

Cuban Church Bells on the property "Delft Haven Cottages of Ralph Carpenter - September 1954
These cottages were built next to the Sandhurst Cottage shown in preceding pictures & cards.

- April 1, 1965 -

Local Bell Stolen - But Carries Curse

Somewhere is a 300-pound bell from an old Santiago, Cuba, church, stolen Thursday night from Delft Haven cottage property of Ralph S. Carpenter, in the West End — but the bell may yet give the thieves trouble.

So convinced were Cubans of the "curse" on persons sacrilegious about church bells, says Mr. Carpenter, that they refused to handle church bells on their coastwise ships. Mr. Carpenter, for many years a plantation supervisor in Cuba, collected a number of historic bells when he lived there, the stolen bell among them. From his own experience he's convinced that the "curse" works.

"It worked before," he says, "and it will work again" — recalling that when another of the bells was stolen four years ago, the car carrying the stolen bell was involved in a crash 20 minutes after the theft and an occupant fatally injured. That time the pranksters were caught in the act and the police were called, to give chase.

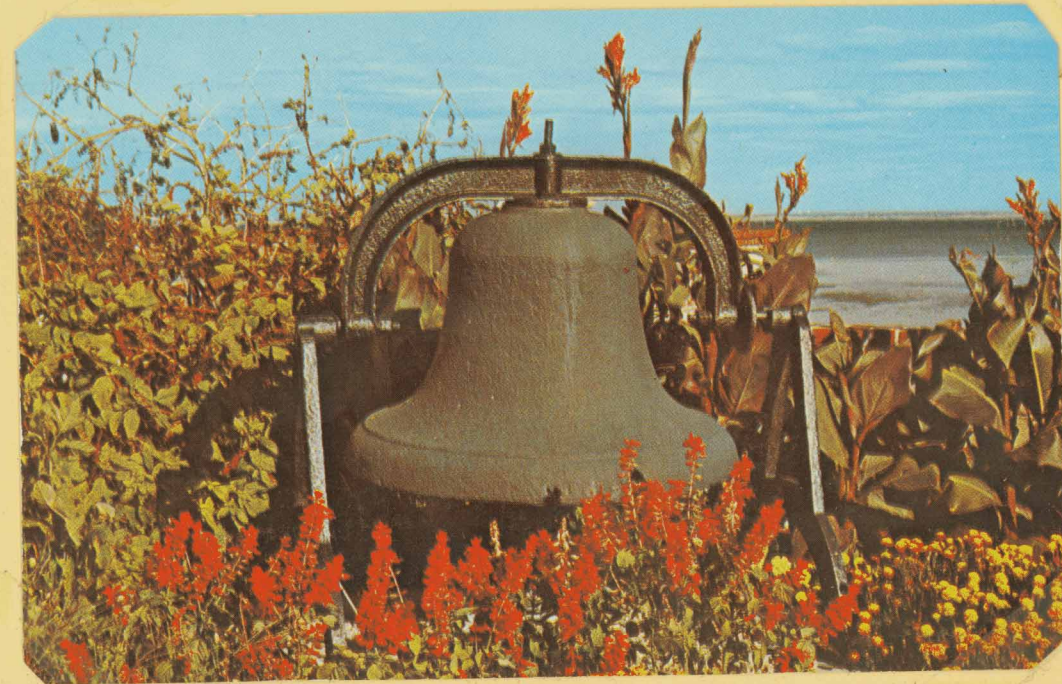
But Thursday night when the big bell was stolen, the whole

thing was managed so deftly that Mr. Carpenter, whose bedroom "isn't more than 50 feet away," heard not a sound. Tire tracks and foot prints covered the site of the structure on which his bells hang but the operation was soundless. Police are working on the theft.

"Those were adult foot prints," says Mr. Carpenter, "The thieves were no youngsters." It took the strength of several men, he points out, to move the bell. He believes the thieves were out-of-town college men who knew of his bells and planned their coup well in advance. No strangers in cars were reported in Town during the daytime Thursday, he says.

As to the "curse" from the bell on those who mishandle it, Mr. Carpenter believes this will work, too, and the thieves may well wish they had let the bell alone.

Of considerable interest has been Mr. Carpenter's bell collection, hung by chains from a huge frame. A 500-pound bell hangs from the upper center. The stolen bell was one of two flanking it. Below are smaller bells. All of the bells are of historic interest but of negligible value on the market, Mr. Carpenter emphasizes. Meanwhile, he's convinced the thieves will discover for themselves before long that you don't steal a bell that can "curse" and go unpunished.



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