



## The Importance of Mentoring Ringers

by Chris Peck, Area 8 Chair

Handbell Musicians of America was already thirty-something years old when this Area 8 Chair came into this world. It would be about fifteen years later that I had my hands on handbells for the first time. It was in a church bell choir called “King’s Ringers” and one of the first pieces that I remember ringing was *Chariots of Fire*. Yeah, you read that right. I don’t know where *Chariots of Fire* fit into the church calendar, but we played a few outside events, so that was probably where it fit in.

My brother and I covered C4-F4, with one of us playing the repeated malleted eighth notes on C4 with a lot of teenage gusto. I think we may have been almost the only youth in

the group. I hadn’t thought about that piece again for many years, until I saw the distinctive original cover of the music in a community bell choir rehearsal room. Instantly, I’m transported back to that time and can see the upholstered burgundy corduroy covered foam pads, the L-shaped tables that we were at in the back of the sanctuary, and our director, with little space to stand because of an abundance of piles of music and instruments, confidently directing us, with the occasional approving (and perhaps, disapproving?) glares.

Our director, let’s give him the name: Kipp Willnauer, began mentoring me by taking me and others to workshops and Area 8 events, by occasionally letting me direct the group, and by letting me play the organ in worship services once in a while. I think my first stint of Area 8 was shadowing him at a youth festival at Coe College in, maybe 1994...?

A few years later, I began college. As I was a music teacher in training, I had the opportunity to attend the annual music teachers conference each year. As I was going through the exhibits my freshman year, checking out the new instruments and new music displays (and of course, the fundraising

---

*Our director, let’s give him the name: Kipp Willnauer, began mentoring me by taking me and others to workshops and Area 8 events*

---

### What’s Inside

- 1 The Importance of Mentoring Ringers
- 4 Ringer Spotlight: Lori Fenton
- 5 Technique Class: Malleting
- 6 Building More Community Opportunities for Handbells
- 7 Learn About Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair
- 8 Meet Trey Bures, Missouri Chair, and Beth McFarland, Illinois Chair
- 9 The Power of Music
- 10 The Past is Prologue: The Early Era of Handbell Ringing in the United States
- 18 Area 8 State Committees
- 19 Upcoming Events

companies' food samples – I was a college student, after all), I came across a display of handbells made by Malmark. As I was a major introvert at the time, the saleswoman, who was a very petite woman, shorter than many of my college buddies that had to try ringing the biggest bell she had, began talking to me about handbells.

Turned out, this saleswoman was an alum of the same college I was attending, and she was aware that there were bells somewhere in the music building. My eyes lit up. Apparently, Don Allured had a workshop there, so the college had purchased a set of bells. So, I went and asked the department head, he unlocked a closet door, and there they were, 3 octaves of Malmark bells (cue the dramatic sounds). I was given permission to see that they get used.

It wasn't long after, that my new Malmark salesperson / college alum friend (let's give her the name: Eunice Tarum) began mentoring me by becoming our college staff bell choir director, by taking me and others to various local workshops (I still remember a Saturday drive for a workshop with Kevin McChesney in Abilene, KS), and offering me opportunities to help or ring with her church choirs.

---

*Isn't the power of music a wonderful thing? Isn't the power of a mentor a wonderful thing as well?*

---

Of course, there is music that takes me back to that time, as well. I still can remember playing "In the Hall of the Mountain King", and her arrangement of the school song, and the various frogs that were displayed as we rang

one of Kermit the Frog's popular songs. She encouraged me to submit one of my first handbell pieces to a publisher.

I showed it to Hart Morris at a festival first. It was an original composition and had quite a few measures of irregular meters. Apparently, the story goes, Hart may have been a little inspired by my piece as he had written something similar to what I had written after I visited with him. I will always think of Eunice every time I hear or ring Cathy Moglebust's *Meditation on Beautiful Savior*, as that was the final piece that I had the opportunity to ring for her. And, I will always remember her frequent hugs.

Isn't the power of music a wonderful thing? Isn't the power of a mentor a wonderful thing as well? Many of us have had an important handbell person in our lives:

- Someone who loves the handbell art as much as we do now.
- Maybe someone asked you to fill in for a missing ringer.
- Maybe someone invited you to a workshop or an Area 8 festival.
- Maybe someone invited you to their concert.

## Area 8 Board

### CHAIR

Chris Peck

### CHAIR-ELECT

Lori Fenton

### SECRETARY

Sara Washington

### TREASURER

Tami Kofron

### PAST CHAIR

Sharon Schmidt

### COMMUNICATIONS

Amy Knudsen

### CHIMES CHAIR

Nancy Youngman

### FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Stephen Swanson

### MEMBERSHIP

Lori Fenton

### RESOURCE LIBRARIAN

Open - Contact Chris Peck

### WEB MASTER

Wendi Calkins-Levitt

### EDUCATION

Rick Richards

### QUAVERS EDITOR

Beth Ann Edwards

### HISTORIAN

Laurie Austin

### ILLINOIS CHAIR

Beth McFarland

### IOWA CHAIR

Dick Crusinberry

### KANSAS CO-CHAIRS

Julie Assel, Janelle Flory Schrock

### MISSOURI CHAIR

Trey Bures

### NEBRASKA CHAIR

Byron Jensen

*If your church, school, or other organization is not in a position to renew its membership at this time, consider an individual membership. The cost averages out to about \$8 per month. Membership information can be found [here](#).*

Many of us ARE that important handbell person in others' lives right now.

- Someone who might love the handbell art as much as we do now.
- Maybe there is someone waiting to be asked to sub for a missing ringer.
- Maybe there is someone waiting to be invited to a workshop or an Area 8 festival.
- Maybe there is someone waiting to be invited to your next concert.

As Handbell Musicians of America turns 70 years old next year (2024), I think it would be interesting to know if we have anyone that has been a member of HMA for 70 years, or almost 70 years! That's a great legacy of mentoring! Please let us know.

### **I'm going to end this column with some requests ...**

- Area 8 now has at least one chair in each state, several of which are brand new. Consider helping your state chair as a formal state board member or an informal volunteer. Several state boards are lightly staffed. They will appreciate the help and the support.
- If there is any type of workshop activity or education that you feel would be helpful to ringers or choirs in your church or your area, please be in touch with your state chair, or with me.
- For instance, if you want some help with techniques, or with helping your choir to be more musical, or with sightreading, or what to do with only four ringers, please talk to us.
- Or if you have a few willing choirs in your area (and you have the space) that want to just sightread music, or to go a little further and learn some music under a different director than your ringers are used to ringing. We have a whole year and a half before our big 2024 FESTIVAL, so I'd love to be helpful in this time. We have a lot of great mentors in Area 8!

*The Raleigh Ringers*

STAY UP TO DATE WITH US!



[www.rr.org](http://www.rr.org)



[/RaleighRingers](https://www.facebook.com/RaleighRingers)



[@RaleighRingers](https://twitter.com/RaleighRingers)



[@RaleighRingers](https://www.instagram.com/RaleighRingers)

**Handbell Services, Inc.**

Shop online for unique gifts & supplies for  
Handbell & Handchime Musicians

**[www.handbellservices.com](http://www.handbellservices.com)**

**toll-free: 800-37-BELLS**

Artisan-made gifts, unique designs on promotional products.  
Educational resources, table foam, gloves & shirts.

