



Bethinking of Old Orleans

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REMEMBERING—Mayor Donna Rodden is pictured here (at right) during the re-dedication of the Tower in Mt. Albion Cemetery on July 4, 1976. Others in the photo (L-R) include this

columnist, the late Bernard Lynch, Stephen Hawley, Assemblyman and Harold Breuilly, President of the Historical Monument Corp. and the late Mayor Rodden.

HOLLEY M.E. CHURCH CLOCK AND BELL

During this past month the clock mechanism from the tower of the former Methodist Church in Holley has been on display at the Community Free Library. The first photo included here shows the original location of the clock and two dials on the tower. The second photo shows the actual clock mechanism as it was situated in the tower. The following research and account of "The Early History of the Holley Methodist Episcopal Church Clock and Bell, 1869-1895" was prepared by Ronald W. Herlan. It is with Mr. Herlan's permission that the following detailed history is presented:

From the initial stages of its construction in 1869 there was considerable community interest in purchasing and installing a clock and bell in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Holley. Provision was made in the original building plans of the church tower to house a clock and bell both of which would serve as a public convenience to note the time of day or night and to add a charming architectural ornament to the village square. Circular openings for future clock faces were simply filled in at that time with matching wooden boards. These acted as a daily reminder and incentive for completion of an unperformed civic duty. Mr. F.M. Bishop, editor and publisher of the local Monthly Adviser, reported in October 1869 that a subscription was ready to be circulated "for the purpose of placing a town clock upon said (Methodist) church."

It was not until August 25, 1890, however, that the previous generation's dreams of a town clock and church bell moved closer to fulfillment. On that date William H. Howe, John D. Arnold and H.O. Jones started to circulate a subscription paper to which signatories were obligated to pay 25¢ and to pledge a further 10¢ each month for a year. At the same time cash or contribution boxes were placed in shops and other places of business for such donations as the public cared to drop into them. A total of 124 subscribers raised \$123.20 in gifts and pledges while \$22.15 was gathered up from the cash boxes. On November 18, 1890 the village opera curtain rose on "The Temple of Fame... clock benefit... This elegantly crafted and beautifully costumed entertainment added \$72.92 to the burgeoning clock fund.

During the last week of June 1891 more than \$250 was raised for the clock when ladies of the village and vicinity presented a special "Business Men's Carnival," complete with a "doll drill," singing, orchestra, recitations and a costume parade of 72 local merchants' banners, followed by the sale of cake and ice cream. Following yet another promotion by local women in October 1892, \$89.18 was set aside for the clock and \$71.86 was used to establish a second fund under church auspices towards acquisition of a church tower bell. Other events, such as those sponsored by the Holley Library and Debating Club, accrued fund interest, and occasional small donations (such as \$1 from four former village residents living out of state), swelled the clock fund to over \$700 by the autumn of 1894.

Clock Fund Committeemen Howe, Arnold and Jones indicated by public announcement that there were now sufficient revenues available to purchase a clock and they invited contributors to meet in the basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Friday, September 28, 1894 at 8 p.m. to elect a purchasing committee. A five-member committee was unanimously chosen at that time consisting of J.H. Ruggles (chairman), Henry C. Lockwood (selected as secretary and treasurer at a committee meeting October, 8th), Charles C. Hayden, True D. Matson and George A. Lee. After their review of extensive correspondence and propositions from various bell and clock manufacturers, the chairman and secretary were authorized to purchase a "No. 15 hour strike clock from the Seth Thomas Company" (of Thomaston, Connecticut at a cost of \$512.00) and a 1014-pound bell from the Henry McShane Manufacturing Company (of Baltimore, Maryland at a cost of \$180.32). A few days after the order was placed a special bell fund-raising dinner at the Church which included a menu of cold meats, biscuit and butter, raw and stewed oysters, cake, tea or coffee, produced \$38.29 in profits.

Before the end of November 1894 both the clock and bell arrived by railroad in the village, on December 7th the Seth Thomas Clock Company representative arrived and began their installation, and within a few short days the work was completed. "Now" reported The Holley Standard on December 20th, "the deep-toothed musical notes of the bell...regularly ring out the passage of each hour, and he who runs may read - the time, if he is anywhere in sight of either of the four faces of the clock."

On Monday evening, February 4, 1895, the Citizens Clock Purchasing Committee met with the Village of Holley Trustees and assigned to them a 99-year lease (extinguished by New York State Supreme Court Order signed January 19, 1972) which they had executed on October 10, 1894 with the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The lease required the Village Trustees to provide for "the welfare and good of the clock," to mend and keep it "in repair or order" and to make certain that the dial room of the clock tower was lighted (so that the four faces were visible at night). Finally, on February 7, 1895, the Citizens Clock Purchasing Committee published its final report and was able to turn over a cash balance of \$8.88 to Holley Village Treasurer Bowman. At long last the dream of a clock and bell for Holley and vicinity had become a living reality.

Today, this "handsome piece of mechanism" as contemporaries described it some 90 years ago, is being professionally restored and permanently relocated at Disciples United Methodist Church. This unique survivor of a bygone age will represent to Holley and vicinity and their posterity a rich and memorable part of their church and community heritage.

The brassplate attached to the base of the clock mechanism reads:

Made by Seth Thomas Clock Co.

Thomaston Conn, U.S.A.

November 19th 1894 (833) A.S. Hotchkiss

This clock mechanism was donated to Disciples United Methodist Church by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson of Fancher, New York in May, 1985.