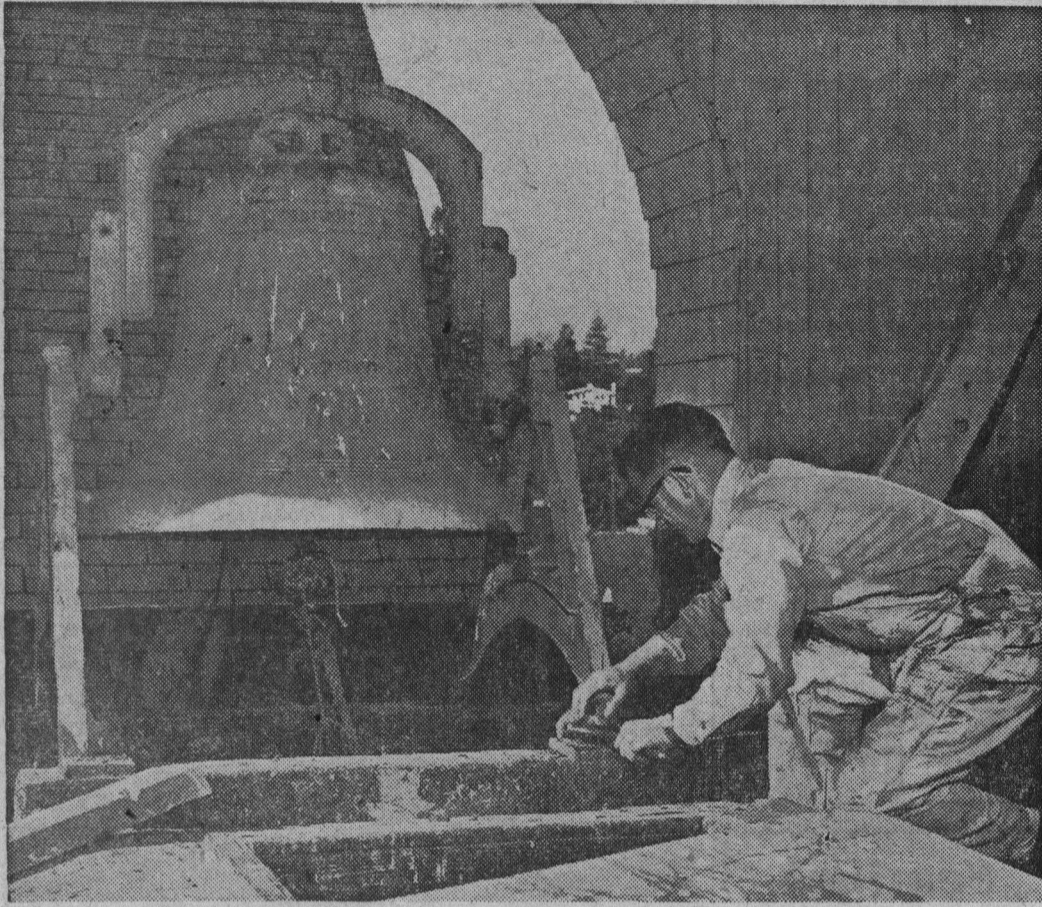


Loosening The Last Bolt



Workman Bob Skaggs loosens the last bolt holding the historic bell from the old First Congre-
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gational church. The bell was sold by the church, now located on High street, to St. Stephen's Lutheran church which is build-

ing a new sanctuary. A crane lifted the 1000-pound bell from its tower.
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Away She Goes



The historic bell from the old First Congregational church, Lincoln and Center streets, was moved from its old home to the St. Stephen's Lutheran church. The bell will be used to sum-

mon members to the church's nearly-complete sanctuary. The photo shows the crane swinging the bell away from its tower and the start of a new life.

The Moving Story Of A Church Bell

By Margaret Koch

A very old bell made a trip across town Friday.

And after several years of hanging quietly in the bell tower at the old First Congregational

church, the historic instrument came out swinging at the end of a crane, ready to go to work again.

Instead of calling local Congregationalists to worship, the bell soon will summon members of St. Stephen's Lutheran church to its nearly-complete sanctuary. A concrete tower, specially designed for the bell, which weighs almost 1000 pounds, has been constructed at the Lutherans' new church site, 2500 Soquel avenue.

"We are very pleased to be able to put the historic old bell back into service again," remarked Rev. George R. Flora, Lutheran-church pastor.

Negotiations for the bell were carried on with a First Congregational church committee headed by Fred D. McPherson Jr., chairman of the church board of trustees. He, Pastor Flora and the building contractor, W. J. Jasper, climbed up into the tower at Lincoln and Center streets several months ago to inspect the unused bell.

"The pigeons and spiders had been there before us," wryly commented McPherson.

They rang the bell several times to make sure it could still sing. Satisfied, they climbed back down out of the cobwebs and into the open arms of several alert Santa Cruz city policemen.

"We thought it might be kids ringing the bell," the red-faced lawmen explained.

The old bell — which has rung out over Santa Cruz for the better part of a century — was cast by Sheffield and company and is dated 1868. Records of its history are not complete but its first trip must have been from England to this country via ship. It is not the first — and original bell — bought by Congregationalists either, but the second one.

From the Santa Cruz Sentinel of May 20, 1890:

"The Congregational church needed a bell. The only one in town then was a cracked one

hanging by rawhides from the Catholic church rafters."

During the pastorate of Rev. William C. Bartlett (1862-1864) a church bell was bought. It was on the eve of the Civil War and funds for the bell were raised with a concert given by home talent. Mrs. E. C. Boston, draped in the Union flag, sang the "Star Spangled Banner." Hats were passed and in five minutes enough money was raised to pay for the bell.

This 800-pound bell was installed in the First Congregational church which was then located on Church street where the First Methodist is today. The great bell became the town's fire alarm and on one occasion it guided a ship into Santa Cruz harbor:

"The captain of a schooner coming into Santa Cruz became lost in the fog and did not know which way to steer until he heard the sound of a bell being rung. It guided him safely into port in about 15 minutes," according to an old report.

On the following July 4 the bell was rung so hard it cracked. It was replaced immediately by the manufacturers, as recorded in material unearthed by C. C. Robinson, historian for the First Congregational church. When the church cornerstone was opened on February 21, 1958, material concerning the church bell was among the contents, Robinson noted.

In 1890, the Congregationalists sold their Church street location to the Methodists and erected the Congregational church at Lincoln and Center streets. The bell is mentioned again in a quote from Robinson's book, "A Century of Christian Witness: The History of the First Congregational church of Santa Cruz."

"And when later we moved to our 'new' church at Lincoln and Center streets, the Methodists were glad to purchase our improved property, all but the bell, which we packed up and took with us."