

The Church Bells Of Halton Hills

By Rev. Richard Ruggie
St. Alban's and St. Paul's Churches

In the first centuries of its existence the church was an underground organization that met secretly to avoid persecution. But not long after it came above ground, it began to use bells to call people to its worship.

The earliest bells were probably not cast, but made of metal plates riveted together (like some of the 19th century cowbells). Other early bells were long and cylindrical, with square heads which caused an unpleasant tone, since the straight sides checked vibration. As the art of making bells developed, so too did the lore about them. They took on personalities of their own—they were named and in some places it is said they were even baptized.

At least it was common to consecrate them for church use. When Major Lachlan Grant presented the carillon to Knox Church in 1922, it was with the words that "these bells... have been solemnly set apart from all common or unhallowed uses." The minister (Rev. R.F. Cameron) in turn prayed "that the spirit of the Lord may reach the heart of everyone within earshot of their sound."

TELL TIME

Besides calling people to church, bells often told the time, in an age when most people didn't have watches. And they were used to toll the death of members of the community.

In some towns they also announced a death with a telling bell—a teller, or "toller". First the sex of the person was announced, with three groups of three strokes for a man, two groups of three for a woman and one group of three for a child (sometimes a higher pitched bell was used for a child). Then the age of the person was told with one stroke for each year of his life. And then the bell was slowly tolled (with perhaps one or two strokes per minute). A leather muffle was sometimes put on the clapper to dull the sound.

Since this all required single rather than double rings, the bell had to be steadied each time, so the person pulling the rope could easily get blisters doing it. The Nine Tailors of Dorothy Sayers' famous mystery novel by that name refers to these telling bells.

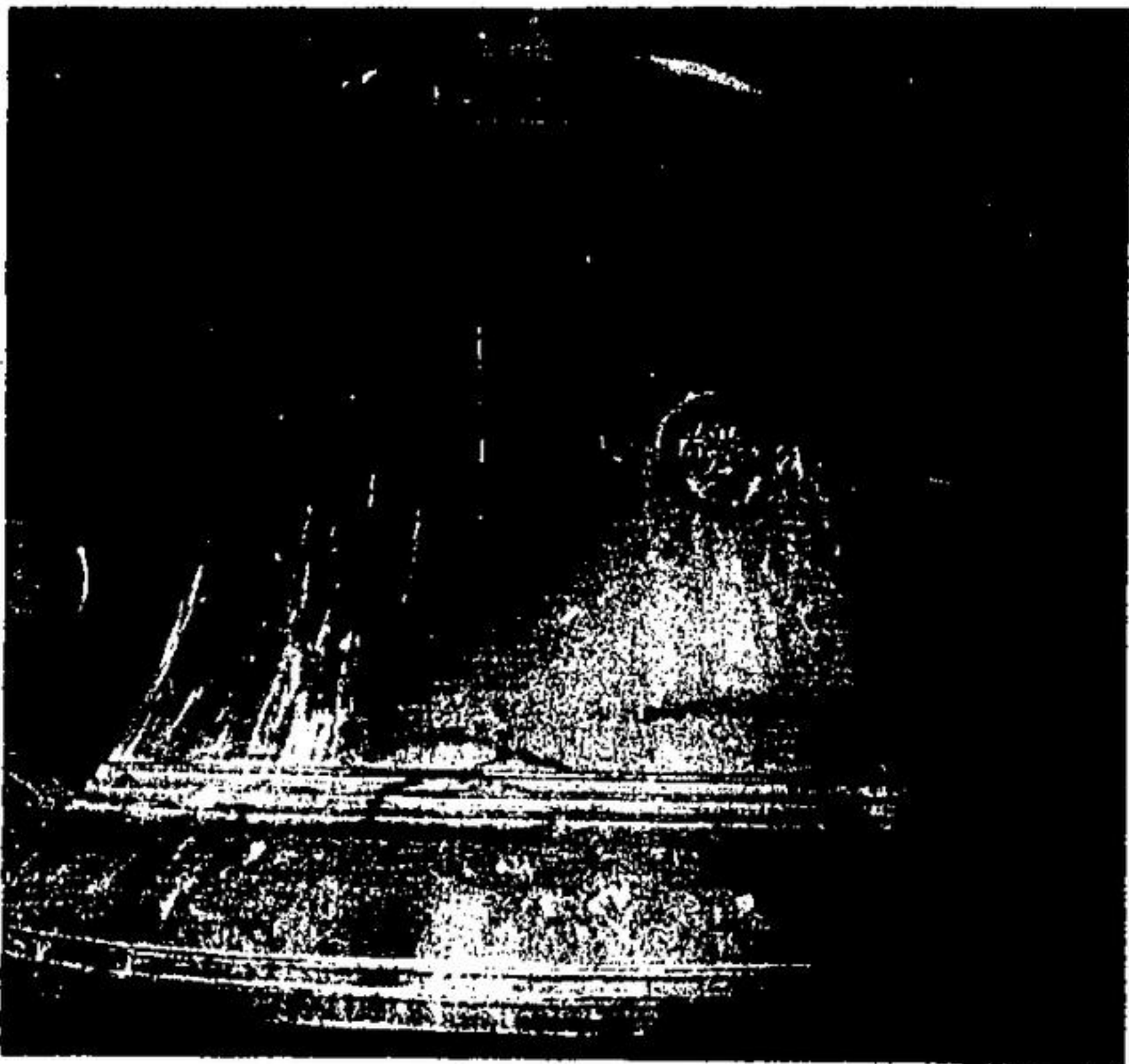
English belfries would ordinarily have eight bells, which wasn't felt enough to play hymn-tunes on—unlike the carillons of Belgium which might contain 40 to 50 bells. So there developed the peculiarly English custom of change-ringing, of ringing the bells in succession, but in varying orders. So if you had three bells, they could be arranged in six different ways:

