

# The Daily Herald.

## Bells to ring for Bicentennial

By GREG MENZA

Staff Writer

Maury County historian Bob Duncan has called for the Maury County hills to be alive with the sound of music on Thanksgiving Day — specifically, bell music.

“At noon Thursday, we would like everyone to ring their bells 200 times to kick off our Bicentennial Year,” Duncan said. “It doesn’t matter if it’s just a small hand bell. Little bells are significant, too.”

Maury County Mayor Jim Bailey credited Duncan with coming up with the idea for “The Ceremony of the Bells.”

“Bob has come up with a nice idea and worked to put together what I think will be a great event,” Bailey said. “We hope a lot of people will want to come out and be a part of it.”

Maury County Reference Librarian Adam Southern was chosen by Duncan to be the official bell-ringer. Southern will begin the serenade from the courthouse at noon on Thanksgiving Day.

“He’ll be our very own “hunchback of Notre Dame” for the day,” Duncan said.

Duncan said he is not concerned the event might sound a flat note because it is on Thanksgiving.

“I think it will be a memorable event that families will want to participate in, and having it on Thanksgiving will make it extra special,” he said. “Those who can’t make it downtown should just step out on their porches or in front of their homes and ring whatever bells they have.”

Among the larger bells that will be heard is one made in 1848 for Columbia’s First Presbyterian Church by the Menelly Foundry — the same artisans said to have created our nation’s Liberty Bell.

“They were the Cadillac of bells,” Spring Hill historian Mark Bridges said.

Bridges’ son, John, a sophomore at Spring Hill High School, where the elder Bridges teaches history, has spent more than 100 hours refurbishing the bell to get it ready for Thursday’s bell ringing ceremony. Bridges took the task on as his Eagle Scout project.

He will begin ringing the 680 pound bell at noon and will be relieved by members of his Scout Troop 114 until all 200 rings have sounded.

With the help of his dad, church records and the writings of the late Daily Herald columnist Jill Garrett, John also learned about the bell’s history.

“Doing this restoration is a good Eagle Scout project because it helped my church and it was interesting,” he said. “I liked learning about its history.”

Among the historic facts John uncovered is the survival of the bell through two fires in the church’s original location at what is now Regions Bank on Garden Street. The first fire destroyed First Presbyterian’s building in 1849. In 1915 a second fire destroyed the rebuilt church. Only the bell survived both.

Duncan will lead interested citizens in ringing the historic Andrews School bell, which has been refurbished and ultimately may be placed in a bell tower commemorating the bicentennial. The bell will be rung at noon Thursday in the parking lot across the street from the James K. Polk Ancestral Home on West Seventh Street.

City officials hope all local churches will plan to ring their bells. More information may be obtained by calling (931) 375-1500.

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