

= Illinois Freedom Bell =

The Illinois Freedom Bell is located in Mount Morris , Illinois , United States , and is the official freedom bell of the U.S. state of Illinois . The bell was created for a church in Lake Geneva , Wisconsin as a replica of the Liberty Bell in 1862 . In 1910 , while it was being moved across the frozen Geneva Lake following a fire at the church , the ice cracked and the bell sank to the bottom of the lake . It was salvaged in 1960 and the village of Mount Morris acquired it in 1966 . The Illinois Freedom Bell is rung during the annual Let Freedom Ring festival , and it can be found beneath a gazebo on the village square . The bell has been credited with starting an Independence Day bell @-@ ringing tradition across the United States . The bell was designated the official Illinois Freedom Bell in 1971 .

= = History = =

= = = Origin = = =

The Illinois Freedom Bell is located in Mount Morris , Illinois , and was cast as a replica of the Liberty Bell in 1862 . Following its casting , the bell was transported to Lake Geneva , Wisconsin , where it was kept in the belfry of a church along the north shore of Geneva Lake . In 1910 , the church was destroyed by a fire ; the bell fell during the fire but was undamaged ; following the fire , the bell was put into storage . The church members then decided to reconstruct the church on the south side of the lake . During the winter , as a group of men attempted to drag the bell across the frozen lake , the weight of the bell cracked the ice and it sank to the bottom .

The bell remained submerged for over 40 years before a wealthy resident of Lake Geneva decided to surface the bell in 1960 . The resident located the bell , and surfaced it with great difficulty , intent on making the future Illinois Freedom Bell the focal point of his new home . After the bell was salvaged he decided it did not suit his purposes . A young farmer from Johnsbury purchased the bell , and it was again kept in storage .

In 1966 , an article was published about the bell 's submersion and resurfacing at Geneva Lake . The article interested the people of Mount Morris , Illinois , and they sent 12 members of their Fourth of July Committee to investigate the bell in Johnsbury . The people of Mount Morris decided to purchase the bell ; a committee was formed and obtained a loan from the Mount Morris VFW . The group also collected donations from local residents to purchase the bell for US \$ 500 . By July 4 , 1966 , the Illinois Freedom Bell hung from the gazebo in its current location , and the two writers who first suggested bell ringing as an annual Independence Day ceremony , Eric Hatch and Eric Sloane were on hand for its dedication .

Five years later , in 1971 , the bell was designated the Official Freedom Bell of the State of Illinois by Illinois Governor Richard B. Ogilvie . A plaque was added to the tower on July 4 , 1972 with an inscription from Governor Ogilvie that reads :

= = = Festival = = =

On February 17 , 1963 , an issue of This Week contained an article , " Make Freedom Really Ring " , written by two Connecticut writers , Eric Hatch and Eric Sloane . In the article , they suggested that every July 4 , all bells in the country ring for four minutes , and radio stations broadcast the ringing for two minutes . Readers across the country took the advice of the magazine 's editor , and contacted local officials in support of a nationwide bell @-@ ringing observance . Concurrently , a resolution was proposed in Congress by Connecticut Senator Abraham Ribicoff that called for the ringing of bells nationwide at 2 p.m every July 4 . Eastern Daylight Time . The bill passed both the Senate and House of Representatives later that year .

Meanwhile , the village of Mount Morris had already decided to hold their own bell @-@ ringing during the village 's annual Independence Day festival , the " Let Freedom Ring " . Subsequently ,

on April 30 , 1963 , Illinois native and rising Republican political star Ronald Reagan visited Mount Morris to dedicate the first Mount Morris freedom bell , which now hangs at the Veterans ' Memorial Fountain . The first freedom bell was a small 16 inch ( 40 @. @ 6 cm ) bell . Later , as U.S. President in 1984 , Reagan was presented with a replica of the official Illinois Freedom Bell in the Oval Office by U.S. Representative Lynn Morley Martin . The first national bell @-@ ringing took place on July 4 , 1963 ; Mount Morris also participated in that ringing . Even though many states sponsored bell @-@ ringings , Hatch and Sloane both credited Mount Morris with making their suggestion a reality .

The Illinois Freedom Bell is annually rung in unison , at 1 pm CDT ( 18 : 00 UTC ) on the Independence Day , July 4 , with other bells across the United States . Thousands of people gather in the village to hear the bell each year on Independence Day . In Mount Morris , the annual event is known as the Let Freedom Ring festival . The Mount Morris festival and bell ringing has been attended by several notable individuals . In 1973 , future Illinois Governor and member of the 9 / 11 Commission , James Thompson attended the festival and bell ringing . A year later , in 1974 , Richard Blake , a noted Abraham Lincoln impersonator , appeared at the festival to speak as Lincoln .

Several times the Let Freedom Ring festival has been broadcast nationally . During the 1964 festival , Governor Otto Kerner was the speaker at the bell @-@ ringing observance , and his address was transmitted via telephone to the Illinois pavilion at the 1964 New York World 's Fair . The 1965 bell @-@ ringing was broadcast over the public address system at Wrigley Field in Chicago . Over the years , the committee for the festival requested that the bell @-@ ringing be part of the Illinois Sesquicentennial , the U.S. Bicentennial , and the Statue of Liberty Centennial celebrations , all of which were allowed . The " Let Freedom Ring " celebration hosts a " Freedom Run " , arts and crafts , a parade , a fireworks display , and the highlighted ringing of the Illinois Freedom Bell .

= = Description = =

The Illinois Freedom Bell is silver in color and cast from bronze metal . It is four feet ( 1 @. @ 2 m ) tall and four feet ( 1 @. @ 2 m ) wide with a weight of 1 @, @ 500 pounds ( 680 kg ) . The bell is housed in a 15 @-@ foot wooden " tower , " which stands in a prominent position on the town square .