123	132
231	213
312	321

MANY CHANGES

Four bells give 24 changes, and eight bells would give 40,320 changes! But churches which put speakers in their belfries (such as St. George's Anglican Church and Norval Presbyterian Church) to play recordings of other peoples' bells tend to play tunes rather than change-ringing. St. John's United Church had a speaker system that was burnt out some five or six years ago. From it the church used to broadcast singing by public school groups on the Friday evenings before Christmas.

Methodist churches, such as the ones in Glen Williams or Norval, didn't usually have either bell or tower. Anglicans tend to have bells, though in Stewarttown they worship in what was once a Methodist building. So when St. John's church there acquired a large locomotive bell from the TH&B stationmaster in Hamilton, about 1952, the congregation had to take out a window from the attic to place the bell. Some of the more modern church buildings rely on their members to use their watches, and have no provision for a bell at all—such as Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church, Immanuel Lutheran, Mountainview Baptist and St. Andrew's United.



CARILLON BELLS in Knox Presbyterian Church were cast by the most famous of the "modern" founders in England—Taylors of Loughborough, whose firm can

trace its origins only back to 1731. It was the Taylor who in 1881 cast Great Paul, a bell weighing more than 16½ tons. Great Paul bears a Latin inscription, from I

Corinthians: Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel. It hangs in the southwest tower of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.



CHAINS restrain the clapper of the bell from the old Congregational church. When the church was given to the town in 1912 for a free public library, one of the conditions was that the bell should be rung every Sab-

bath, at a time to be arranged by the "resident pastors of the several churches in town". Unfortunately, tendency, today, outside libraries, schools and fire halls, is that bells should

be seen but not heard. Like many Ontario bells, this one was cast (in 1878) by the old Meneely foundry in West Troy, New York, established in 1825. Looking at the bell is Rev. Richard Ruggles.



SINCE SAXON times in England, churches have been expected to have a bell. So the provision of a place to hang it was necessary, and affected the architecture of churches. So it came about that some churches, even when there was no intention to have a bell, would be built with a belfry. Thus the old Baptist church on Georgetown's Main Street (illustrated here) had an elaborately designed belfry which seemingly never housed a bell—nor did the belfries of St. John's United Church, Maple Avenue Baptist Church or Norval Presbyterian Church.

Photos by
The Herald

Busy Month For Norval Churches And Brownies

Unit Two of Norval United Church held their regular monthly meeting at the home of Mrs. Jean Dunlop on Wednesday evening February 6 with Mrs. Edna Murray presiding.

