

The Liberty Bell

The Bell's Message

The Liberty Bell's inscription conveys a message of liberty that goes beyond the words themselves. Since the bell was made, the words of the inscription have meant different things to different people. When William Penn created Pennsylvania's government, he allowed citizens to take part in making laws and he gave them the right to choose the religion they wanted. The colonists were proud of the freedom that Penn had given them. In 1751, the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a new bell for the State House. He asked that a Bible verse be placed on the bell: *Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land Unto all the inhabitants thereof – Leviticus 25:10*. As the official bell of the Pennsylvania State House, today called Independence Hall, it rang many times for public announcements, but we remember times like July 8, 1776 when it announced the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

The old State House bell was first called the "Liberty Bell" by a group trying to abolish slavery. These abolitionists remembered the words on the bell and in the 1830s adopted it as a symbol of their cause.

Beginning in the late 1800s, the Liberty Bell traveled around the country to expositions and fairs in an attempt to heal the divisions of the Civil War. It reminded Americans of their earlier days when they fought and worked together for their independence from Great Britain.

In 1915, the bell made its last trip and came home to Philadelphia where it now silently reminds us of the power of liberty. For more than 200 years, people from around the world have felt the bell's message. No one can see liberty, but people have used the Liberty Bell to represent this important idea.

Bell Facts

The bell for the Pennsylvania State House was cast in London, England at the White Chapel Foundry. However, it cracked soon after it arrived in Philadelphia. Local craftsmen John Pass and John Stow cast a new bell in 1753, using metal from the English bell. Their names appear on the front of the bell, along with the city and the date.

By 1846, a thin crack had begun to affect the sound of the bell. The bell was repaired in 1846 and rung on February 23 for George Washington's birthday celebration. On this date, after a few hours, the bell received its fatal crack and has not been rung since. There is no documentation as to why the bell cracked; we surmise that it cracked from over ninety years of continual use.

The bell weighs 2080 pounds. It is made of 70 percent copper, 25 percent tin and small amounts of lead, zinc, arsenic, gold, and silver. It hangs from what is believed to be its original yoke made from American elm (*Ulmus americana*), also known as white elm, water elm or soft elm.