

Acknowledgement: Supplementary timeline and records from the Mayo Historical Archives provided courtesy of Mr. Jeffrey Daehn, Bell Master, and Ms Karen F. Koka, Librarian, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota.

“For many years Dr. W. J. Mayo and Dr. C. H. Mayo have had in mind a carillon for Rochester and we all know that anything they may plan eventually becomes a reality.”

—Dr. Donald Balfour describing the carillon project
at the Clinic Staff Meeting of September 20, 1928

Carillon Time Line

1925

July 23 First discussion of the carillon, initiated by Dr. Will, appears in the Board of Governors’ minutes.

“Dr. W. J. Mayo reported a conference with Reverend G. P. Sheridan concerning the installation of a carillon at the Congregational Church. Dr. Mayo stated that he felt this was something which should not be installed in a church of any one denomination but should be placed in a tower constructed for its use in a public building.”

1926

August 18 The Board of Governors’ minutes report that “Dr. Plummer discussed the plans for the new building.”

Two other items of business followed, then “Dr. W. J. Mayo brought up the question of installing in the city a carillon with bells or chimes. Dr. Plummer stated that it would be almost impossible at this time to change the plans of the new building to provide for its [the carillon] being placed there, and Dr. Mayo appointed Dr. Balfour and Mr. Lobb as a committee to look into the matter of making it a community affair and possibly locating the carillon in the new central school building.”

1927

May 4 Harry Harwick sends a letter to Thomas Ellerbe, architect, saying that the placement of the carillon requires “considerable height for it, or it is not successful.” He suggests that the instrument could be placed on a specially designed water tank that the city would soon need to build at the top of College Hill Park.

May – July Dr. Will travels to Europe from May 21 to July 10. While in England he visits the Gillett & Johnston foundry and the Taylor foundry. On June 27, at his request, Gillett & Johnston sends a formal proposal to Ellerbe Architects, “Estimate and Specifications For a Carillon of 23 Bells for the Mayo Clinic, U. S. A.”

May 23 Toronto architects Sproatt & Rolph reply to questions from Dr. Balfour regarding requirements for carillon installations. They also recommend Taylor or Gillett & Johnston as foundries that might cast the bells.

July 13 “The Board [of Governors] discussed the advisability of locating the Carillon which Drs. W. J. and C. H. Mayo and Mr. J. H. Kahler propose to present to the City of Rochester as a soldiers’ memorial, in the tower of the new Clinic building. It was the sense of the Board that this would provide a suitable place for the Carillon for the time being and until the City or The American Legion should erect a proper structure to house it elsewhere.”

October 2-11 A Mayo committee visits seven carillons on the American east coast and in Canada.

Dr. Balfour later noted in his summary of the carillon project to the staff that it was “decided to duplicate the carillon in the Memorial Tower at the University of Toronto” at this time.

October 3, 11 Rev. J. L. Belford, a Brooklyn priest, recommends the Les Fils de Georges Paccard foundry in France.

Dr. Will’s Oct. 11 response states that the Clinic has already “decided on the Croydon people,” that is, the Gillett & Johnston foundry.

October 11-31 The carillon is ordered from the Gillett & Johnston foundry of Croydon, England.

November – The Gillett & Johnston foundry casts the bells for the Rochester Carillon.

December

1928

c. January No. 23, the last—and largest—bell is cast, a 4-ton B-flat.

- March 3** Over 2,400 bell ringers attend a Gala hosted at the Croydon Foundry by Gillett & Johnston to celebrate the casting of the largest tuned bell ever made, 18 tons, for the Riverside Church Carillon in New York. The 23-bell Rochester/Mayo Carillon, recently cast and set up for “a hard fortnight’s working test,” is played at the event. Oral tradition holds that Lord Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, who spoke at the event, also blessed the Rochester instrument.
- March 30** Dr. Plummer cables Gillett & Johnston, “Tower Mayo Clinic ready erection bells. When erection start?”
- April 3** Gillett & Johnston ships the carillon to New York aboard the *S.S. Minnekada*. They also note that their installation foreman, A. H. Townsend, is working at a church in Cohasset, Massachusetts, but will come to Rochester when notified of the carillon’s arrival there.
- April 17** The bells reach the port of New York and are shepherded through customs by Thomas & Pierson, Customs and Freight Brokers.
- April 18** The carillon begins the final leg of its journey west on Pennsylvania Railroad flat cars.
- April 24** The bells arrive in Rochester. Mayo cables A. H. Townsend in Massachusetts: “Bells on track here. What shall we do?”
- Spring** The carillon is installed in the new Clinic tower. It is inscribed “Dedicated to the American Soldier.”
- September 16** Mayo hosts a dedication ceremony for the carillon—and the new building. Dr. Charlie states that “because of the great necessity of using the new Clinic building as rapidly as the floors are completed there will be no formal opening, and this day of dedication must serve. The Clinic is now open.”
- October 17** Board of Governors’ minutes note, “Dr. Balfour suggested that J. J. Drummond be given an honorarium not exceeding \$500 a year for his services in playing the carillon. The Board left the matter with Dr. Balfour and Mr. Harwick for settlement.” Mr. Drummond was also an administrator at the Worrall Hospital.
- 1957** Rochester’s first carillonneur, James J. “Jimmy” Drummond, records *Out of the Clouds*.
- 1961** Carillon expert, Arthur Bigelow, recommends that the Rochester Carillon be expanded to 56 bells, which would put it into the “concert size” category.
- 1964-1965** Mayo discusses expanding the carillon with both the Schulmerich Company and the I. T. Verdin Company, but no action is taken. Schulmerich proposes replacing the hand and foot-played clavier with electrical hammers to strike the bells, a plan that Mayo does not favor.
- 1974** Mayo reopens discussions about a carillon expansion with the I. T. Verdin Company. Clinic carillonneur, Dean Robinson, visits with company officials about the potential project.
- 1975** Dean Robinson, the second Mayo Clinic carillonneur, and James Keane, a senior student in the Mayo Medical School, record *Bells Over Rochester*.
- 1976**
- October 1** A contract is signed with the I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, to carry out the expansion, with the additional 33 bells to be cast by Petit-Fritsen of Holland. The contract includes the bells and action, the new 56-note keyboard and cabin, and a 56-note practice machine.
- 1977**
- September 16** The expanded 56-bell carillon is dedicated. It was made possible by gifts of descendants of the Alphonso Gooding Family of Rochester: Mr. Judson Gooding, Mrs. Frances Gooding Sheets and Mr. Parker Sanders in memory of his wife, Isabelle Gooding Sanders.
- 2006** Conservation and overhaul of the carillon is done by the Het Molenpad Expertise company. When a crack is found in Gillett & Johnston bell No. 1, a new bell is ordered from and cast by the Taylor Foundry of England, which had the original specifications and molds from the defunct Gillett & Johnston company.
- 2013** Installation of a computerized clock allows the carillon to play the Westminster Chimes at the quarter hour for the first time in many years. Dr. Will originally requested this function, but the mechanism had stopped working. The new mechanism was gifted by John T. and Lillian Mathews.