Business was dealt with followed by the devotional by Mrs. Lois Reid and Mrs. Deanna Cleave. The program consisted of the members dividing into three groups with each group discussing current articles in the Observer, after which lunch was served and a

social time was enjoyed. The group in charge of the meeting were Mrs. Gwen Laidlaw, Mrs. Glenn Laidlaw, Mrs. Jean Dunlop, Mrs. Lois Reid and Mrs. Deanna Cleave.

Unit One of Norval United Church Women met at the home of Mrs. Percy Laidlaw on Thursday afternoon, February 21 with Mrs. Guy Wilson presiding. The roll call on a verse from the Bible on love or a poem was answered by the 14 persons present.

Mrs. Murray Laird gave the devotional on "Forgive us our trespasses", and Mrs. James Laidlaw gave an interesting story on the history of the World Day of Prayer from its beginning story on the history of the World Day of Prayer from its beginning until today after which she gave an amusing item. Mrs. Spencer Wilson gave a report of the church executive meeting which she had attended.

Mrs. Bill Graham and Mrs. Guy Wilson assisted the hostess in serving lunch and a social time was enjoyed.

Norval Presbyterian Church WMS met at the home of Mrs. Clure Archdekin on Tuesday afternoon, February 26, with 11 persons present and Mrs. Harold Reed in the chair. The roll call was answered with a verse from the Bible on worship or mission.

Mrs. Craig McClure and Mrs. Nelson Robinson gave the devotional, and Mrs. Harold McClure gave the chapter from the study book on "Worship and Mission".

Mrs. Dixon Duff who had attended the presbytery gave a talk on what she had learned there on the work of the treasurer and how the mission money is divided to assist the many projects that the church supports.

Plans were made for the dessert luncheon to be held on April 23 in the church.

Mrs. John M. McClure and Mrs. H. Anthony were the lunch committee and assisted the hostess in serving lunch after the meeting.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Laidlaw showed pictures of their trip to Cuba at the regular monthly meeting of Norval United Church Couple's Club meeting held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Laidlaw on Wednesday evening February 27 with 40 attending. The pictures and the talk by Howard and Aileen was very interesting. The executive for 1974 are: president, Bill and Gwen Laidlaw; secretary, Jack and Mary Crawford; treasurer, George and Marilyn Smith.

At the regular meeting of Norval United Church YPS held in the church on Sunday

evening March 3 with Terry Laidlaw presiding, the young people planned and practised for a worship service which they will conduct at the regular church service on Sunday morning March 10. The whole service will be taken by the young people with special musical numbers. The teen choir will be assisted by members of the Young Peoples Society. The theme of the worship service is "Freedom".

Following the planning meeting lunch was served and a social time enjoyed.

