr. Cathy Doerksen. She directs a Grade 4/5 Ensemble and Handbell Ensembles for Middle and Senior School.

WINNIPEG MENNONITE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AT BEDSON AND AGASSIZ DRIVE SCHOOLS:

Wilma Poetker donated a three octave set of Schulmerich Handbells where they were being used alternately by Julie Doerksen and Andrea Goertzen at these two schools. Unknown status now.

WILLIAM AND CATHERINE BOOTH BIBLE COLLEGE, LATER CATHERINE BOOTH BIBLE COLLEGE, AND NOW CALLED BOOTH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE: A three octave set of Schulmerich Handbells was used by Karen Cartmell and later the "Bells of Joy" were directed by Mandy Raynsford. Unknown status now.

SCHOOL GROUPS IN RURAL MANITOBA

CARMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: **Cindee Broeska bought a three octave set of Malmark Handbells from Phyllis Gowan in the spring of 1995.** She used them with her students at Carman Elementary School. Later Melissa Cole became the director. The school also has a set of Suzuki Hand Chimes. The current music teacher is Paul Cwir however the bells are currently in storage.

(* Morna-June Morrow adjudicated Carman School Handbells at the Tempo Festival in April 1999.)

CENTENNIAL SCHOOL IN SELKIRK: Brenda Chorney borrowed some handbells from Morna-June Morrow to use in a Christmas Concert several years ago. The school now has a set of hand chimes.

THOMPSON: Karen Buller (Buhler) used a set of hand chimes at a school in Thompson, Manitoba.

COMMUNITY GROUPS IN WINNIPEG

MCCLURE PLACE RINGERS: With the oldest set of Schulmerich Handbells in Manitoba, Audrey Jones continued with the Tec Voc Alumni Ringers and started two groups at McClure Place in **February 1986**, one of which were residents of the building and the other members of McClure United Church. She continued these groups until 2007.

COMMUNITY GROUPS IN RURAL MANITOBA

NEW HORIZONS GRANT IN BRANDON: Mary and Tom Ferris received a Health and Welfare Government Grant for a **three octave set** of Malmark Handbells for use with the Happy Haven Seniors of Brandon, and now being used by **Central Happy Haven** by Eileen McLachlan.

STONEWALL: Olga Muller Friesen directed the Stonewall Children's Chorus and the Singing Carillons when she was teaching in Stonewall. The Singing Carillons, who not only rang handbells but also sang as they were playing were selected to perform at the Provincial Music Festival Hi-Lites Concert. They were also filmed by the National Film Board for a film on Canadian music and won first place in the Centennial Search for Talent in Manitoba. The Singing Carillons also made a tour of Europe. Upon the death of Olga Friesen, her family had Morna-June Morrow service the bells and sold the three octaves to Agnes Dyck and the fourth octave to Fort Garry United Church. Later Agnes Dyck sold the three octaves to Sheryl Sokolies where she now directs the Henderson Highway Seventh-Day Adventist Handbell Ringers.

CANADIAN FOLKSONGS PUBLISHED

As you may recall, Patsy Andrews-Vert presented a workshop on the ten Canadian folksongs composed for handbells and chimes by Manitoba composer Craig Cassils at the 2018 International Handbell Symposium in Cairns, Australia. The folksongs were well received by symposium delegates.

Our thanks to Patsy to following up with From the Top to get these compositions published.

Check out the link below where you can hear each selection played. Click on the link below to open.

<https://fromthetopmusic.com/product/canadian-folk-songs-ten/>

The Whitechapel Handbells Have Found a New Home

Written by Aaron Klein and

Permission to reprint this article was given by Margaret Leuschen from Kildonan United Church

Mr. Vince Leah, who was a member of Kildonan United Church and an accomplished organist, donated this set of 25 handbells to the Worship Committee in the early 1990's. This set remained quiet for some time. Eventually, a handbell ringer group was formed at Kildonan United Church. We enjoyed the added musical dimension during our worship and reflection time. It was uplifting to witness the teamwork that brought our congregation the experience of bell music.