DETROIT, MI • FOUNDED BY SUSAN & DAVE BERRY

# Ringer Spotlight: Lori Fenton

**Tell us a little bit about yourself. Where do you ring? How long have you been ringing?**

I started ringing bells in my church choir in Sioux City, IA about 40 years ago. Our music director, Eleanor Tasker, was very involved with Area 8 and she was responsible for us having 5 octaves of bells. (We all know how hard it is to ask the church board for money for music equipment.) Not a common thing in the 80s but I certainly didn't realize how fortunate we were. Except for my years away at college, I pretty much never stopped ringing.

**What is your favorite handbell ringing position?**

F5G5

**What is your favorite piece to ring?**

*Elegy* by William Payn. There is a lot of emotion in this piece and it's really hard NOT to feel something when you're ringing it.

**Describe one of your most memorable handbell events or road trips.**

There are so many! My most unique experience was traveling with Desert Bells out of Scottsdale, AZ on a bell tour in Italy in 2008. While we had used a travel company to help arrange all of our performance stops, something was lost in translation when it came to what we needed for tables (we had traveled with everything else). We ended up playing on a wide variety of table options (like small round cafe ones) but we of course, managed to adapt. Bringing bells to a place that really has no familiarity with them really gets to the heart of why I ring. I want someone else to hear them for the first time and love them like I do.

**Any additional information or stories you would you like to share with your Area 8 friends?**

Bells are not my only obsession. I am also passionate about cats, Disney and wine.

## Quick Quavers Eight:

1. Schullies or **Malmarks?**
2. **Marts** or mallets?
3. Gramann or **Payn?**
4. Clothespins or **dogears?**
5. **Raleigh Ringers** or Sonos?
6. **Hard copy** or tablet?
7. Polo shirt or **anything but?**
8. One assignment, or **move around?**



Lori Fenton

*We are so fortunate that many of the composers of the pieces we love (and maybe hate) are alive and we can interact with them at events and follow them on social media. We have favorite directors to ring for. We have bell friends all across the country - or even the world. There are new directors and composers entering our world every year. Our music and the instruments are changing all the time. It's a unique space that I am proud to be a part of.*

## Spotlight your Awesome A8 Friends!

Nominate a ringer for our next Ringer Spotlight, or nominate yourself! For more information, visit the Area 8 home page [here](#), and click on the link for Ringer Spotlight. To access the form directly, [click here](#).





*Professor Bell*

*Hello all. This is the esteemed Professor Bell. You may have caught my lessons on handbell technique with my wonderful and eager student, Clapper on our Area 8 Fourth Friday on-line classes in 2021. Clapper was kind enough to ask me to share with all our ringers, as he learned so much!*

# *Technique Class: Malleting*

by Professor Bell

This lesson will cover the art of malleting in handbells. Mallets are available in most of the handbell resource businesses, as well as your local music store. As handbells are percussion instruments, the percussion mallets will work. The advantage of getting them through the handbell businesses is that they are marked with the correct bells. Generally the higher the bell, the harder the mallet, the bigger the bell, the softer the mallet. Experiment with your mallets for the best sound for the specific piece. A more percussive piece may need to use a slightly harder mallet to get the very short sound.

The best way to mallet correctly on handbells is to NOT think of “hitting” the bell, but the concept of “pulling” the sound out. The bell should never be struck. Hold the mallets about 2 to 3 inches above the bells and use a gentle stroke on the outside, directly above the area where the clapper would hit if rung. The sound and overtones are best in that spot. Raise the mallet once contact is made to avoid a “thud” sound. Such a sound comes from hitting the bell or not carrying through with the mallet stroke.

It is always best to alternate hands when malleting the same note on the table. By doing this, especially in parts with many measures of repeated malleting, the ringer is less likely to slow the tempo by a repeated motion in one hand. Also, if possible, strong beats (i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of a measure in 4/4) or accented notes should be played with the dominant hand, as that will be stronger and will help give a natural push to the required beats.

The musical symbol in handbells for malleting is + . If you see that symbol, you know you are going to mallet in some way. If the music just shows +, you will hold the bell up and gently strike it, so the sound continues. If you need to mallet two bells, hold the two in one hand and the mallet(s) in your dominant hand, either by holding both bells in the shelly/4 in hand position or one held normally in your hand with the other one hanging down from your ring or pinkie finger. If there is time in the music before you mallet, rest the mallet on the bell then pull back an inch or two before you mallet it. That way, you will definitely make contact with the bell as you know right where it is, plus you will have a continuous motion around. The distance of 2 to 3 inches is important, because if everyone starts the same distance apart, it will be together, plus it helps prevent the ringer from “hitting” the bell if the motion comes from farther away. If the + symbol has a · (dot) under it, that indicates that the bell is to remain on the table for the malleting (the dot with a note in music shows staccato). With the bell on the table, the notes will be stopped as soon as malleted for the staccato effect.

We are including the link [here](#) to my class with Clapper. Please take a few minutes to view it. I know a visual demonstration will be most helpful!!! And, please watch for more technique lessons in the future!

# Building More Community Opportunities for Handbells

Byron Jensen, Nebraska Chair

In late-fall 2021, Hannah Jensen-Heitmann (my daughter), launched the Hastings Community Music Academy (HCMA). The essential mission of her non-profit organization is to reconnect (or newly connect) people to a musical experience; for some, these experiences may have lapsed several years ago. Through her own career as a studio teacher, accompanist, composer and singer/songwriter, Hannah has met countless people whose music participation stopped after high school graduation. HCMA provides music opportunities for these musicians to revisit their music participation, or even find it for the first time. The organization is in-residence at First Presbyterian Church which provides rehearsal space, and as needed, equipment.

So far, Hannah's efforts have brought together sign language choirs, ukuleles for seniors, singer/songwriter forums, and yes, even handbells. Each of these are led by an instructor engaged by HCMA. Through my assistance, over two dozen experienced the art of handbell ringing at the beginning level, and over a dozen handbell players with extensive experience have rung in the advanced section.

Over a six-week course with each session lasting forty-five minutes, the beginning ringers learned all manner of technique, including (in some cases) learning or re-learning how to read music. I used Level 1 and 2 music. "Ring Joyfully" by Susan Geschke, with its various techniques and whimsical musicality, brought many smiles and a sense of accomplishment for these beginning ringers. I did not mark the music, insisting that ringing required achieving some level of music reading competency. Some players were hesitant of this expectation, but all accepted the challenge. Overall, there was much good-hearted laughter and learning.

The more advanced handbell group consisted of ringers who currently play in a handbell choir, or who rang handbells in college. Thinking that these ringers were like racehorses ready to break out of the gate (and knowing that some were), I quickly realized that placing Level 3+ to 5 music in front of them was not a wise idea. We eventually progressed to lovely renditions of *Rondo Passacaglia* by Cynthia Dobrinski, *Fantasy on Restoration* by Brian Childers, *Fantasy on King's Weston* by Fred Gramann, and other selections.