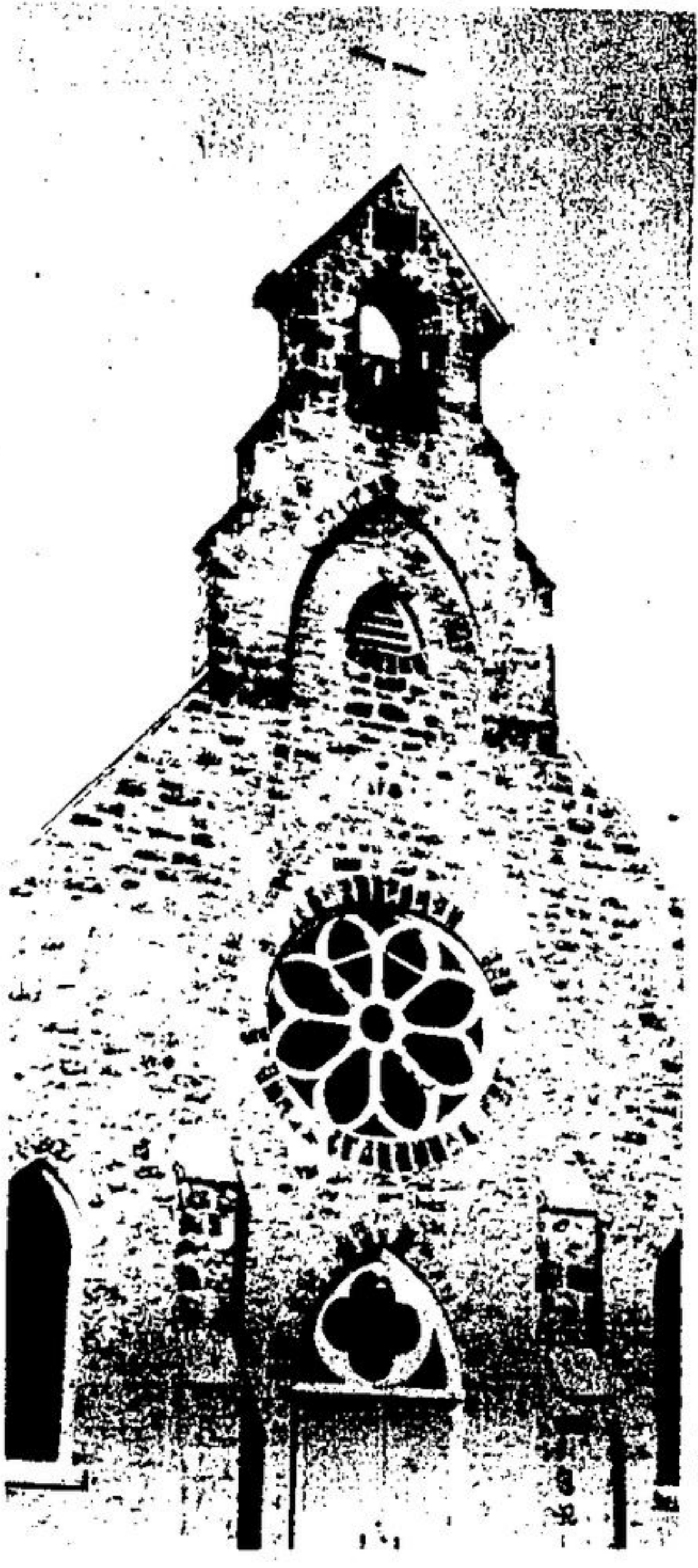
Rev. Peter Barrow of Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown, was the guest speaker at the World Day of Prayer service held in Norval United Church on Friday evening, March 1. The theme of the service was "Make us Builders of Peace".

Seven-year-old Susan Neuman has been busy going up and down the country roads getting orders for Girl Guide cookies and so far she has over 150 boxes ordered. This must be some sort of record for a Brownie. Her mother says Susan had done it all by herself. Susan is going to be a very busy little girl when delivery day rolls around on April 29. Perhaps she will solicit the aid of her father and his truck.

Another Brownie who has brought honors to the Norval group is eight-year-old Melanie Cooper who won the cookie poster contest for Halton Division. Her poster placed first in the Credit Valley District and then went on to win the Halton Division contest.

