

Legend Echoes In *Chimes* Of Christmas

*Jean Ary interprets the songs of
holiday bells with yesterday's folk lore*

EACH YEAR nature wraps the campanile in the same soft, white tissue paper and presents it as her Christmas gift to the Iowa State campus.

Bells have been customary Christmas presents in past years in spite of their enormous size. Two centuries ago a king, considering it a bargain, purchased two carillons for his private use. They cost his subjects \$43,000 apiece. Often those who received such musical gifts found inscribed in the bell the price the donor had paid.

The world's largest bell, the Czar Kolokol in Russia, was the gift of an empress. Before it was ever used, this 221 ton token was cracked and an 11 ton piece fell out. The bell stands in Moscow's market square, where people walk inside the bell through the break.

Desiring to be ever-famous, a native king gave the Great Bell of Mandalay to his people. A legend says that there are buried within it 100 solid gold images of the king's family.

According to legend the 60-ton bell of Peking was a tragic gift. A founder, obeying the emperor's command to mold a huge bell, failed twice to complete his task. The angry emperor gave him one more chance, failure meaning loss of his life. The founder's 16-year-old daughter, knowing of her father's fate, went secretly to a fortune teller and learned that human blood would be a necessary constituent of the metal before the metal could be cast successfully. As the metal was poured into the mold, the girl hurled her body into the boiling mixture. Her father became a raving maniac, but his bell was soon world famous. As the bell rings today, the Chinese hear the voice of the 16-year-old martyr.

The hand bell has a strange history. A holy man, using a meadow for religious meetings, used the hand bell to attract attention. As townspeople and country-folk heard this curious and fascinating noise, they gathered around the traveler and heard his story of the "Star of Bethlehem." Thus they connected the sound of the ringing bell with the Savior of the World.

As early as 622 A. D. a bishop received a bell from his people when he was installed into office. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, Italy, is given credit for placing the first bell in the tower of a church, in about 400 A. D. This bell is believed to have been a copper kettle hung from the roof and rung with a hammer. An actual

church bell did not appear until two centuries later.

Besides being personal gifts, bells have been a gift to mankind in general. The carillon has had its share in musical activities of the present world. At first it was used only for telling time, but when primitive machinery was introduced, bell ringers added a few other notes for variation. Gradually a spirit of competition arose between towns to see whose bell ringer could play the best and most complete tunes. During periods of war, bells were often sacrificed to make cannons.

St. Rombout's in Mechelen, the cathedral of the primate of all Belgium with its 48 bells, is considered superior to all carillons. Music lovers from all over the world come to hear Staf Nees play concerts every Monday evening in the summer. Traffic is barred from the city so that the beautiful melodies can be heard by everyone.

The largest carillon, 72 bells, located in Manhattan's Riverside Church, was a gift of Rockefeller. Its 20-ton bass bell is the largest tuned bell in a carillon.

With the coming of the Christmas season 36 bells from the campanile will ring out to Iowa State students a continuous wish for joy throughout the holiday.

