

The Harry W. McGinniss Memorial Carillon At the Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church

October 1989

At the Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church

Since their beginnings in the 15th century Belgium, church carillons have marked the hours have rung out music in towns and villages across Europe and Americas.

Carillons came to contain as many as 70 bells, which are played from a keyboard. The modern bells are forged so that they can be tuned to a variety of harmonic intervals. Playing the carillon requires musical expertise, time and dedication. This combination is not available in most communities, and full-time church musical directors are hard to find.

However, a recent innovation – the electronic carillon – has solved this modern problem. And thanks to the dedication and thoughtfulness of a church and its family, Kensington area residents are treated to the authentic-sounding chimes of the Harry W. McGinniss Memorial Carillon.

Presbyterian Church was a vital part of his life. According to his daughter, Dr. Aria McGinniss a life-long resident of Chevy Chase View, Harry McGinniss rarely missed a Sunday at the church, acting as a greeter to all who came. When he died in 1965, his family and friends decided that a carillon would both ass to the church and would be something Harry McGinniss would have taken great pleasure in.

Thus, the McGinniss carillon was installed in 1969. Made by Schullmerick Company of Pennsylvania, it sits in metal case in the church balcony.

The carillon plays tapes that are changed according to the liturgical calendar. It is set to play every 3 hours from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day of the year.

James W. Burgess, the church's business manager at the time of the carillon's installation, became the first keeper of the carillon. He was followed both roles by his son-in-law, John Parce.

Today, Marion Baucer is in charge of maintaining the carillon, changing the tapes and adjusting the seasonal changes.

Next time you're sitting in rush hour traffic on Connecticut Avenue, enjoying a quiet moment in the garden, or walking the dog, listen for the carillon, greeting Kensington with its gentle reminder for the passing hours.