



Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Curatorial Records, circa 1994-1997

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 98-042, National Museum of American History.  
Division of Cultural History, Curatorial Records

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## Descriptive Entry

This accession consists of records that document the acquisition of a bell to be hung in the north tower of the Smithsonian Building in 1996 during the 1996 celebration of the Smithsonian Institution sesquicentennial. The bell was manufactured by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England. David Shayt, a Museum Specialist in the Division of Cultural History, National Museum of American History, and W. David Todd, horologist in NMAH, were deeply engaged in planning for the bell's acquisition and installation. Materials include correspondence, photographs, and architectural drawings.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

Bells

### Types of Materials:

Architectural drawings  
Black-and-white photographs  
Books  
Manuscripts

Names:

Shayt, David H.

Smithsonian Institution -- Anniversaries, etc.

Smithsonian Institution 150th Birthday Party on the National Mall (1996: Washington, D.C.)

Todd, W. David

Whitechapel Bell Foundry (London, England)

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## Container Listing

### Box 1

- Box 1 of 2 Folder 1 Bell Beginnings. Renwick's bell tower; Regents' 1851 call for clock and bell; Ripley's 1965 approval of bells concept; Shayt's July 7, 1994 appeal; Muldoon's staff survey notes.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 2 Smith of Derby Proposals. November-December 1994 bids from Alan Androuais (Smith of Derby); company literature.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 3 A. T. Cross Funding. Bell budget (\$40,000 approved by 150th Program Committee; employee-funding approach rejected); May 1995 offer from Alice Burnette to A. T. Cross (1846-1996); letter of acceptance; company pen literature; photo of CEO Ron Boss.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 4 150th Programming. Meeting plans, schedules, notes linking bell with other 150th-birthday undertakings.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 5 Bell/Clock Contract. Smith of Derby contract signed by the Office of Contracting and Property Management (OCPM) July 18, 1995, SI-4 requisition and supporting memos, invoices.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 6 Bell Inscription. Memos, drawings charting development of wording on bell. Photos of words as cast.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 7 London Trip, September 1995. Planning memos, itineraries of Smithsonian, A. T. Cross parties attending bell casting at Whitechapel Bell Foundry: Pachter, Burnette, Stamm, Shayt, Boss, (Goodway).
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 8 Big Ben Visit, September 18, 1995. Letters of permission from British Government authorizing special visit by Shayt and Goodway up into clock room and belfry of Big Ben at Houses of Parliament to inspect Dent clock and Whitechapel's Big Ben bell during the twelve o'clock noon strike.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 9 Whitechapel Bell Foundry (WBF). Bell spec sheets, drawings, photos of casting, Smithsonian people at WBF September 1995, foundry booklets.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 10 Furnaceman Brian Thompson. Letters between Shayt and Whitechapel employee who prepared bronze metal for Smithsonian bell. Features Thompson's detailed descriptions of metal, molding, and casting procedures; bell cleaning, tuning, repair options, and his education (Additional Thompson writings and drawings on other bells and their making in Shayt's NMAH bell data files.)
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 11 Journal - "The Smithsonian Bell" by David H. Shayt. A 91-page bound memoir handwritten by Shayt giving first-hand descriptions of the bell's day-by-day progress from liquid bronze to final ringing. Begins with London program September 1995, concludes with bell closing out 150th year, December 31, 1996. Contains drawings of bell-casting procedure, rosters of people and places.

- Box 1 of 2 Folder 12 Other Bells Cast With Ours. Letters, photos, literature referencing the three other, smaller bells cast from the same melt during the September 21, 1995 pour at Whitechapel: one bell each for churches in Battersea (Jamaica) and Marietta (Georgia, USA); and one bell for town hall in Rockingham (West Australia).
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 13 Bell Inclusion Attempt. Memos from Freer conservator Tom Chase describing his bid (with Shayt's support) to add a bit of bronze from an ancient Chinese bell in Freer Gallery collection, in keeping with custom of adding special inclusions during important bell castings. Plan defeated at 11th hour by delicacy of Smithsonian politics surrounding bell-casting event.
- Box 1 of 2 Folder 14 Bell Tuning (A#). Memos, drawings, letters, images describing tuning of bell by Nigel Taylor and David Menzie at Whitechapel, September 26, 1995, later confusion over note struck (A-sharp; not D-flat).

