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Here Now the Bells, Sweet, Silver Bells

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Here Now

The bells of the campanile which can be heard from January to December assume a significant meaning during Christmas time. They ring with special tidings and joy during this season, playing traditional tunes of the holidays. The chimes which resound are similar to those of old with many of the special customs attached.

Christmas bells are thought of lightly in this country, yet no other instrument has as much meaning as does a Christmas bell, and no other symbol has had more written about it.

The bell did not take its prominent place in the church until some time after Christmas had become a well-established festivity. It then found its way into every part of the world where Christmas was celebrated, uniting all in its message of "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men."

To the medieval folk, the village bell was nearly human. It was given a name and hoisted into its belfry with a special ceremony. The bell rang out announcing the evening hour of prayer, "Angelus," the town births, marriages, deaths, and every festival.

But the bell's most important duty was to ring in the advent season. On each of the three mornings preceding Dec. 25, bells were rung as a happy reminder of the coming of Christ. Then, at sunset on December 24, the air was filled with their continuous chiming. Again the bells were heard an hour before midnight, this time to announce the passing of "Old Lad," a popular nickname for the devil. And, finally, at midnight all the church bells of the earth could be heard echoing Christ's birth.

Today Christmas bells bring the same spirit as they did in the Middle Ages. As Iowa State students walk in the midst of the music pealing from central campus, there is joy in the air.

by Marsha Barron, H. Jl. 1

Sweet, Silver Bells...