Our final "performances" were open to the public on the sixth and final class period. Handbell/chime techniques were demonstrated to the audience, and because of the relaxed atmosphere, even some rehearsing was conducted. After a short program, we invited the audience (mostly family members) to ring the handbells. And to think we started this during mask mandates!



Byron Jensen

*Hannah's idea for the HCMA has shown that there are people who wish to get back into music performance (or even try it for the first time). All that was needed was a catalyst to get them to explore their talent. We encourage you to look around your own community to find similar opportunities to introduce handbells to beginners, and perhaps bring together experienced ringers who wish to play more challenging music.*



*Dick Crusinberry*

## *Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair*

I'm Dick Crusinberry, and I'm honored to be the new Iowa Chair. Since I'm new to the leadership team I thought I'd tell you about myself.

I am a native Iowan, raised and educated in the state, but I left for Nebraska several years ago to pursue my career. My heart was always in Iowa, though, and I was happy when we moved back to Iowa last summer.

I started ringing about 30 years ago. The church my wife and I attended in Lincoln had a handbell choir and I thought it looked like an interesting challenge, so I asked a friend who was a ringer about it. She connected me with Nancy Youngman, who taught me to ring and invited me to join the bell choir. I have enjoyed it even more than I anticipated!

I have been a member of Heaven's Echoes at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Lincoln, as well as the handbell choir at Trinity United Methodist Church in Lincoln. I also was one of the founding members of Bell-issimo, an auditioned community handbell choir in Lincoln. Since moving to Iowa I have been ringing with Resound! Handbell choir at St. Andrew Presbyterian in Iowa City as well as Des Moines Concert Handbells.

My musical background is in low brass, primarily trombone and bass trombone. I have played the trombone for more than 50 years and was the Principal Trombone for Lincoln Civic Orchestra. I was former president and a long-time member of the Lincoln Community Concert Band, and played in a brass quintet in Lincoln. Since coming to Iowa City I have played in Iowa City Community Band and Iowa City New Horizons Band. I also play in Tempered Brass, a local trombone choir, and play euphonium in my church's brass choir.

After 30 years, I retired from my practice as a urologic surgeon last year. My wife, Laurel, is a chaplain at University of Iowa Hospitals. We have four grown children and three grandchildren, as well as a rather stubborn English bulldog who runs the house. I enjoy running, hiking, and traveling the world—I made it to my seventh continent when we visited Antarctica last winter.

I'm really looking forward to getting to know more people in Iowa and continuing to make music with new friends.

*We value your opinion!  
The Area 8 Education Committee is considering events that are geared to children, youth, or college-age ringers. If you have an interest in age-specific workshops or ringing events, please contact Rick Richards, Education Chair.*

# Trey Bures, Missouri Chair

Trey began his musical journey like many did, at his church, Grace Covenant Presbyterian in Overland Park, KS. He sang in the children's choirs and began playing handbells under the tutelage of his mother in the 5th grade. Trey continued to play at GCPC through middle and high school, and also attended the Intergenerational Handbell Camp in Parkville, MO, starting in 7th grade. In addition to handbells, Trey grew up playing both tuba and bass. At Shawnee Mission Northwest High School in Shawnee, KS, Trey performed in the band and orchestra programs and was honored his senior year as the John Phillip Sousa award winner.

Trey attended Presbyterian College in Clinton, SC where he majored in religion and minored in music and athletic coaching. At PC he was fortunate to play in the handbell choir under the directorship of Dr. Ron Davis in addition to being active in both the orchestra and band programs. He was named to the South Carolina Intercollegiate Honor Band for five years playing tuba and bass. Upon graduation in 2011, Trey returned to the Kansas City area and successfully applied to become the director of bell choirs at Lenexa United Methodist where he directed both an adult and a children's choir. He also auditioned to perform with Rezound! Handbell Ensemble, of which he was a member from 2011 to 2013.

In 2013 a longing for the relationships he had built in South Carolina drew him back to the south and Trey moved to Lexington, SC. Within a couple weeks Trey met his future wife, Jesse, while watching their beloved Kansas City Chiefs. In 2015 Trey and Jesse returned to the Kansas City Area and Trey resumed his role as handbell director at Lenexa UMC in 2015. He also rejoined Rezound! in the winter of 2021.

Trey is relatively new to the Area 8 scene, serving as one of the local liaisons for the 2022 festival in Kansas City. He is excited to face the challenge of the Missouri Chair.

# Beth McFarland, Illinois Chair

Beth McFarland, has been ringing handbells for roughly 38 years. She feels very fortunate to have started ringing in high school and loves that her then choir director got her hooked. She is currently the director of three handbell choirs: the Heritage Bells Choir at the United Methodist Church of Libertyville, Illinois, for 3 yrs, but has been ringing with the ensemble for 28 years; the Celebration Ringers at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois, for 10 years; and the Random Ringers Community Handbell Ensemble, located in the Northern Chicago suburbs for 17 years. Aside from handbells, Beth works as an administrative assistant at a pharmaceutical company, and she and her husband, Dan, have three daughters, Keira, Abbey, Megan; cats George and Fievel; and dogs, Coco and Claudia in Mundelein, Illinois.



*Trey Bures  
Missouri State Chair*

*Trey is new to the Area 8 board and brings a wealth of experience and passion to the position.*



*Beth McFarland  
Illinois State Chair*

*Beth has served as Illinois co-chair and this is her first year as solo state chair. She invites and welcomes Illinois members to share this position with her.*





Julie Assel

## Music ...

- ... stimulates our minds, hearts, and bodies.
- ... feeds us all.
- ... quiets the chaos in our minds.
- ... soothes our weary souls.
- ... carries us when we feel like we cannot move forward.
- ... is the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

*Are you listening?  
Do you feel it? As  
a director, are you  
facilitating its work  
in your players'  
lives?*

# The Power of Music

Julie Assel, Kansas State Co-Chair

This fall, I realized I have been conducting the handbell choirs at my church for more than 20 years. I started when I was single. The bells played at my wedding. They supported me while my husband was deployed, and they have been there through my continually changing life and the lives of my spouse and now two sons, ages eight and ten.

While I have always known that bells have supported me through the joyous and challenging times in my life, it wasn't until the pandemic that I realized how handbells was such an important part of the lives of my players as well. My adult handbell program played the Sunday before shutdowns were announced across the country, and my youth program was silent between March 2020 to September 2022. During the pandemic, our adults used technology to knit together pieces and small groups came together to play as soon as it was allowed. Why? Because the power of music sustains us in challenging times. We have all talked about its importance.

But what about now? What does music mean now for players? Our youth program is back. In fact, there are more youth participating than before the pandemic, and former youth handbell players who were in college during the pandemic have come back and asked how they can be involved with bells again. They come together because music brings them joy.

But what about our adults? Our adult members are living lives of transition. One player just had her second baby. One player just retired in December because of pain in her hands. One player's oldest child just went off to college. One player's father was in and out of hospitals and nursing homes as he experiences the medical challenges of growing older. Three players have children in kindergarten to fifth grade with a growing number of activities of their own. Three players have grandchildren for whom they are occasional caretakers. All of these players bring their whole transitioning selves to our rehearsals each week. We work hard. We laugh. We talk and pray together, for each other, and for the world around us.

