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Bell Dedication at Broadview Mansion

SARAH ATEN | News Reporter | @sarahmaten Sep 12, 2017 Updated Sep 18, 2017



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The mansion has a long history in Normal, according to Immanuel Bible Foundation Executive Director Annette Klinzing.

The Broadview Mansion was built in 1906 and was owned by Bird and Margaret Van Leer. In 1933, Bird Van Leer passed away. In 1944, Margaret Van Leer worked to form a nonprofit, Immanuel Bible Foundation, which currently is in charge of the Broadview Mansion.

The Broadview Mansion bell tower is 110 feet tall and held ten bells when at full capacity. The tower also has a long history, having been built in 1939.

It was dedicated in honor of Bird Van Leer by his wife Margaret Van Leer Sept. 29, 1940.

Engraved on the biggest bell was "Dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Bird Colladay Van Leer, 1867-1933, by his wife Margaret Langstaff Van Leer, 1939. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

"We wanted this public to always know now forever that that was what was engraved, because that bell is gone and we just felt that was a really important significance of the mansion and that the community to see that that's what she had engraved on that 2,000 pound bell," Klinzing said.

The bell that is now at Broadview Mansion originally came from Second Presbyterian Church, which Margaret attended.

"We wanted to get a replica of a bell that was in the bell tower at the Broadview Mansion," Klinzing said.

In 2004, Second Presbyterian Church was torn down and built again. However, a new bell tower was not build, and eventually it ended up at Broadview Mansion.

"I think it's really really special to the community, because Mrs. Van Leer and her husband Bird Van Leer give so much to the community," Kinzing said.

"They open their home. They help people, they were very generous people. We really want them to be remembered for what they are and what they did for the community."

The Van Leers gave donations to different churches and were actively involved in the community.

"Her [Margaret Van Leer's] goal was that the music was played during the early morning, it was call to worship," Klinzing said. "In the evening program... restful pause to the community and especially to the busy students who attended [Illinois Wesleyan University]and Illinois State, because you could hear it from there."

The dedication ceremony took place Sept. 7.

"It went great," Klinzing said. "We had over 100 people, and we also did tours in the mansion and we had a beautiful ceremony. We had bell ringer playing the bell at the beginning of the program."

Klinzing said they were fortunate enough to have 95 year old Mary Winn in attendance. She is the wife of James Winn, Broadview's earliest carillon player. James Winn was a student at Illinois Wesleyan when he played the bells at Broadview.

The bell is available for the public to view. Broadview Mansion is at 1301 S. Fell Ave., Normal.

SARAH ATEN is a News Reporter reporter for The Vidette. She can be reached at smaten1@ilstu.edu Follow her on Twitter at @sarahmaten

Sarah Aten

News Reporter