

The Bells of St. Ann

Each Sunday morning the bells of St. Ann Catholic Parish fill the air with their call to worship.

The parish bought the bells in 1997 from McShane Bell Foundry, the oldest bell maker still in operation in the United States. At the time of purchase the church was told that the bells were 100 years old.

Despite being purchased through McShane, the bells were actually manufactured by Van Duzen, a foundry whose roots stretch back to 1837 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

A Van Duzen Bell Company catalog published in the 1920s gives insight into the manufacture of the bells which now hang at St. Ann.

“In the manufacture of our bells we use the old German sweep or pattern,” the pamphlet said, “which enables us to furnish a bell of a certain tone at from fifty to two hundred pounds weight less than our competitors.”

There are four bells in the St. Ann church towers. Three small bells reside in the western tower and one large bell in the east. The full peal of bells weighs a total of 3,850 pounds.

From 1997 until 2001, the bells remained with McShane foundry, as diocese complications delayed the construction of the new St. Ann church.

Today, the bells can be heard prior to each service of mass, after funerals, and on other special occasions, their bright peal giving voice to the soul of the city.