

The Story of St. Patrick

The original St. Virgil's Church had neither belfry nor bell when built at 48 West Hanover Avenue in 1883. But a belfry was added when the church was moved to Five Corners in 1888, and, through the graciousness of parishioners Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Conklin, an 981-pound bell named St. Patrick was hung from St. Virgil's steeple in 1889.

St. Patrick pealed from St. Virgil's until the old church was demolished in 1956, when the bell was given to the parish of St. Joseph's in Mendham. In June, 1976, St. Virgil's parishioner Dan Myers noticed an old bell in the tall grass behind the St. Joseph rectory. His father, Dan Myers, Jr., recognized the old St. Virgil's bell and Fr. James Fallon obtained permission to bring St. Patrick home.

Parishioner Bob Somol trucked the bell to Morris Plains. Fr. Fallon asked the parish for suggestions to house the bell and, with the help of parishioner John Flory, designed a bell tower incorporating the 1888 cornerstone from the old church and part of the canopy which formerly hung over the altar in the present church.

The Bishop McLaughlin Council of the Knights of Columbus volunteered to pay for construction of the tower. Carmine Moschella and Bill Dempsey excavated the foundation in the Fall of 1977 and bricklayers Pat Doherty, Jim Miller and Dave O'Keefe, assisted by K of C members, completed the tower by November, 1977.

Meanwhile, George Calazaferre, a neighbor but not a parishioner, manufactured the iron supports to hang the bell and devised a locking mechanism.

St. Patrick rang from the new tower on Christmas Eve, 1977 - a St. Virgil's tradition returned home - thanks to the alertness, initiative and labor of many parishioners.



Bill Dempsey, Fr. Browne, Dan Myers and Carmine Moschella break ground for the tower to hang the historic St. Patrick Bell which was returned to St. Virgil's in 1976 after a 20 year absence. The bell first pealed from the belfry of the old St. Virgil's Church in 1888. The new bell tower incorporates the original 1888 cornerstone from the old church.



[Return to the Parish history main page.](#)

The Parish history page will link you to:

The first part of this history; The History of St. Virgil's School; The Biography of James Fallon; The Story of St. Virgil and the St. Virgil relic; The Story of the St. Patrick Bell; and The Parish Honor Roll.