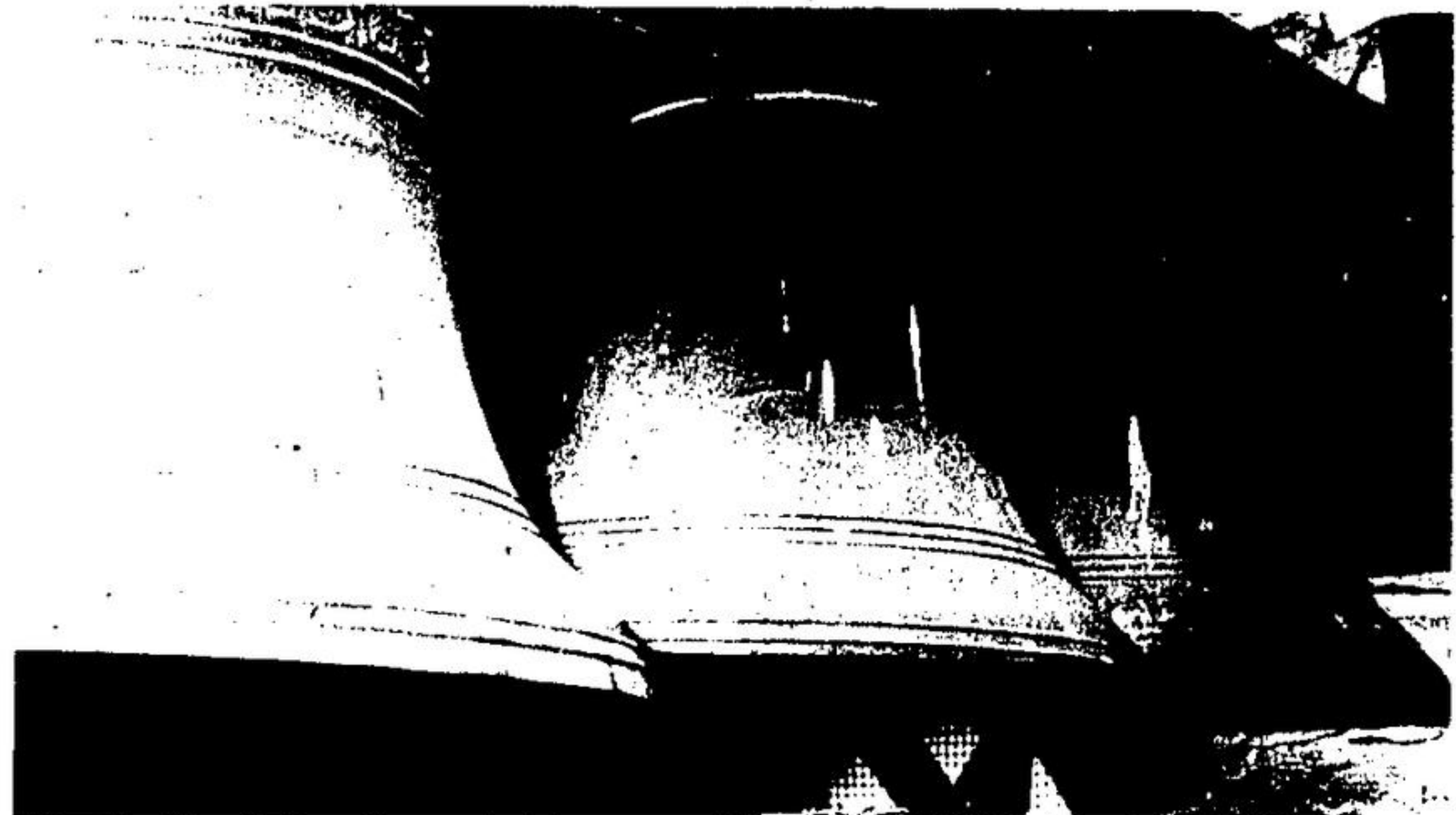
At the regular Brownie meeting on Monday evening, March 4, Melanie was presented with a plaque by Division Commissioner, Mrs. Doreen Melcombe, and a book from deputy district commissioner, Mrs. Elaine Crawford, in recognition of her excellent poster.

Starting this week Mrs. Brian Coe who attended the School for the Deaf at Milton, began teaching the Brownies the sign language. The Brownies hope that you are saving your empty bottles for their next bottle drive to be held on Saturday, May 11. —Mrs. Dorothy McLean



BELFRIES will house a number of bells. A single bell, or sometimes two bells, can be hung in a stone turret or cot above the church. Such is the case with Sacre-Coeur Roman Catholic church on Guelph Street. Because of the fragile state of the masonry and the effect vibrations might have on it, this bell has not been rung for many years. Though the

turret had always been on the church, it was only about 1931 that the bell was placed there. The priest at the time, Father McBride, had relatives working for the CNR, and they acquired the old engine bell for the church. In French Canada, many of the old church bells are emblazoned with a crucifix.

