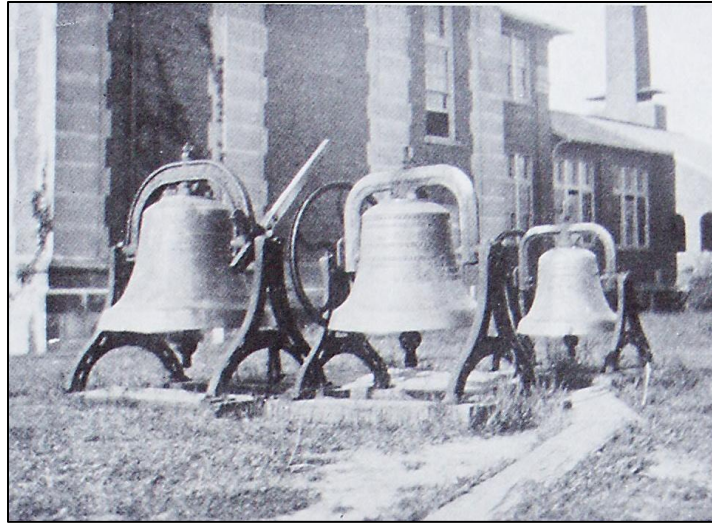


Church bells at St. Luke's Catholic Church in Plain, Wisconsin



THE STORY OF THE BELLS OF ST. LUKE

May 21, 1885 - The Times

A bell weighing 600 pounds was taken from this station to Plain last Thursday for the Catholic church about to be built. The name of the donor, Ignatz Bindl, and the name of the official priest, Rev. (F. J.) Shimonick, are cast on the bell in raised letters. A Mrs. Theresa Weishan is donating a bell weighing 400 pounds. The church will then have three bells weighing 800 pounds, 600 pounds, and 400 pounds respectively. It may seem strange to some that a country church should have so many bells, but it is the custom with large congregations of Catholics to have two or more bells to be rung on various occasions. The ringing of each bell is understood by the members. The Franklin (Plain) church is to be a very fine, costly one. Work will commence on the new catholic church next week.

April 6, 1977 – The Home News

The higher tower of the church (the present church) contains three bells - the largest named Luke, the medium one Mary for the Blessed Virgin, and the smallest John. The John bears the inscription to "Johann Weishan - the first white settler in Franklin, Sauk County, Wisconsin, in 1847." The Luke and John bells are inscribed with the date "1885" and note a "25th Jubilee."

Ringling the Bells of St Luke

By Harold & Anita Frank

When the cyclone demolished the old church in 1918, only the steeple containing the bells remained. The steeple was dismantled, and the bells moved to the site of the present church. They were rung at ground level to announce the church services which were held in the school building at that time. In 1939, they were hoisted to their present location in the bell tower of the new church. There are three bells - large, medium, and small. Since the primary purpose of the bells is to alert people of an impending church service, they are always rung at the start of the Mass. Some years ago, on weekdays, the ringing of all three bells indicated a High Mass, the two smaller bells a Low Mass, with Sundays and Holy Days always utilizing all three bells. Until a few years ago, the medium bell was rung briefly, one half-hour before the beginning of all Masses.

Above articles are from *The Home News* (Spring Green, WI), October 13, 1982, page 9, with the title "Hear them ring." The 3 bells pictured above from the 1935 "Chimes" yearbook were located on the north side of the Catholic school and Chapel building which was dedicated in 1920.

ST. LUKE'S CHIMES

Sometimes sad, sometimes glad
Sometimes just a calling clear;
Oft with glee, happy free,
Sounding far and near.

Jubilant ringing, exultant singing
On each high feast day;
Sweet joy shedding, gladness spreading,
By their happy lay.

Sometimes groaning, sometimes moaning
Calling sinners to repent;
Now extoling, then consoling,
Giving hope when they relent.

Sometimes tolling, sadly rolling
Telling of a loved one gone;
Hearts are bleeding, bells are pleading,
Begging prayers for wrong.



Zita Schmitz '35

(Above is from *St. Luke's Chimes*, Volume II, St. Luke's High School, Plain, Wisconsin. 1935. Poem and photo of 3 bells on page 11, and Zita's photo on page 21)

Zita Schmitz was a Senior in the Class of 1935 when her poem was published. She was born August 5, 1918, in Bear Valley, Richland Co., WI, to Peter Anthony and Anna Margaret (Bissen) Schmitz. She married Harold Robert Nachreiner. Zita died April 2, 1963, Plain, Sauk Co., WI.

Dean Blau (1933-2015) recalled hearing St. Luke's church bells toll once for each age of a person that had recently died. The Blaus could hear the tolling bells from their farm 2-1/2 miles north of Plain and counted the tolls to try to figure out who died if they knew someone had been sick. The bells also rang at noon each day, and people would stop their work in the fields and bow their heads in prayer.

From *St. Luke Catholic Church, Plain, Wisconsin Bicentennial Memories*, 1976: "When there is a death in the parish the large bell is rung approximately 50 times, then the same bell tolls the age

of the person who died. On the day of a funeral the bell is again tolled until the casket enters the church, when all three bells are rung. After the mass, the bell again tolls until the funeral procession reaches the gravesite. . . . St. Luke's has had many dedicated bell ringers over the years. Among them are: Joseph Laubmeier, Ignatz Schreiner, Clem Frank (whose sons, Harold, Gordon and Victor took over the bell ringing chores each summer), Gerhard Dischler, Mrs. Christine Voelkel, Thomas Bindl, George Weitzel, Alphonse Alt, Josie Hetzel, Harland Bladl and presently Ed Frank.”

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