

The Bolton Fire Hall Bell

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The story as I heard it was as follows; When the Bolton Public School burnt down the Fire Chief recovered the School Bell from the ashes and brought it back to the Fire Hall where it was used to alert volunteer firefighter to assemble. When James Bolton School Principle Bruce Chevalier retired he wanted the Bell brought to James Bolton Public School as his retirement gift. A fund was taken up but the Fire Chief at the time was unwilling to give up the Bell and it remains with Bolton Fire Station 302.

Background Research

"The Temperance Hall which had been purchased on March 24, 1858 by the Sons of Temperance from John Helliwell for \$75, and was sold to the Bolton School Board in September 1860. The building was located on the south-east corner of John and Victoria St and was used for school purposes over the following 14 years. The Temperance Hall School continued to be used until the new school was build on Albert St. On Feb 27, 1875, the lot and building were sold by public auction to George Elliott for the sum of \$247, but did not include the Bell that was later transferred to the new school, which disappointed the purchaser greatly. The building was dismantled in 1953 by James Goodfellow." - Excerpts from School Days by Murray Hesp

Temperance Hall is shown on the Bolton, Tremaine Map 1859 and according to the T. C. Prosser map of 1854 Temperance Hall is shown as being located on Lot 111 which is located on the corner of John and Victoria St. The Temperance Hall stood until 1953 at which time it was being used as a barn. It was sold to James Goodfellow who dismantled it and used the timbers to build a new Seed Plant at the Mill. Coincidentally, this property was bought by my Great Grandfather Roland Hyatt at about the same time as the building was sold to Mr. Goodfellow and he built the house that is located there today.



Location of Temperance Hall: Corner of John Street & Victoria Street, lot 111. Tremaine Map, 1859

"In early 1874 a lot on Albert Street was purchased from William Curliss for \$400 where the new Bolton Public School was to be located." - Excerpts from School Days by Murray Hesp

On December 27, 1968, the Bolton Public School, also known as the Albert Street School, was destroyed by fire.



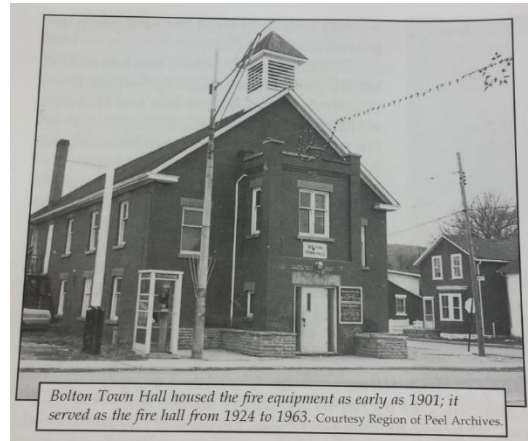
Bolton Public School circa 1897 and turn of the century with Belfry



Bolton Public School circa 1910 with Belfry



Bolton Public School after 1923 when Belfry was removed and 1960's renovations



Bolton Town Hall pre and post 1942 with the addition of the Belfry

Answering the Call



From 1924 to 1963 the Fire Hall was in the basement of the Old Town Hall. In 1963 the Fire Station was moved to Timothy Lane and it was this Fire Station that answered the call, in 1968, for the fire at the Albert Street School.

“In August 1944, Murray Hesp and his father where near the Town Hall when the Bell rang, raising the alarm about a barn fire southwest of the Village.” Pg. 68, Answering the Call

“A Bell mounted on the Town Hall was the most effective way of notifying the community of a fire in progress, until the Bolton Telephone Company Limited was formed in 1920. After the Bell was electrified in 1943, the phone operator could ring it by remote control. In 1955, a fire

siren mounted on two 40-foot poles on the east side of Chapel Street replaced the Bell.” Pg. 74, Answering the Call

“In new hall opened in 1989. In a nostalgic look back, the men installed the fire bell from the Old Town Hall over the door.” Pg. 84, Answering the Call



Rough cast Bell at the current Fire Station

Bolton residence Cyril Wallace and Dave Richardson recount the sound of the Bell in the Old Town Hall as having a “gong” sound as have only a single strike unlike what you may hear with a church bell.

Conclusion

After reviewing all the details of the story I can find no documented link between the Albert Street School and the Bell and the Bolton Fire Hall. There is no doubt that a Bell existed at the Temperance Hall School and that the bell was transferred to the Bolton School after 1875. I have been unable to source any written accounts of the Bell being retrieved for the Bolton School fire. Oral accounts recollect a hand bell that was rung to summon the children to class starting in the 1940's until the time the school burnt down. The location of this hand bell is still known and in the possession of a private citizen.