



*Altgeld Hall  
(Nicholas Britsky)*

*Chime Concerts  
at the  
University of  
Illinois*

## *The Bells*

The University Chime, weighing a little over seven and one-half tons, was installed in the tower of Altgeld Hall in the fall of 1920 and dedicated at Homecoming on October 30 of that year. The bells, cast by McShane Bell Foundry, Baltimore, Maryland, are the memorial gift of the Classes of 1914 through 1921 and the United States School of Military Aeronautics. The largest bell, weighing a little over one and one-half tons and measuring five feet in diameter, is dedicated to Dr. Edmund Janes James, President of the University from 1904 to 1920. The second largest bell commemorates the patriotism, resolution, and zeal of the men who trained in the U.S. School of Military Aeronautics. The inscription on the third largest bell reads as follows: "Through these chimes the Classes of 1914-1921 call the multiplying and majestic company of students and graduates to join them in gratitude, loyalty, and devotion to their Alma Mater." The Seth Thomas clock mechanism that enables the chime to automatically strike the hours and the quarters is the memorial gift of the Class of 1922.

The Performing Room is five stories above ground level. It contains the playing keyboard (or clavier), a practice keyboard, a music library, a desk, and chairs and benches for visitors. The practice keyboard duplicates the playing keyboard except that its wooden levers are not connected to the bell clappers. The practice keyboard's sound emanates from metallic bars that are struck by small hammers attached to the levers.

## *The Bells - cont'd*

The playing clavier is seven feet wide, and its wooden "pump-handle" levers represent an octave and a half of tones. When a lever is pushed down about four inches, a steel cable running from the clavier to the clapper inside a bell in the upper reaches of the tower moves the clapper, causing it to strike the sound bow of the bell. The longest cable from keyboard to clapper measures 68.5 feet.

The scale of the keyboard for the fifteen bells ranges from a lower D to an upper G. With the exception of lower D sharp and lower and upper F natural, the range of notes is complete. Because of the tone exceptions and the keyboard range, however, much of the music in the Performing Room library must be transposed or rearranged for the chime. Since there is no F natural, music is usually transposed to keys containing F sharp, most frequently to the keys of G or D. Out-of-range notes must be lowered or raised an octave, or replaced.

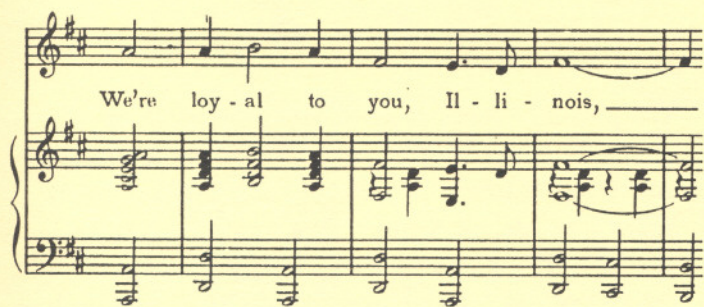
The ringing of the chimes on the hour and the quarter-hour is controlled automatically. The tune (the "Westminster Chime") involves four bells and a separate set of five hammers outside the bells (one bell has two such hammers – one for the hourly strike). These hammers are activated by a clock mechanism housed in a small room on the Performing Room roof. The sound of the first bell of the quarter hour and the sound of the first hourly strike mark the time accurately.

## *A Time-Honored Tradition*

The Altgeld Tower bell concerts have been a tradition at the University of Illinois since the dedication of the bells in 1920. Although heard throughout the campus, the concerts are best listened to along the broadwalks of the Quad, on the lawn surrounding the Alma Mater statue in front of Altgeld Hall, and from the bench-lined plaza east of Altgeld Hall. The chime remains a major attraction on the University of Illinois campus. An alumnus stated that "the chime is a cherished memory of beauty in the years following graduation like the tall and stately trees that once did and will again 'canyon' the broadwalk with its hundreds of surging youth."



*Chime Tower  
(Fred and Betty Turner)*

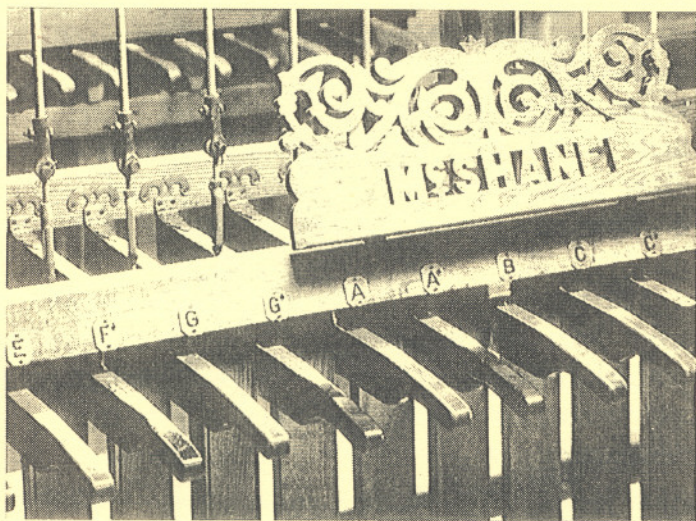


## *The Schedule of Concerts and Tours of the Tower*

Sue Wood, Chimesmaster, and her staff of chimesplayers perform regular concerts from 12:50 to 1:00 PM on weekdays when the University is in session, and during other class-passing periods when chimesplayers are available. The tower is open for public tours from 12:30 to 1:00 PM each weekday that the University is in session. Special concerts are performed on a number of occasions during the school year. These include Quad Day during new student week, Homecoming Weekend, the Illini Union's anniversary on February 8, U of I Founders Day on March 2, and Commencement evening following the President's Concert for graduates. Other special concerts and visits to the Bell Tower can be arranged by contacting Mrs. Wood at (217) 684-2908 (e-mail = [sgwood@prairienet.org](mailto:sgwood@prairienet.org)).

## *The Chimesmaster*

Sue Wood, an environmental chemist, has been playing the chime in Altgeld Hall Tower since 1971. She became Chimesmaster in 1995 when Albert E. Marien, who had played the bells for 37 years, was designated Chimesmaster Emeritus. Mrs. Wood has taken lessons on the Rees Memorial Carillon, Springfield, IL, and is the carillonneur at University Lutheran Church, Champaign. She is an associate member of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America.



*Playing Clavier  
(John Paul Buzard)*