So, just like bells have supported me as I have transitioned through my life changes in the last twenty years, each of my players has been supported and sustained by our handbell program, both children and adult, even when they take a break for a pandemic or for college.

Remember, your rehearsals are about more than learning music. They are about bringing music to the audience AND the players. They are a small group ministry.



# *The Past is Prologue:*

## The Early Era of Handbell Ringing in the United States

Laurie Austin, Area 8 Historian

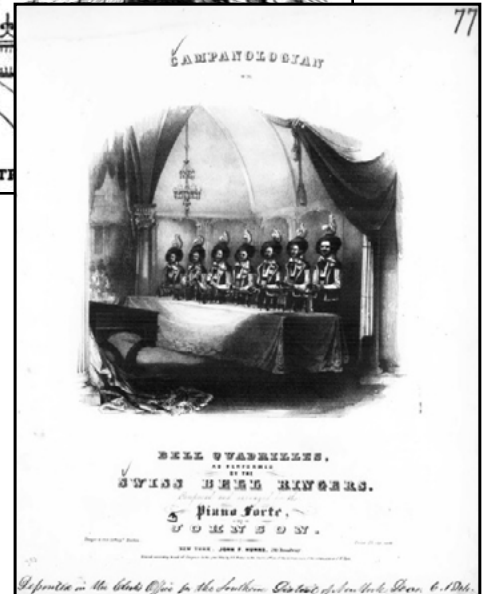
With the 70th anniversary of Handbell Musicians of America coming up in 2024, we will use the next several issues of Quavers to look at the history of handbells, particularly in what is now Area 8. Long before there was a national handbell musicians organization dividing our country into various regions there were handbell performances all around. This article will attempt to cover the early history of our instrument in the US, and particularly in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska.

### Arrival from England

Tuned handbells probably made their first appearance in the US in the form of an imported traveling bell band. In the 1840s, bell bands in England were very popular. Our story involves the Lancashire Bell Ringers, who at that time traveled around England performing in concerts and winning handbell competitions. The drawing below, showing seven ringers and a director, was used to promote their appearance at the Adelphi Theatre in London.



This is the group that caught the eye of the great American showman, P.T. Barnum, when they were both touring in Ireland in 1844. He brought them to the United States re-branded as the mustachioed, poofy-hatted “Swiss Bell Ringers” during their American tour. An image of these “Campanologians” (those who study campanology, and another name that they went by) appears on the front of a piano adaptation of their music that is now in the collection of the Library of Congress. The notation at the bottom of this music says it was deposited in the clerk’s office of the southern district of New York, December 6, 1844.



If you're curious at what their music may have sounded like, check out one of their quadrilles, the finale called *The Village Green*. (You can download this music from the Library of Congress [here](#).)

Newspaper advertisements show that the Swiss Bell Ringers debuted at Niblo's Garden in New York, September 12, 1844. "After producing a great sensation in New York" they moved along to other mid-Atlantic locations such as Calvert Hall in Baltimore where you could see them perform for 50 cents a ticket. The Star newspaper explained "the music is produced by the ringing of these bells, which are passed with incredible rapidity from the hand of one performer to the other as the exigencies of the tune require. In this way, the most difficult overtures and combinations of harmony are executed, with astonishing precision and beauty of effect."

Newspapers show their Baltimore appearances were written up in places as far away as Charleston, SC and New Orleans, LA. In October, the Swiss Bell Ringers appeared in a series of concerts in Boston at the Melodeon. These ads mention that they are assisted by a violinist of great skill; newspapers in other locations mention they are accompanied by a flutist. When they went to Washington, DC in December, they played at the White House for President Tyler. Their tour continued into the southeast United States, to New Orleans, then Ohio. All told, the Lancashire Ringers, billed as the Swiss Bell Ringers, toured the US, Canada, and Cuba for almost three years, but I cannot find evidence that they came as far west as our area.

A group as popular and hyped as the Swiss Bell Ringers was bound to produce imitators. The first I found was in a June 14, 1845 newspaper article. It seems there was a bit of drama when the Campanologians (the original Swiss Bell Ringers) and the Campanologian Band of Brothers both appeared at the same time in Cleveland, OH. "The originals at once offered to decide the capabilities of each by giving a concert at once—both bands to give a performance, and the public to decide; but the Brothers declined the challenge and left the place." I love the idea of a handbell ring-off!

A June 22, 1845, article published in New Orleans suggests that when the Swiss Bell Ringers recently performed in Buffalo, NY, they found that a rival group had performed there before them. At this point they were unmasked (in print) as not being Swiss, but in fact being the Lancashire Ringers from England.

It is likely that these same Campanologian Brothers, also referred to as the Band of American Bell Ringers, were the rivals mentioned. Massachusetts papers in July of 1845 were reporting that these American Bell Ringers had just toured "the west" and Montreal. (In 1845, Ohio counted as "the west.") Around the same time, a New York newspaper was announcing in the same column that the Swiss Bell Ringers were appearing in Portland, Maine, while the Campanologian Brothers were appearing in Albany.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "THE VILLAGE GREEN." It is labeled "No. 5." and "FINALE." The score is written for two staves, likely representing the right and left hands of a handbell player. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

**Ding, Dong.**—The Campanologians recently visited Buffalo, N. Y., when they found that a rival company of "native artists" had been there before them, claiming to be as good as the genuine Swiss Bell Ringers, and asking patronage on the score of their nativity. The Simon Pures issued a card denouncing the "counterfeit presentment" as an imposture and humbug. Several of the presses in that vicinage have taken the home-brewed article under protection, and denounce the foreign band in turn as impostors—they claiming to be Swiss, when in fact they are Lancashire English weavers, who never saw the land of Tell. The quarrel is a very pretty one as it stands, and we have no doubt the respective parties will ring the changes upon it as long as it proves profitable to do so. We think it altogether unlikely that the American bells can be silenced. The Yankee company is composed of mettlesome fellows.

