

Along Brandy Creek
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By Jim Fitzpatrick

To the folks in the surrounding countryside it was like an announcement of the beginning for each days work, for a day of rest on Sundays of course. The bell was rung two or three different times on Sunday, once early every morning during the week. The tolling of the bell signaled the beginning of the mass about to take place inside the old church building at St. Michael's, seven days a week. The wooden structure, its high overhead belfry with the cross on top and bell within, was there at the crossing of 88th Avenue and State Road.

The old church stood for about a hundred years before it was finally taken down, along with its ancient cast iron bell. The church council sold the salvage rights to the building for a dollar, to a fellow over on Leonard Road. Gene and son Curt, they took it apart piece by piece and hauled it home. One of the council members volunteered to store the bell over in a building on his hog farm; until the new brick church you see there now could be built. Doug loaded it up, with lots of help, and put it up in his barn.

When finally the new church at St. Michael's was being constructed; the old bell was hauled back north, to its home ground. They made a special place at the entrance, where you walk up to the front door, to hang that old bell. It is mostly quiet now, down low to the ground where you can see it well, under the arch below the spires that rise up to the heavens. The church folks do ring it now and again. Sometimes kids in the neighborhood ride their bikes at night, ring it good and peddle away into the darkness as fast as they can.

It has been said, that in days past, the sound of the old bell could be heard as far to the west as the banks of Crockery Creek, north to the County Line, south to Grand River if the air was just right, and all the way east to Coopersville at times.