

Seaboard's bells and whistles shine

Ten months after Seaboard Weatherproofing & Restoration carefully removed the 1000-lb. bell from its tower at the Irvington Presbyterian Church, the church bell, having been retuned at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in England, was hoisted back into its rightful place.

"Our job is to tune the bell for a specific sound," said Neil Thomas, bell hanger with London's Whitechapel Foundry, who supervised the tuning and worked hand-in-hand with Seaboard to re-install the bell. "Now that it's tuned the pitch will remain consistent and will resonate better so the bell can be



Above: the bells restored by Seaboard Weatherproofing.

heard at a much greater distance." In addition to the original bell, which was first cast in 1875 by Meneely & Kimberly in Troy, NY, four new carillon bells (a set of fixed bells struck by hammers and operated from a keyboard) that were cast by Whitechapel were also installed.

The British foundry, one of only two bell foundries in England, is renowned for having cast the Liberty Bell and London's Big Ben.

The Irvington Presbyterian Church is located at 25 North Broadway in Irvington and was constructed in 1869. It was designed by James Renwick, architect of the Smithsonian Institution and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

"The exceedingly tall tower and its historic bell are tangible reminders of the influence and beauty the church has in the community. We're proud to be a part of the town and this project," said Walter Sedovic, architect of the church renovation and principal and CEO of Walter Sedovic Architects in Irvington, N.Y.

The recently retuned bell was first installed less than a decade after the

church was built. It has not pealed in the tower since the late 1950s, when electric carillon bells were installed. When that system failed in the mid-1990s, all bell-driven hymns from the church tower fell silent.

After years of debate among church leaders, the decision was finally made to repair the existing bell and add four new ones. In February 2007, the 4.5-foot high, 3.5-foot wide, bronze bell was finally removed from the church's seven-story bell tower. It arrived in England in March and returned by steamship in July. It took five months before all the elements were in place for congregation members and townspeople to hear something no one in Irvington has heard for half a century.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime project," said Jay Fiebich, General Manager of Seaboard Weatherproofing & Restoration. "This bell has not been heard from for nearly 50 years. We worked very closely with Whitechapel Foundry in removing the bell and now we're very excited that it's back in place...working on a piece of history that is this substantial is very rewarding to us."