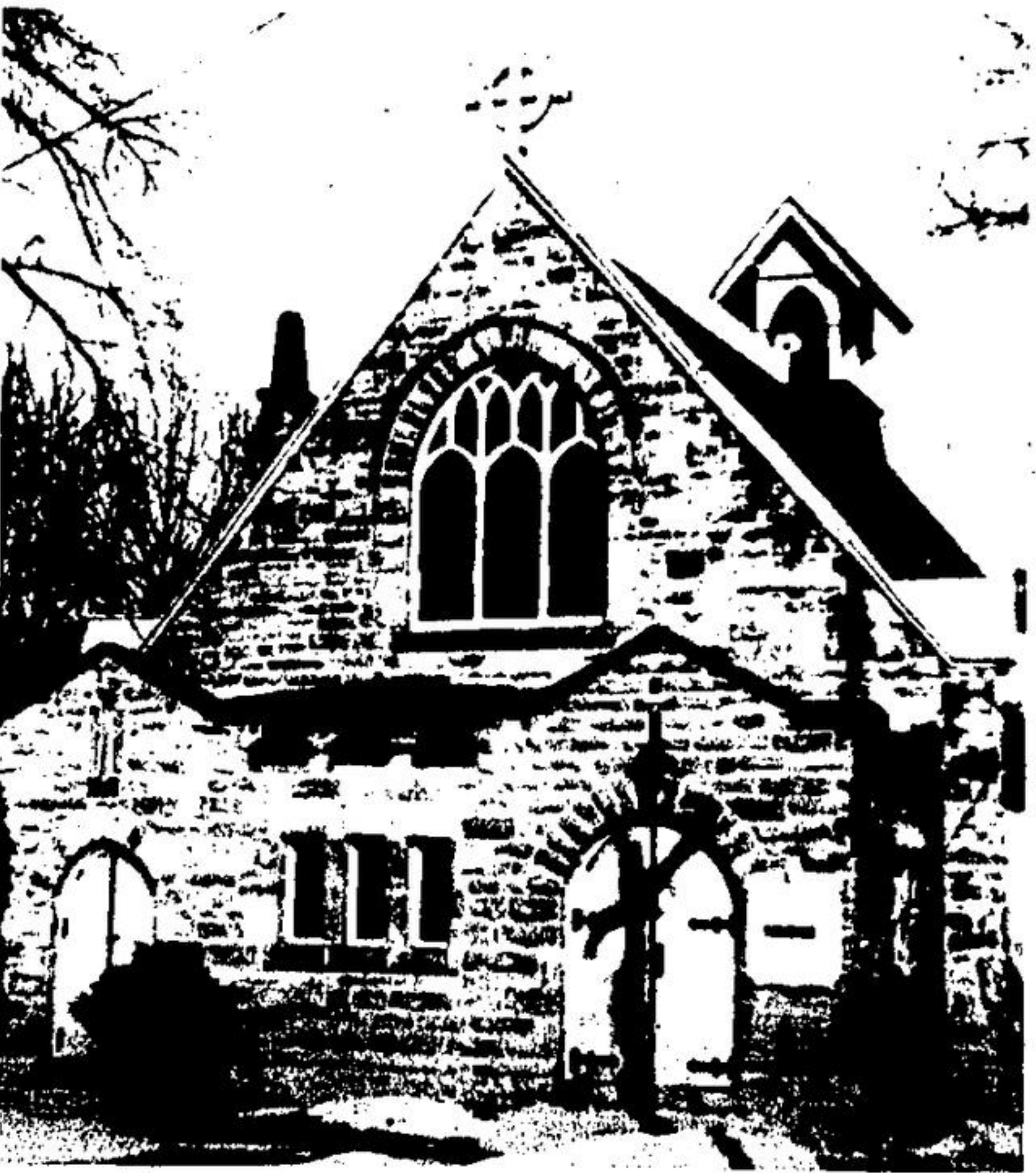


THE EIGHT bells of Knox Church's carillon are fixed, immobile, to the beams from which they hang. They are

rung by pulling a wire attached to the bottom of the clapper—visible at the bottom of this photo. This

practice is called "clocking", and some people claim that vibration is checked when the bell is rung

