

Sonora Grammar School Bell, By Pat Perry

A piece of Sonora's history has been returned to the City of Sonora. Betty Castle, former City Clerk for the City, has donated an antique hand bell that was used by teachers at the Sonora Grammar School, commonly referred to as the Dome.

A teacher typically rang a handheld bell to signal students to come inside or to begin and end class.

The bell is eight inches tall and four and one half inches in diameter. It has a wooden handle, a brass body, and an iron clapper with a dense ball that strikes the body to make a very loud ring.

The bell has come to the City in a rather circuitous manner. Jesse Damin and his wife Martha Hembree Damin were janitors at the Grammar School. When they retired they were given the bell as a memento of their service. Jesse, knowing his neighbor Clarence House, liked antiques gave him the bell. At that time, Clarence owned Elsbree's Cigar store in downtown Sonora, and planned to have it on display there. However, the bell never made it to the store. After Clarence and his wife, Katie, passed away it became the property of their daughter, Betty House Castle.

The loud ring of the bell would certainly have gotten the students' attention.



There are no identifying marks on the bell, which was used at the Sonora Grammar School for many years.