Box 2

- Box 2 of 2 Folder 1 Bell Shipping. Papers, slides documenting bell's December 1995 passage by ship (the S. S. Atlantic Companion) from Thames Haven to Port Elizabeth (New Jersey), warehousing, pick up by SI personnel, trucking to NMAH, cleaning, dolly fabrication, trucking to Arts & Industries Building, rolling into Castle display in Children's Room, south tower, early January 1996.  
[Digital Content: Arrival of the bell for the Flag Tower of the Smithsonian Institution Building, December 15, 1995. \[Image no. 95-7356-13\]](#)
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 2 Bell Unveiling. Slides, descriptions of bell in Children's Room, unveiling night of January 29, 1996, with Secretary Heyman, Senator Clairborne Pell (D-RI), Alice Burnette, Marc Pachter, and Cross's Ron Boss. Two Smithsonian flags sewn together by Claire Muldoon veil the bell, before Heyman and Pachter unveil it to wild applause. Display brochure, media coverage. Bell clapper locked off with bicycle lock to prevent hand-ringing while on display. Bell exhibit panel by Rick Stamm and Peter Muldoon appeared in same room, January-August.  
[Digital Content: On January 29, 1996, Secretary I. Michael Heyman and Marc Pachter, chairman of the Smithsonian Institution's 150th anniversary activities, lift the Smithsonian flag to unveil the new bell to be installed in the Flag Tower on August 10, 1996. \[Image no. 96-28-4A\]](#)
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 3 Bell Installation Plan. Installation timeline, work sequence, Form SI-23 ( February 16, 1996), Johnson crane offer.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 4 Clock Installation. Images of 1960s Verdin clock in tower prior to June 1996 removal by Shayt and Todd for storage in NMAH. Measured cross-sections of dials, Smith of Derby technical sheets, images of new clockworks, installation by Alan Androuais and Peter Lane (Secretary of Defense). Clock controller and inverter instruction manuals. Copies are housed inside master control.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 5 Clock Hands. Images of Verdin's 1960s cast-aluminum hands on north, south, west dials prior to removal by Shayt and Todd in June. (One set

stored in NMAH, other two given to Castle Collection.) New HI 01 Smith of Derby copper hand designs, shop drawing, scenes of wood mockups over old hands, Alan Androuais installing new hands, August 8, 1996.

- Box 2 of 2 Folder 6 Bell Acoustics. Questions, comments about decibels of bell strike, judgements from engineer at National Institute of Standards and Technology, Under-Secretary Newman's decision (over-ruled August 11) to restrict bell-ringing to 12:00 noon only, Washington Post coverage of first bell ring, Shayt and Todd response, slides of August 1996 test ringing by Androuais and Lane in Haupt Garden.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 7 Bird Problem. Steri-Tech proposals to rid clock dials of birds following Shayt's removal of starling nests, dead starlings, live chicks, and other mess from inside north dial. Advertising for spikes, noises, plastic owls, netting, wire, electric shock, other remedies rejected by Castle as too invasive. Stonecarver Constantine Seferlis mechanically ground off existing droppings from north and west dials in July 1996. New 1/4" brass plates deny birds access into dials.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 8 The Tower. Images, drawings of Castle clock tower exterior, 1850s - present.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 9 Bell Frame. Images of bell-frame mockups, 1) white wallpaper tub in December 1994 to check for ground visibility, 2) exact plywood replica in Spring 1996 to check for final alignments, leveling, location of load-bearing elements in roof. Correspondence with Hammer's' Plastic Recycling, Iowa, over recycled plastic lumber chosen by SI woodworkers for contoured bell frame base. Spec sheets, images of other uses. No images of bandsawing of our 4 x 4 plastic lumber by Don Gramling (Smithsonian journeyman).
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 10 Bell-Raising Music. Selections proposed for use during bell's ascent by crane to castle roof, including Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer," Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock," and Smithsonian Polka. Only Sousa's "Thunderer" used from selection due to mis-communication with U.S. Marine Band, group demanded by Heyman (former Marine).
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 11 Events of August 10, 1996. The day's happenings, as published for the SI Birthday on the Mall.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 12 Bell Dedication and Raising. Memos, proposals for ritual, media accounts of bell dedication on August 10, 1996, speech by Barber Conable dedicating bell, slides of bell-raising, A. T. Cross staff.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 13 Bell Mop-Up. Two summary memos from Shayt.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 14 Thank Yous. Cards and photo issued to bell workforce, other words of thanks for involvement. Card photo by Kim Nielsen, Neg. 96-25500-4.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 15 Unsung Heroics. Images, descriptions of Unsung Hero Program, nomination process, group photo.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 16 Ingots of Bell Metal. Disposition memos for the 22 cast sunbursts of bell-metal bronze poured by Brian Thompson at Whitechapel on

September 21, 1995 from molten Smithsonian bell metal. As of October 1997, three ingots remain with Stamm in Castle Collection. All others distributed.

- Box 2 of 2 Folder 17 Bell Talks. Descriptions of talks given by Shayt on the bell to groups in D.C., California, Alabama, Sri Lanka, and Virginia.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 18 Media Coverage of Bell and Clock Installation. Local and national, internal and external.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 19 Lightning Protection. Correspondence, literature on bell's conductivity of atmospheric electricity. Vlad Mazur's report of November 20, 1996 from National Severe Storms Lab following his tower visit to the bell. Standards Manual (1987) from Lightning Protection Institute.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 20 Hammer Problem. Images, descriptions, correspondence regarding bell hammer and its erratic movement around bell soundbow. Problem corrected by Alan Androuais, February 19, 1997.
- Box 2 of 2 Folder 21 Bell Care. Correspondence related to regular maintenance of bell system. Slides of bell in-place on tower roof, Androuais maintenance agreement, original Whitechapel Bell Foundry card on belfry maintenance commonly hung near internal swinging bells.