

Mansfield memories: The town's Revere Bell finds new home

By Kevin McNatt and Andrew Todesco

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MANSFIELD - If you have passed by the new Mansfield Public Safety building recently, you might have noticed a shiny bell mounted behind a glass tower. The building might be new, but the bell is old. Here a brief history of Mansfield's Revere Bell.



A bell was cast at the Paul Revere and Sons foundry in 1827 has found new home in the new public safety building on Rt. 106.

For much of the 18th and 19th centuries, the most important building in town was the meetinghouse on what we now call the South Common. The meetinghouse served as a church and was a central location for social and political events of the day. By the 1820s there was a growing need for a bell to alert the townspeople of church services and other events. Unfortunately, no funds were available. It was decided to approach Asa Clapp of Portland, Maine,

to see if he would finance a bell.

Born on a farm in East Mansfield, Asa Clapp went on to become a Revolutionary War soldier, a sea captain, and a wealthy merchant in Portland. Mr. Clapp instantly agreed to pay for the bell, replying as follows to Dr. Benjamin Billings of Mansfield: "In consideration of your earnest wishes and the early and sincere love I bear for my native Town, I present this bell to them in hopes it will tend to unite the good people more in one scheme worshipping God, as the scheme is not of as much consequence to man as a willing mind and a humble heart."



A Revere Bell once graced the town's meetinghouse on the South Common.

The bell was cast at the Paul Revere and Sons foundry in 1827. It is inscribed as follows:

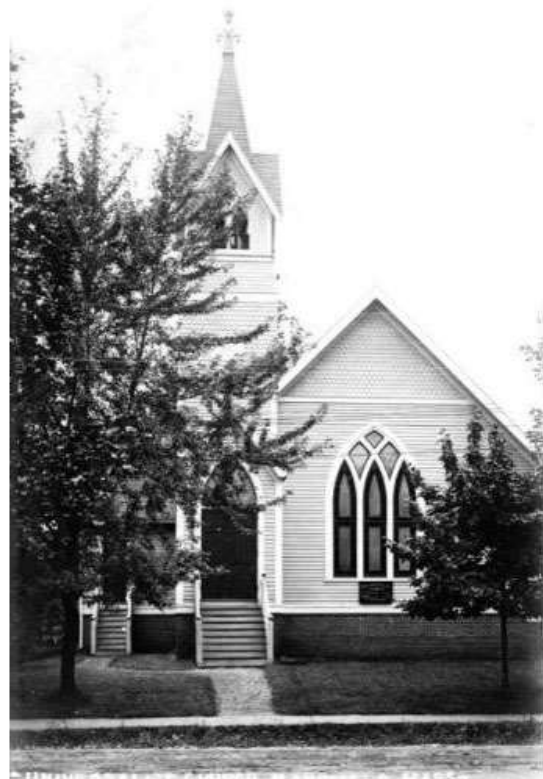
REVERE BOSTON 1827
PRESENTED BY ASA CLAPP ESQ OF
PORTLAND IN TESTIMONY OF HIS
EARLY AND CONTINUED
AFFECTION FOR
HIS NATIVE TOWN OF MANSFIELD

The bell remained in the meetinghouse on the South Common until the building was moved to Union Street in 1872. It stayed there until the meetinghouse was dismantled. The bell was moved to the new Universalist Church at 96 Rumford Avenue in 1890, where it remained until the Universalist Church disbanded.

In 1936 the bell was moved again, this time to St. John the Evangelist Church at 43 High Street. There it would remain for 79 years. In 2015 St. John's congregation disbanded and formed a new congregation in Easton. St. John's graciously returned the bell to the Town of Mansfield. Badly tarnished after years of exposure, the bell was refurbished by New



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England Brass Refinishing of Brockton. The bell was stored for a time until its installation at the Public Safety building in May 2019.

Now nearly 200 years after it was cast, Mansfield's Revere Bell has another new home, safe once again in the custody of the Town of Mansfield under the watchful eye of our police and fire departments. We would have to think that somewhere Asa Clapp is smiling.

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