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## For Whom the Bell Tolls

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Visitors who celebrate Independence Day at St. Paul's Church National Historic Site are treated to 13 rings of one of the great historical treasures of the area -- the bronze bell that hangs in the steeple of the historic church, and once clanged to celebrate the birthday of the King of England.

It was cast in 1758 at the Whitechapel foundry in London, the same place with the Liberty Bell, now in Philadelphia, was molded in 1753. Whitechapel was a leading foundry, with more than a century of bell casting experience. Craftsmen used mathematical formulas to determine the design and shape of bells. Then they dug a deep pit and built a hollow brick oven slightly smaller than the inside of the planned bell. Layers of clay covered the brick and were shaped to form the inner mold. Over the inner mold, workers used a template to build a clay bell, and then applied lubricant to shape an outside mold. When it dried, the clay bell between the two molds was removed, leaving a cavity into which workers poured molten bronze. After the bronze cooled and hardened, workers removed the clay molds to free the new metal bell.

The bell at St. Paul's is inscribed with the names of the two craftsmen, Lester and Pack, who created it, or **Fecit**, which means "made it" in classic Latin. The bell also bears the name of the Rev. Thomas Standard, the long-serving colonial rector who purchased the bell as a gift to the parish. A British import, it probably arrived in 1759, and was hung from rafters in the town's small, wooden meetinghouse, which dated to about 1700. It was located about 50 yards west of the extant stone and brick church, whose construction began in 1763.

Before the Revolutionary War, the bell was used to summon the community to church service on Sunday. Additionally, the tolling of the bronze bell announced a local death or funeral, and the clangor would have even honored the June 4 birthday of King George III of England. During the War for American Independence, it was removed and hidden to prevent its confiscation and use for military purposes. Fortunately, it was not damaged, and when hostilities ceased, the bell was recovered and hoisted atop to steeple of the stone and brick church. After the war, the community began to tradition of ringing it to celebrate Independence Day.