Mr. Vincent "Vince" Leah (1913 – 1993) was a memorable Manitoban who was born in Winnipeg and lived in the north end throughout his years. He contracted polio at the age of eight. Ralph Brown School and Isaac Newton School were the schools he attended. He spent 63 years as a journalist at the Winnipeg Tribune (50 years) and the Winnipeg Free Press (13 years). Aside from his first few years in journalism, beginning at the age of 16, Vince Leah covered sports and specialized in areas such as British soccer and children's sports. He is credited with coming up with the "Blue Bombers" name. He is known for bringing Little League Baseball to Canada in 1950. He coached hockey and soccer and many other sports. He was a constant advocate for and supporter of community sports. Because of all his contributions to children's sports – through his writing, coaching and organizing – Vince Leah received the Order of Canada in 1980. He was the first recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer in Sport Award given by the Manitoba Sports Federation in 1981. Mr. Leah received numerous other awards and recognitions. Three Winnipeg streets, a Community Centre, and a Park honour his name.

This two-octave-set of handbells are Whitechapel Bells. They are distinguished by the brown leather handles. The cases are not made by Whitechapel; yet they house the bells safely and securely.

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry company began in 1570 in London, England. The company manufactured handbells since the 1740's. Each bell is hand-tuned to exacting standards and matched so, altogether; they make a fine musical instrument. Whitechapel is also famous for its very large bells made for church steeples. The two most famous bells in the world were made at Whitechapel: Big Ben, the largest bell in the Great Clock of Westminster in London, and the Liberty Bell for the United States of America.

In 2022, these 25 handbells were donated to École Seven Oaks Middle School on Salter Street in the Seven Oaks School Division of Winnipeg by Kildonan United Church. Due to declining membership, the Church closed in April 2022. The Congregation is pleased these handbells will be used by youth in the West Kildonan area of Winnipeg. These are fine instruments with a distinguished history and background. With your dedication and good stewardship, you will enable them to enhance the musical enjoyment for many.



Handbell players may enroll in one of two sessions. The Session 4 Handbell camp will be for student handbell ringers who have finished grades 5-12 and adults. The program is designed for those who are at the early to intermediate levels of experience with handbell ringing and will include sessions on technique and care of handbells, sight-reading, and repertoire reading.



Handbells – Grades 5-Adult – Session 4 – July 10-16, 2022

\$600 USD if registered before May 1 or \$615 USD after May 1

Adult musicians will have another opportunity to play **Handbells** during the Adult Community Camps held Session 7. This short and intense session is for ringers ages 21 and up with intermediate through advanced experiences with handbells.

Handbells – Ages 21+ – Session 7 – July 30 – August 2, 2022

\$300 USD if registered before May 1 or \$315 USD after May 1

Register Now

YOU HAVE BEEN IN A BELL GROUP TOO LONG WHEN . . .

- You hear music and start to sway back and forth
- A weave is not something you do with your hair, but with your bells
- You schedule your social life around bell rehearsals
- You retire from your job rather than miss bell rehearsal
- You count measures out loud in your sleep
- You hear the phrase “*ring my bell*” and take it literally
- You point out key changes and dynamics while listening to the radio
- You try to guess the tempo marking of your favourite song
- You hear “B 5” and think it’s bells instead of BINGO
- All your friends are in bell choirs
- People ask about your personal life, and you say, “Oh, you mean the handbell choir?”
- You think the bass bell players are normal
- The congregation worries when they see you without your gloves
- Someone says the word “*key*” and you look for the key signature rather than the way to get into the door
- You remember sharps and flats more easily than your own name
- You walk out of bell rehearsal humming the last piece you played
- You use your kitchen utensils more for “bell” practice than cooking
- You know that English handbell is not one that was made in England
- Your family vacation includes a handbell conference
- You discharge yourself from hospital, so you don’t miss bell rehearsal
- You give a speech on handbells for anyone who will listen
- You think *Phantom of the Opera* sounds better on bells
- The only acceptable excuse for missing rehearsal is your own funeral
- You definitely have been in a bell choir too long when you start making up lists like this



MBGEHR SEEKING A NEW EDITOR FOR THE *RINGERS' ROUNDTABLE* AND MONTHLY UPDATES

The MBGEHR has had only two editors of the *Ringers' Roundtable* over the past 27 years. The first editor was Tracey Wright, later assisted on occasion by Morna-June Morrow and eventually Morna-June became the editor.

Sixteen years ago, Morna-June not only assumed the editor's position but also that of Archivist, where she established the MBGEHR Archives in the Manitoba Government Public Archives. She also assumed the position of Membership Treasurer.

It has become apparent with mounting health issues, Morna-June feels it is time to find a new editor to handle the *Ringers' Roundtable* newsletter and Monthly Updates. Anyone who is interested is kindly asked to contact MBGEHR Chair, Patsy Andrews-Vert at patavert@mynetset.ca

This will be the last issue by your current editor. Many thanks to those who have willingly contributed to the many issues over the past sixteen years.