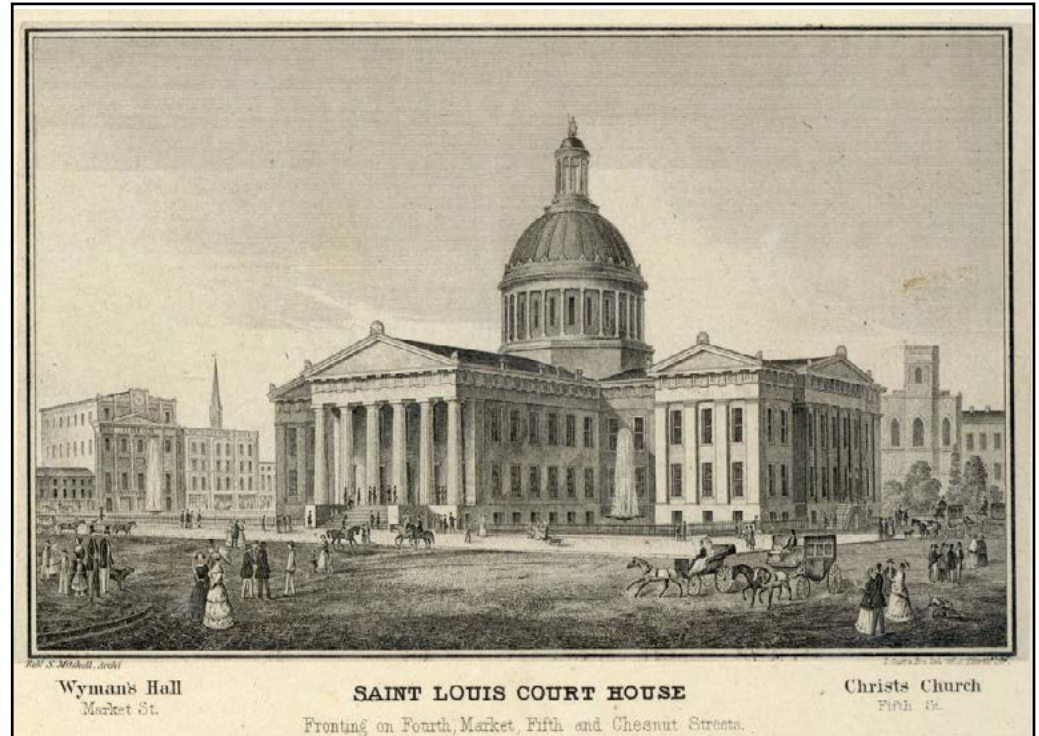


In fact, the “Swiss Bell Ringer” moniker became a generic way of describing tuned handbell ringing in the US. Rather than the specific name of a group, it became more of a musical performing concept. It is also the reason why instruments that are rightfully called “English handbells” were erroneously referred to as “Swiss” for so long.

## What About Area 8?

Of course Area 8 didn't exist back then; actually, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska weren't even states yet when the first handbells arrived in our region. As far as I can tell, it was another group also called the Campanologians or Swiss Bell Ringers who was responsible for bringing bells to our area in the mid-19th century. The earliest evidence I could find was an appearance at Wyman's Hall on Market Street in St. Louis in June of 1850. Their performances were in such demand that they added three concerts there. They moved along to Hannibal, MO in July, where the newspaper described them as being under the direction of Herr Conrad Freebertshyer. (I found this name spelled several different ways, but I am assuming all of the various spellings are the same person, and the same group.) They also visited Quincy IL, and Keokuk, Burlington, Davenport, and Dubuque, IA around the same time. To put this in perspective, realize that Iowa became a state only in 1846, four years earlier. In other locations, bell bands directed by Herr Freebertshyer were also called “Germania Bell Ringers.”

This 1854 drawing of the Saint Louis Court House shows Wyman's Hall on the left. The Swiss Bell Ringers performed here four years before this drawing, as the dome of the court house was still being built.



Interestingly, in 1853 the

Democratic Banner of Davenport, IA reported that the “Swiss Bell Ringers have purchased a large tract of land in Iowa, and intend taking up residence there, after having finished their farewell tour of concerts.” I gather this is the same Freeberthyser Swiss Bell Ringers group that introduced bells to our area three years before. After 5+ years of touring throughout the country with their musical troupe, they retired with on their accumulated fortune. And much like the farewell music tours of today that are really not the end, “after a retirement of seven years” they appeared again at the Mercantile Library in St. Louis in early 1861.

The 1922 obituary for Martin Freeberthyser said he was the last of the Swiss Bell Ringers, whose family had settled in Dubuque, IA after immigrating to the US from Switzerland in 1848 and touring the country as a famous theatrical troupe. He died at his home in Pinckneyville, IL. His funeral was in St. Louis and he was buried in Valhalla Cemetery there. So Area 8 can rightfully claim some fairly deep handbell heritage in this country.

But the most famous and apparently long-lasting American bell band was born when the Peak family musicians decided to branch out into bell ringing. The Peak (sometimes Peake) family had been traveling around New England performing vocal music as early as April 1845, and it appears they started incorporating bells into their act as the Peak Family Swiss Bell Ringers in 1852. This version of the Peak Family continued to perform on handbells across the country into the 1870s. Sadly by 1882, William Peak, the family's manager, father, and leader, was reported to be in jail as a vagrant. The newspaper reported that, “two years ago he was worth \$100,000 but now he is a pauper.”



A similar report in 1885 said the Peak family parents were now inmates at the Courtland County poor house near Homer, NY. Between lavishing large sums on their children, giving to charity, and making poor business investments, their considerable fortune was lost. In today's dollars, that would be about \$2.9 million, which suggests that his musical act was very successful for more than three decades.

Fortunately, Mr. Peak must have recovered somewhat because a decade later he was reported happily playing music and showing off his "remaining chime of French musical glasses" at his home in Brooklyn, NY.

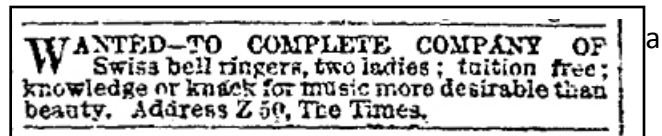
It seems clear that the "Peak" name was co-opted by other bell band groups, because they continued to perform at venues around the country even though the original Peak family management was no longer involved. It looks like the younger members of the Peak family went on performing with other groups but still used the Peak name. The younger William Peak married into the Berger family, and they frequently performed as Swiss Bell Ringers under the Peak and Berger names. Incidentally, when the younger William Peak finally settled down, he lived in Chicago for many years.

It is difficult to keep track of the various 19th century touring bell bands because they had similar names, and often the same groups appeared throughout the region on their tours. Here's a sampling of what I was able to find in each state.

## Missouri

In what is now Area 8, the Peak Family Swiss Bell Ringers were the second act to appear in the newly built Lockridge Hall in Kansas City in 1859. They traveled there by steamboat and performed for two nights. They returned to KC in 1866 to perform for two nights at Long's Hall. Both the Smith Bell Ringers and the Peak family appeared in Sedalia in 1869. The Smith Bell Ringers moved on to Springfield after, but perhaps should have stayed away. "As bell ringers, we cannot do the public the injustice to praise them." The entire troupe was advised to find another vocation.

The Peak family visited Louisiana (MO), Marshall (twice), and Jefferson City in 1873. Leavitt's Swiss Bell Ringers appeared in Savannah in 1874. Denlam's Bell Ringers appeared in Sedalia in 1874. Saint Louis hosted the Peak family ringers in 1875, where for a week "they afforded great pleasure to the patrons" of the Theatre Comique with the superior character of their performances. From St. Louis, the Peak family went to Rolla. Hannibal hosted what was billed as the Original Lancashire Bell Ringers in 1875, but somehow I doubt they really were. The Leavitt group was again touring in late 1875-1877 in Oregon (MO), Marshall, Lexington, and Linneus, Butler, Sedalia, and Independence—all to good reviews. Will L. Smith's Swiss Bell Ringers appeared at the Music Hall in Kansas City in 1886 with "Humpty Dumpty" pantomime that drew large audiences to several shows. In Liberty, the newspaper announced that "Smith's bell ringers will tintinnabulate at the opera house."



