

**\*\*\* Press Release \*\*\***

## **City of Watervliet to Dedicate ‘City of the Bells’ Park**

City of Watervliet Mayor Charles Patricelli announced the city will host a gathering on October 14 to formally dedicate a new structure in memory of the Meneely Bell Foundry and recognize the location as ‘City of the Bells’ Park.

Gene Burns, a local historian and the “go-to” person on the Meneely bell history will also say a few words at the dedication. The general public is invited to attend the event.

The dedication will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the recently constructed Meneely bell structure, located on 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Second Avenue, south of the Congress Street Bridge. The general public is invited to attend the event.

The event will culminate several years off hard work, made possible by the donations of various city businesses and charities. The Meneely bell that resides in the ‘City of the Bells’ structure was produced in the Meneely Foundry, that was located on Broadway – where the City of Watervliet Library and Senior Center resides — for St. Patrick’s Church and was placed and resided in the church’s steeple for decades. The St. Patrick’s bell was removed from the steeple and stored at the City of Watervliet Historical Society when the church building was razed. One of the larger bells made by Meneely goes 54” in diameter and weighs 7400 pounds.

In 2019, the Dutch Reformed Church bell tower needed to be removed from the building because of deteriorating conditions. The tower housed a Meneely bell and the city needed to find a home for the artifact. Mayor Patricelli approached John Razzano, Chairman of the Watervliet Charitable foundation to seek assistance in funding a memorial.

City officials partnered with the Watervliet Historical Society and the Watervliet Charitable Organization to determine a location and in the design and creation of the structure and the needed documentation for all visitors to learn about the rich history that Watervliet played during the Industrial Revolution. A design of the

memorial was prepared and donated their services by Rida Architecture of Albany N.Y.

“We decided that the proper home for the Dutch Reformed bell was at the church itself, which houses the Watervliet Historical Society,” Mayor Patricelli said. “The St. Patrick’s bell, which was moved from 19<sup>th</sup> Street when the church was razed and relocated to the Watervliet Historical Society, would be used for the ‘City of the Bell’ Park, and moved to 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Second Avenue, to preserve the memory and legacy of the Meneely Bell Foundry.”

The Meneely Bell Foundry was established in Watervliet in 1826 by Andrew Meneely, a former apprentice in the foundry of Julius Hanks. Andrew Meneely was a silversmith by training, and a chemist who mastered the mix of copper (78%), tin (22%) and molten heat to produce bells of elemental beauty and functionality. The bells were revered for the quality of their rich musical tones.

Meneely was one of the greatest bell makers in American History. A total of more than 65,000 bells were cast under the Meneely brand between 1826 and 1951, when the business closed. Upon the death of Andrew in 1851, his sons took over the business and the family continued to cast Meneely bells for another 100 years.

The original factory produced clocks, engineering instruments and bells. By 1836, the foundry became one of the largest and most acclaimed bell foundries in the country. Soon its reputation spread internationally. Its bells were loaded on barges and ships on the Erie Canal and the Hudson River near the foundry and were sent around the world.

Meneely manufactured a variety of church, academy, factory, depot, fire alarm, steamboat, ship, locomotive, plantation, fire engine, light house and other bells. These bells included chimola and carillons. Foreign competition which offered cheaper labor costs and cast-iron bells, and the unavailability of metals, due to World War II, were all factors in the closing of the foundry in 1951.

When the church bell had to be removed from the Dutch Reformed Church bell tower in 2019 due to deteriorating conditions of the tower, we needed to find it a new home. Mayor Charles Patricelli approached John Razzano, Chairman of the Watervliet Charitable foundation to seek assistance in funding a memorial. We suggested the location to be at the foot of the Congress Street bridge of 19<sup>th</sup> St and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. A design of the memorial was prepared and donated their services by Rida Architecture of Albany NY.

“There have been so many who helped over the years to make this possible,” Mayor Patricelli said. “So many volunteers helped with the polishing, moving and donating their time and money to get to where we are today. We hope they will be in attendance.

“Eagle Scout candidate, Matt Martini, has been placed in charge of installing shrubs and landscaping around the bell as part of his Eagle Scout project. We’re so proud of Matt for applying the finishing touches to this great memorial,” added Mayor Patricelli.

Residents that want to learn more about the rich history Watervliet played should visit the Watervliet Historical Society any Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 11-3, or they can visit [www.Watervliethistoricalsociety.org](http://www.Watervliethistoricalsociety.org)

## **MEDIA ADVISTORY**

**What:** Dedication of ‘City of the Bell’ Park

**When:** 5:30 p.m., October. 14.

**Where:** 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Second Avenue — South side of Congress St. Bridge — Watervliet.

**Media and city residents invited. Photo-op. City officials will be present.**