

The Bells of Altgeld Hall

*A*ltgeld Hall, which was designated an historic treasure and was added to the National Register of Historic Buildings in 1970, was constructed in 1896-1897 and was first used as the University Library. In 1927, Altgeld Hall became the home of the College of Law. The Mathematics Department, the present unit occupying the building, took up residence there in 1956.

In 1920, the University chime, cast by McShane Bell Foundry, Baltimore, Maryland, was installed in the 132-foot-high Altgeld Tower; the chime was the gift of the classes of 1914 through 1921 and the U.S. School of Military Aeronautics. The small room at the base of the tower that was formerly used for overflow library materials was converted into the chime playing room, housing the playing and practice consoles.

The scale of the fifteen bells in the University of Illinois chime ranges from low D to G, one and one-half octaves, with the exception of low D-sharp and both F-naturals. Because of these exceptions and the limited keyboard range, much of the music currently played must be transposed and/or rearranged for the chime. Since there is no F-natural, music is transposed to keys containing F-sharp, such as the keys of G and D. Out-of-range notes must be lowered or raised an octave or replaced.

Throughout his thirty-seven year career as university chimesmaster, Albert E. Marien promoted the acquisition of additional bells to convert the fifteen bell chime to a forty-eight bell carillon. A carillon is a chromatically matched set of twenty-three or more bells playable from a baton-type keyboard, and a four-octave carillon would be considered a very respectable-sized instrument in the world of playable cast-bell systems. The conversion of the current chime to a forty-eight bell carillon would increase tremendously the musical selections that could be played on the Altgeld Hall bells.

Over the years, a number of individuals and University organizations have shared Mr. Marien's dream of establishing a major carillon in the Altgeld Hall Tower. When Marien retired in 1994, enough unsolicited donations were in University of Illinois Foundation's coffers to fund one bell in recognition of his years of service as university chimesmaster. That bell will be the first of the forty-eight bells in the new carillon. It is the 347-pound F-natural bell included in the chart to the right.

Each bell that is purchased by an individual or a group will be inscribed with the date of the gift and with the name of the donor or group providing funds for the bell. Donation checks should be payable to the University of Illinois Foundation with a notation on the check that it is for the Altgeld Hall Carillon.

MUSICAL NOTE	WEIGHT (LB)	COST \$	WEIGHT (LB)	COST \$	WEIGHT (LB)	COST \$	WEIGHT (LB)	COST \$	WEIGHT (LB)	COST \$
A	33	2,801	57	3,742	208	6,540	1,054	18,962		
A#	31	2,772	55	3,720	193	5,900	844	16,880		
B	29	2,772	53	3,634	171	5,500	760	15,960		
C	29	2,772	49	3,396	148	4,900	645	14,190		
C#			49	3,318	146	4,831	546	12,890	4,641	46,410
D			46	3,188	126	4,530	458	10,750	3,206	35,266
D#			44	3,060	107	4,255	402	9,890	2,654	33,175
E			44	3,037	100	4,188	398	9,392	2,235	29,613
F			43	3,001	98	4,167	347		1,992	27,390
F#			38	2,901	86	4,024	270	7,686	1,550	22,862
G			35	2,847	71	3,873	259	7,400	1,418	22,397
G#			35	2,847	60	3,766	237	6,980	1,109	20,516

Friends, students, and alumni of the University of Illinois are urged to help fund this project. Because of the wide popularity of the bells in the Altgeld Hall Tower and the music they produce, it is expected that the new carillon will be funded, not by several major donors, but instead by a myriad of individuals who appreciate the bells.

Developing the new carillon will be an expensive venture. The University of Illinois Foundation has established a fund to receive monies for the project. All donors contributing \$1,000 or more will have their names included on a bronze plaque to be displayed at the base of the Altgeld Hall Tower. Individuals or groups can also purchase an individual bell or bells. The cost of each bell is listed in the chart above.

For further information about this project, feel free to phone or write Roger Martin, Associate Provost, 215 Swanlund Administration Building, 601 East John Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Phone: (217) 333-4523.



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