WANTED-TO COMPLETE COMPANY OF  
Swiss bell ringers, two ladies; tuition free;  
knowledge or knack for music more desirable than  
beauty. Address Z 50, The Times.

Also in 1886, a want-ad for two women bell ringers appeared in the Kansas City Times, that thankfully stressed that musical talent was more important than looks.

Another group called the Arion Swiss Bell Ringers performed at the Ninth Street Museum and Theatre in Kansas City, MO in 1887. A handpicked group of nine theater employees from across KC appeared at the Fountain Theater Club in Kansas City in 1888. There was a distressing story from August of 1888, when a nine year old girl, Docka Pihlgren, a child cornetist performing with the Peak family for the previous two months, died of overwork in KC after having gone through a summer tour of Kansas. In 1892, a KC newspaper was expressing the hope that Mr. Fred Berger would revive his troupe of bell ringers the next season. "There is loud demand for this charming kind of entertainment, a kind that has practically been out of vogue for many years." Presumably, the Faust Brothers Vaudeville Show featuring the London Bell Ringers at the Gilliss House Hotel in KC in 1897 was not the kind of charming entertainment that the paper was hoping for.

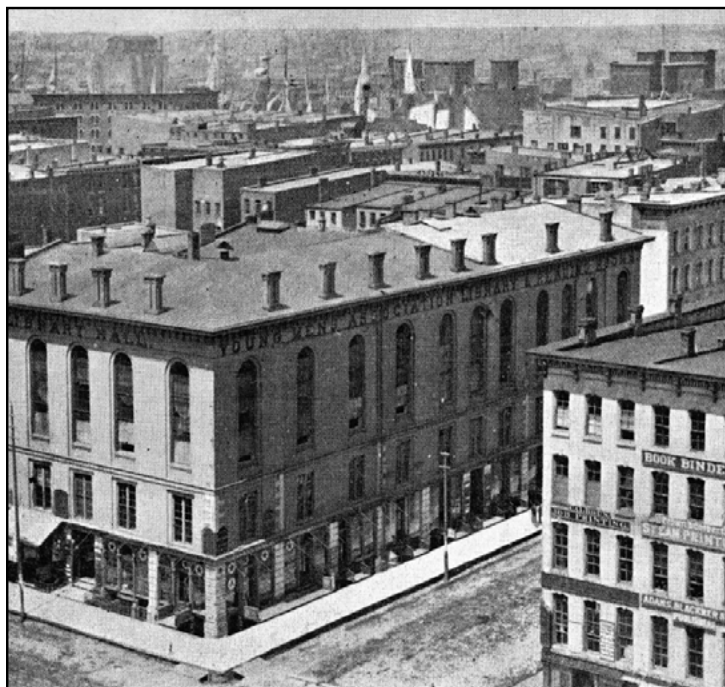
## Iowa

Dubuque hosted a group of Swiss Bell Ringers (but not the “original” ones) in 1853. Burlington also played host to the Swiss Bell Ringers (but these were the original ones, meaning the Freeberthyser group) in 1853. The Peak family “Germanian” Bell Ringers appeared in Keokuk and Davenport in 1855. Marshalltown hosted the Almondbury Hand Bell Ringers in 1857. The Peak family came to Davenport and Burlington, and were still performing occasionally around the state 10 years later. At the Courthouse in Des Moines in 1867, it is mentioned that they were assisted by the celebrated Berger family.

Council Bluffs papers went into “ecstasies (sic) of praise” over the performance of the Peak Family bell ringers in 1868, it being the “best entertainment ever witnessed” in the city. The Swiss Bell Ringers returned to Des Moines in 1869 to perform three performances at Moore’s Hall with a vocal group called the Alleghanians. The Peak Bell Ringers were back performing around Iowa in 1874 and again at Dohany’s Opera House in Council Bluffs in 1888.



Left: Dohany’s in Council Bluffs, IA, illustrated in 1887, where a later version of the Peak family ringers appeared in 1888.



View of Metropolitan Hall in Chicago taken in 1855. The Peak family ringers would perform here in 1859.

**Y, DECEMBER 5, 1867.**

Miscellaneous.

**COURT HOUSE!**  
GRAND CONCERTS OF THE  
**PEAK FAMILY!!**  
Vocalists, Harpists, Violinists, and  
**SWISS BELL-RINGERS,**



Assisted by the Celebrated  
**BERGER FAMILY!**  
Solo Instrumental Performers.  
**THE LARGEST TROUPE OF BELL-RINGERS  
IN THE WORLD!**  
**Silver Cornet Band!**  
Composed principally of Juveniles, under the Direction of FRED. BERGER.  
**TWO NIGHTS ONLY!**  
**THURSDAY & FRIDAY EVENINGS,**  
December 5th and 6th.

SCALE OF PRICES:  
Tickets, . . . . . 50 cts.  
Reserved Seats, . . . . . 75 cts.  
Tickets for sale at Mills & Co.'s Book Store, and at the News Depot in the Post-Office.  
Doors open at 7 1/2. Commence at 7 3/4.  
J. C. GOODBURN,  
Business Manager.  
Dec. 2-dtt\*

The ad that appeared in Des Moines, 1867.

## Illinois

The Chicago Tribune in 1853 announced the return of the Freeberthyser Swiss Bell Ringers, after they had played for packed audiences in Chicago the previous month. The same group also performed in Quincy. The Peak family appeared in Quincy in 1854, 1855, 1857, and 1859. The Peak family was also in Freeport in 1857. Chicago newspapers in 1859 suggested that the Peak Family Ringers appeared twice in the city that year, the second time at Metropolitan Hall where they apparently debuted a new set of silver bells. The following year they returned again. The Freeberthyser Swiss Bell Ringers came to Chicago in 1861 on their “oops, not retired” tour. The Peak family was back in at the Academy of Music for “classic parlor entertainment” 1872, and again in Chicago in 1876. A group called the Royal Bell-Ringers visited Chicago in 1882. Elsewhere in Illinois, newspapers announced performances of the Peak and Berger family bell ringers in Freeport in 1867 and Elgin in 1878.

## Kansas

Atchison played host to the Peak Family Swiss Bell Ringers in 1860 (before Kansas was a state!) at Holthaus Hall, and again in 1866. The Swiss Bell Ringers appeared in Leavenworth in 1864. The Swiss Bell Ringers appeared in 1886 at Dunning's Opera House in Kansas City, KS. The White Cloud Chief announced in 1868, "The celebrated Alleghenians and Swiss Bell Ringers are now in this State. We hope they will not imitate the Peake Family, two years ago, in visiting only the cities; but that they will give all a chance to hear them, and come around this way. To our taste, there never was music produced equal to the bells; and those who have never heard them, have missed a rare treat." Lawrence hosted the Peak Family Swiss Bell Ringers in 1869, and again at Liberty Hall in 1870. The Burger family performed in Lawrence in 1871 at Frazer's Hall to eager listeners.

