

New Bell Farm Discovery # 004:

Bell Farm Dinner Bell

Items: A triangular metal dinner bell measuring about 3 feet on each side, and weighing about 35 pounds, along with a small metal striker

Dimensions: length: 32 x 31 x 31 inches per side; diameter: 1 inch; circumference: 4 inches; bar shape: octagonal

Manufacturer: Unknown; possibly made on site by the resident blacksmith

Date: Unknown; possibly dates to the Bell Farm era: 1882-1896

Donor: Doug McMillan, Saskatoon



Image # 1: View of the dinner bell and striker

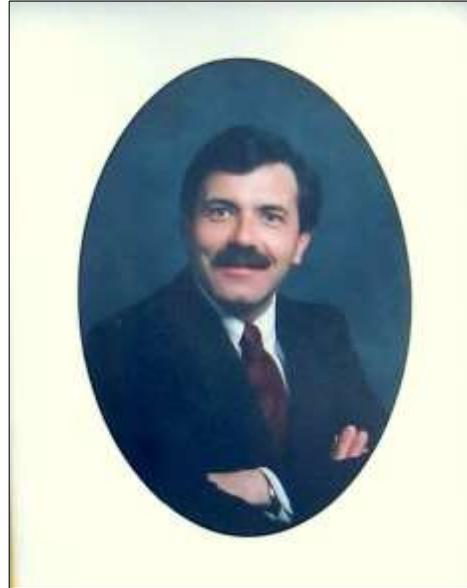
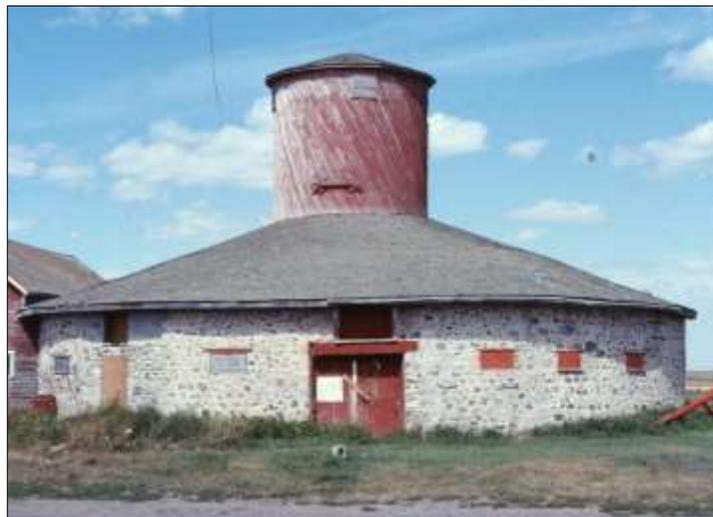


Image #2 & 3: Doug McMillan holding the dinner bell preserved by his brother Don (right).

Background: Don McMillan had a life-long interest in history and antiques. In 1971 he began working for the provincial government, serving first as a special assistant to NDP Premier Allan Blakeney, then as the Chief Electoral Officer, and later for the Department of Labour. Around 1980 Don attended an auction sale at the historic Bell Barn north of Indian Head, and came home to Regina with this dinner bell. It remained with the family after Don's death in 1997, and was ultimately relocated to Saskatoon. Aware that the Bell Barn had been reconstructed, Don's brother Doug and their mother Bobby both felt that the bell belonged back at Indian Head, and donated it to the Society on June 6, 2014.



Images #4: The Bell Barn in 1977.

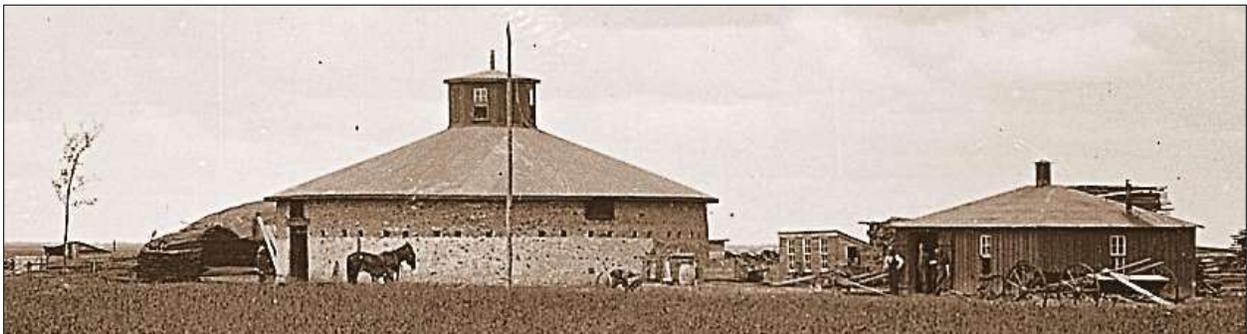
Comments: Although the exact origins of the dinner bell are currently unknown, it is reasonable to believe that an item like this was used to call together people working in the main farm yard of the Bell Farm for meals or some other event. It might also have been used in times of emergency, one of which was reported in the Aug. 12, 1886 issue of the *Qu'Appelle Progress*:

“About 15 o'clock on Friday last fire was discovered in a double barn near the Northern Bell Farm Cottage occupied by Geo Bingham. The barn contained two horses which were burned to death, and the barn with contents will be a complete loss.”



Images #5: Sketch of the Bell Farmyard on Oct. 25, 1884, by T.H. Thomas; a small portion of the round barn is visible at the far right, next to the square building.

It is also possible that the dinner bell was manufactured on the farm by the resident blacksmith.



Images #6: The blacksmith shop (right) was located close to the round stone horse stable. (1884)

Importance of the Discovery: This dinner bell is one of only a handful of artifacts that survive from the Bell Farm era. It provides insight into the kind of communication that existed for calling together people who were spread some distance away from the main farmhouse.

Sources: **Images 1 & 2:** Frank Korvemaker, Regina

Image 3: Doug McMillan, Saskatoon

Image 4: Rick Kilarski, Sask. Culture and Youth, Regina

Image 5: Glenbow Museum / Archives: NA-1406-143

Image 6: McCord Museum: Notman Collection: V1387(2)

Personal Communication: Doug McMillan, Saskatoon, 6 June & 23 July, 2014

Personal Communication: Dan Walker, Indian Head: 10 June 2014

Personal Communication: Eleanor Holden, Indian Head: 14 June 2014

Personal Communication: Ernie Bereti, McLean: 20 June 2014

Personal Communication: Sandra Bingaman: 11 Aug. 20104

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