

Santa Cruz Fire Bell To Have A New Home

The casting of a certain bell 101 years ago will be the cause of celebration in 1976 in the City of Santa Cruz.

This 860-pound sculpture of musical bronze is the Santa Cruz fire bell. With clapper and stand, it weighs over 1,200 pounds. It stands in front of the main Santa Cruz fire house on Center Street.

On this centennial-plus-one anniversary of the fire bell, it will be moved to the head of the Pacific Avenue Garden Mall, to stand as a proud ornament of the Town Clock.

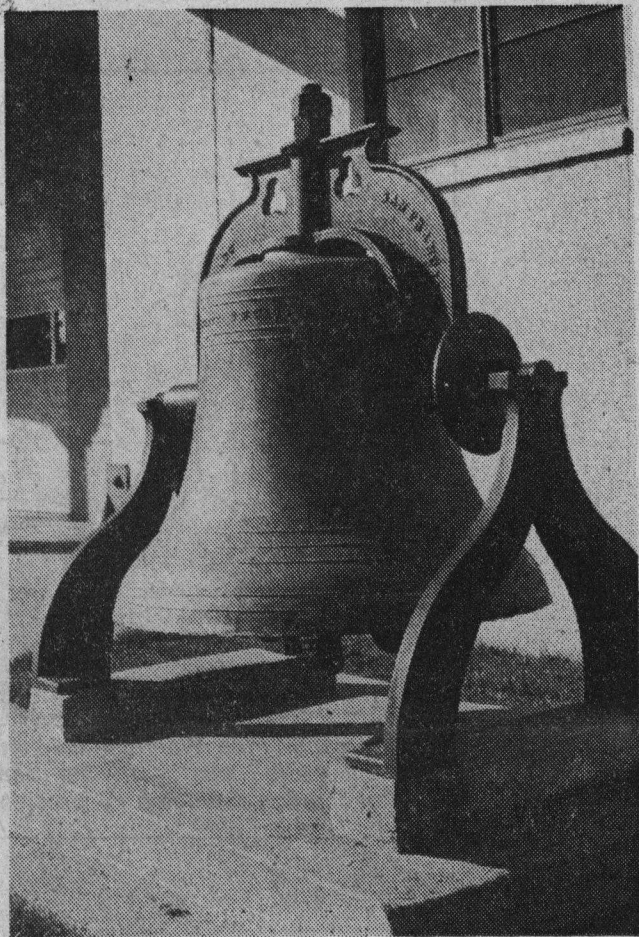
Chief Charles Schneider said that Robert Darrow, chairman of the citizens' group backing restoration of the Town Clock, wanted to know about the bell.

The department's unofficial historian, Firefighter Tom Zehrung, put together some notes for Darrow. Since the bell was used by the city firefighters from 1878 to 1940, it seemed appropriate to display it with the Town Clock, Schneider said.

Zehrung's history of the bell shows the city bought it on April 1, 1878, at a cost of \$491. It was shipped to Santa Cruz by steamship from San Francisco.

The bell was installed on the roof of city hall, which was then on Front Street, where the jail building now is located.

A wooden tower 30 feet high was constructed behind the city hall, because of the weight of the bell. It called firefighters from that location for years, until the fire



This bronze beauty rests in front of the Santa Cruz Fire Department's station on Center Street. It will move to a new location at the head of the mall, depending on the success of a citizens' fundraising drive for the Town Clock.

department moved it to a tower behind their station on Church Street.

When the department moved into new quarters on Center Street, around 1940, the bell was removed from the tower and placed in

storage. An air horn continued to call volunteers until 1971.

And now, after 62 years of use and 36 years of retirement, the bell again will find its place on high — with the Town Clock.