The decade of the 1870s brought a considerable amount of bell ringing to Kansas, though not all of it was good. Residents of Emporia had a less than pleasant encounter with the Smith bell ringers in 1871. The stinging commentary of the review said, "one bugle blast from the Berger troupe is worth the whole Smith programme." Ouch!

Presumably the citizens of Emporia had a better experience the next year when the Peak Family Original Swiss Bell Ringers under the personal supervision of Wm. Peak, Sr. appeared for two nights at Bancroft Hall in 1872. After Emporia, they traveled to Troy and White Cloud. The Smith group appeared in Salina in 1874, but this time they were well received, and when they appeared in Wichita a couple weeks later they were also applauded.

In 1876, the Leavitt Bell Ringers made multiple appearances. Their arrival was announced, "Bell ringers are always fashionable, and this company is first class. They have a cornet band, orchestra, lady vocalists, and humorous singers; these, with the music of silver bells, make an entertainment of rare merit, and one that should be well patronized. They may be engaged at reasonable rates by churches, societies, lodges, etc., by conferring with the Agent who will be one week in advance of the party." They "travel by their own conveyance, and parade the streets with four horses and an elegant band wagon which contains a band of 7 pieces. They also give an open air concert in the evening, before the exhibition, thus giving the citizens two free entertainments." Thus, we find them in Troy, Emporia, Iola, and Hartford. Iola pronounced them, "real good," and Hartford said, "it was the best and sweetest music we ever listened to." But Emporia didn't seem to think they lived up to the hype. "The Leavitt bell ringers had a good house Monday night and gave a passable exhibition. Some of the singing was very ordinary, and the bell ringing cannot begin to come up to that of the Bergens (sic) and the Peaks." Thankfully, the people of Iola and Emporia, as well as Fort Scott and Lawrence, were treated to a Peak family tour just a few months later. The Lawrence paper dwelled on their longevity, saying it was the Peak's 57th season of touring, and they've added new attractions as the age required. They were "considered to be the best 'Bell Ringers' in the world." It appears to be a theme throughout the articles I read that the Peaks and their Berger counterparts consistently performed at a high level.

The Andrews bell ringers appeared in Salina in 1877, creating "considerable fun" and "gave some good music." Later that year the Leavitts were back. They appeared in Salina giving "a fair entertainment...the bell ringing was good." They also appeared again in Iola and Belleville. They had competition from Smith's bell ringers, who appeared in Hutchinson and Troy also in 1877. The Alleghanian bell ringers were also around in 1877. They had a rather unpleasant visit to Dodge City that involved a manager drunk on whiskey and a much-delayed performance that wasn't very good when it finally did commence. Let's hope their appearance in Emporia a week later was better.

The Smiths were back in Troy, Atchison, and Salina in 1878, while Oakes's Bell Ringers and Concert Troup visited Lawrence, Salina, and Atchison later that year. The bell ringing tide seemed to ebb and flow after this, bringing few in the early 1880s, but picking up again in the middle of the decade; likewise in the 1890s.



The Peak Family performed multiple times at the first Liberty Hall in Lawrence, KS.



## Nebraska

A group of Hungarian Bell Ringers performed as part of Carter's Zouave Troupe in Omaha in January, 1867, before Nebraska was officially a state. The Peak and Berger family bell ringers appeared in Nebraska City and Omaha in 1868, and Lincoln in 1870. The Peak Family Swiss Bell Ringers made their way into Falls City and Lincoln during their 1872 tour, where they were advertised as "The Largest Troupe of Bell Ringers in the United States—The Largest Set of Silver Table Bells, 7 1/2 Octaves, Chromatic scales, (the finest tuned and the best in tune)—The most perfect set of silver staff bells and best staff bell." Miss Fanny Peak served as the bell soloist.

Brownville hosted an unidentified group of Swiss bell ringers in 1874. The next year the newspaper noted, "since the completion of the railway to this place, Brownville is favored with most of the travelling shows." Thus the Leavitt Bell Ringers made an appearance there at the end of December, 1875. Here, as in other places I've seen, the star of the Leavitt show wasn't necessarily the bell ringers, but a comedian named Harry Eads. Brownville was treated to a high-caliber performance by the Peak Family of Bell Ringers in 1876, starring a well known Nebraskan musician, Prof. D.C. Smith. The Leavitt Bell Ringers and Harry Eads were back in 1876, and they also traveled to Falls City and Fairbury on this tour. In 1877, the Andrews Family Swiss Bell Ringers appeared in Lincoln before they moved on to Ashland; and the Leavitts were back in Harbine and Brownville. Here we learn a tidbit about the Leavitts that I had not previously seen—they had multiple companies that performed under the Leavitt name, so that they could be performing in different places at once. In this case, the concert was given by Leavitt's Bell Ringers Company No. 2, and "owing to the fact that Company No. 1 had been here only three weeks previous but a small audience was in



Funke's Opera House in Lincoln hosted the Arions Swiss Bell Ringers for a week in 1885 and 1886; and Smith's in 1887.

attendance." As in Kansas in this year, we see the Smiths also putting in an appearance in Brownville.

An unspecified and apparently untalented Swiss Bell Ringer group made their debut at City Hall in York in 1878, "their performance last evening was a sorry one and will be their last in all probability." They made a similarly bad impression on the people of Wahoo, who called them a fraud. The Oakes Bell Ringers made their way into Plattsmouth in 1879. Lincoln attracted the Royal Hand Bellringers and Jubilee Singers of London in 1883, when the "large and appreciative crowd was more than delighted with the rich mellow tones of the metallic cups."

The Alleghanian Vocalists and Swiss Bell Ringers caused a minor kerfuffle in Omaha and Central City in 1884 when they complained during their performance at their lack of patronage. The Arions Swiss Bell Ringers performed for a week at the Opera House in Lincoln in 1885, with a change of program every evening to attract a returning audience; later in the year they appeared for four nights in Hastings. It was obviously a success because they returned back to Lincoln for another week in 1886. When the Arions group performed in McCook in 1886, the review mentioned the absence of a key member and how inferior the performance was to the one the year before. Both the Oakes and the Smiths came through Lincoln in 1887 within a month of each other. Another Swiss Bell Ringer group appeared in Omaha in 1891 and again in 1898.