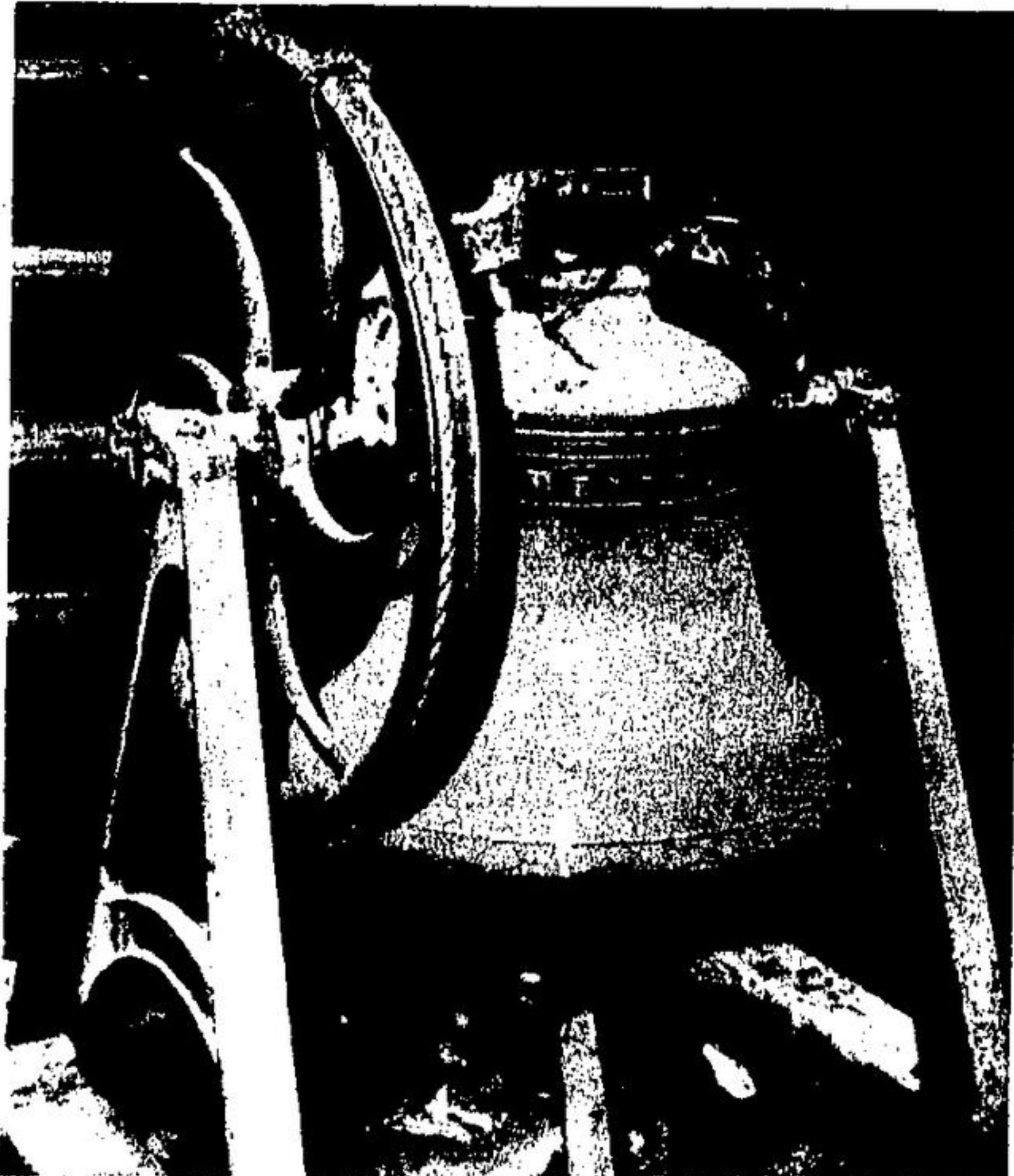
in this way. The cracking of the rim, or "sound-bow" of many larger bells has been blamed on clocking.



THE BELL above St. Alban's Anglican Church in Glen Williams is not marked, but it may be fairly old by Ontario standards. The church was built in 1892, when the

Rev. T. G. Wallace was the rector of Georgetown and Glen Williams. He moved to St. Jude's Church in Oakville, just about the time that

a set of chimneys and a clock were being placed in the belfry there. So the old bell was donated to the new little church in the Glen.



ST. PAUL'S Anglican Church bell, Norval was cast in 1853. This mounting comes closest to the ideal way of hanging a bell. For ringing, a

bell would be "raised" to an inverted position, so that almost a complete revolution is performed each time the rope is pulled. This moun-

ting, however, lacks the "stay" which would keep the bell from falling over at the conclusion of the stroke.