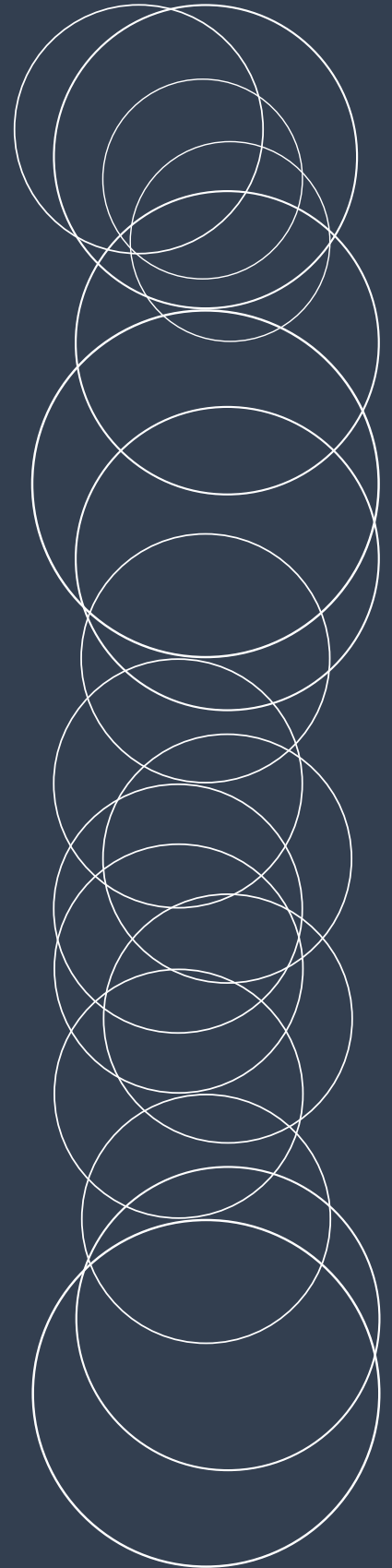
## The Nadir of Early Handbell Ringing

When William Peak died in 1899, his obituary suggested that his family did a great deal to spread the popularity of handbells in the 19th century, having visited every part of the United States, often repeatedly. Mr. Peak died in Brooklyn, NY, and his death was reported in the Kansas City Star and in numerous papers across the country. One article said, “bell ringing, like minstrelsy, had its day and in recent years bobs up only occasionally in vaudeville entertainments.” It is important to acknowledge that during this time period, bell bands appeared in shows that frequently included racist blackface performances that perpetuated harmful stereotypes in the name of comedy. This is part of the history of our instrument.

By the turn of the century, handbell ringing was very passé. Certainly bell band acts didn’t die away completely, but they tended to be relegated to one of several acts in a Vaudeville show rather than their own standalone performance. As late as 1921, a bell troupe called “Normalcy” was performing in vaudeville picture houses in Western Kansas. In 1922, “Holland Bell Ringers” performed a concert live on WDAF radio in Kansas City that featured bells of different types, harps, cymbals, saxophones, and a variety of “novel instruments characteristic of Holland musicians.”

This is where things stood with handbell ringing in the United States until Margaret Shurcliff brought new energy to the instrument in Boston in the early 20th century. The story will continue in our next edition of Quavers.

*Author’s Note: I would like to applaud the considerable resources available through the Mid-Continent Public Library’s online research databases. Most of the articles used in this piece were accessed through their America’s Historical Newspapers and NewspaperArchive databases, but I also used others. I would also like to acknowledge the research posted online by William Butler and Peter Jensen Brown. A proper written history would have full footnotes and citations for each of my claims above, but I have chosen to forgo that for the sake of space. If you have any questions about my sources, please feel free to contact me at [historian.area8@handbellmusicians.org](mailto:historian.area8@handbellmusicians.org).*



## Illinois Committee

### Illinois State Chair

Beth McFarland

### Western IL Rep

Don Wood

### Secretary

Beth McFarland

### Registrar

Kristin Kalitowski-Kowal

### Events

Sharon Schmidt

### Music Librarian

Beth McFarland

### Handbell Services Rep

Debi Robey

### Hand Chime Loan

### Program Coordinator

Patti Mangis

### Hand Chime Loan

### Program Mentor

Open - please contact

Kendall Ladd

### Food Coordinator

Anna Piro

## Iowa Committee

### Iowa State Chair

Dick Crusinberry

### Treasurer

Mary Lee Park

### Secretary

Donna Sprague

### Historian

Christina "Tina"

Elwood Gehrke

### Western Representative

Yvonne Johnson

### Eastern Representative

Cat Walker

## Missouri Committee

### Missouri State Chair

Trey Bures

### Past Chair

Suanne Comfort

### Treasurer

Suanne Comfort

### Membership

Sherry Boland

### Chime Chair

Christie White

## Nebraska Committee

### Nebraska State Chair

Byron Jensen

### Secretary

Natalie Radcliffe

### Treasurer/Registrar

Linda Ashely

### Chimes

Nancy Youngman

### Scholarship

Janet Chiocchi

### Members

Michael Allen

Jessica Kite

Deann Nicolaus

Brian Lew

Angela Wright

## Kansas Committee

### Kansas State Co-Chairs

Julie Assel &

Janelle Flory Schrock

### Treasurer

Karla Denton

### Secretary

OPEN - Contact

Julie or Janelle

### Chimes

OPEN - Contact

Julie or Janelle

## Does Your School Qualify?

Area 8 offers a handchime loan program to schools in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. *Qualifying schools will receive:*

- 3-octave set of handchimes for one semester (approx. 4 months) with teaching materials
- support network and/or mentor
- one-year membership to Handbell Musicians of America.

To check availability of handchimes for loan or to submit an application, please contact Nancy Youngman, Area 8 Chimes Chair.

*To learn more about the Chime Loan Program, visit the [Area 8 website](#).*

*A video featuring Nancy Youngman describes in detail the Area 8 chime loan program and can be found [here](#).*

# Upcoming Area 8 Events

## February 2023

February 25, 2023

8:00 am to 4 pm SpRingfest 2023

Our Savior Lutheran Church, Fenton, Missouri

---

## March 2023

March 4, 2023

7:00 pm St. Olaf Handbell Choir Winter Tour Concert

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, Iowa

March 12, 2023

6:30 pm Bell-issimo Concert: Celebrate the Irish

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

---

## April 2023

April 2, 2023

4:00 pm The Chalice Bronze Concert

Raytown Christian Church, Raytown, Missouri

April 30, 2023

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert

First Congregational Church of Western Springs, Western Springs, Illinois

---

## June 2023

June 2, 2023

7:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Concert

St. John's Lutheran Church, Des Moines, Iowa

June 3, 2023

7:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Concert

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Urbandale, Iowa

# National Events

February 2023

Distinctly Bronze East 2023

02/23/2023 12:00 PM - 02/26/2023 08:00 PM ET

New Bern, North Carolina

Reaching for Bronze

02/24/2023 08:00 AM - 02/26/2023 08:00 PM ET

New Bern, North Carolina

July 11-15, 2023

Handbell Musicians of America National Seminar

Irving Convention Center/Westin Hotel

Irving, Texas

## Publishing in Quavers

4 publications per year,  
published once each season.

## Articles

Articles are due on the  
10th day of January, April,  
July, and October.

## Advertising

[Click here](#) for more details  
about advertising in *Quavers*.  
6 ads for the price of 5!  
Run 5 identical ads in 5  
successive *Quavers* and get  
the 6th ad free.

## Events & Concerts

must be submitted by the  
25th of January, April, July,  
and October to be included  
in *Quavers*. To submit  
a concert or event for  
inclusion, click [here](#) or  
go to the A8 Website,  
Events page.

## Questions?

Please send all questions  
and comments about  
this and future *Quavers*  
publications to Beth Ann  
Edwards, Editor:  
newslettereditor.area8@  
handbellmusicians.org

*Find the most up-to-date  
calendar and details  
about events on the  
[A8 website](#).*

Please check websites for  
updated calendar and event  
information.

---

*Find the most up-to-date calendar and details  
about events on the [A8 website](#).*