

## **Bring the Ring Back to Ballard!**

The Ballard Historical Society is organizing a community effort to literally "Bring the Ring back to Ballard!" by installing a automatic mechanism in Ballard's historic bell located at the corner of 22nd Ave NW and Ballard Avenue in Ballard so that it will ring regularly and on demand for special occasions.

Ballard's City Hall with its impressive 1600 lb. bell presided at the top of Ballard Avenue during the years Ballard was an independent town from 1889 to 1907. The bell tolled at 6 pm every evening to let the shingle mill workers know that it was the end of the day and time to stop working. The bell continued to ring until the late 1940s though the city hall was no longer a city hall due to the fact that Ballard had become part of Seattle. When the former city hall building was in disrepair and shingle mills were few and far between, the bell was appropriated by a politician for use in another part of the city.

Ballard's bell rang no longer but some who remembered its sound and presence missed it and wanted to bring it back. Ted Peterson, a retired State Senator from Ballard was one of these individuals. In the late 1980s, he and a small group of dedicated citizens founded the Bell Tower Foundation, designed and built the Ballard Centennial Bell Tower to house the bell and reinstalled it in its former position at the top of Ballard Avenue. At that time the bell could be rung manually and there were plans to install an automatic mechanism so that the bell would ring on a regular basis. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter Ted Peterson passed away, the bell was vandalized and subsequently the manual mechanism was disengaged. The bell has been mostly silent for almost 20 years.

Bertha Davis, a retired elementary school teacher who taught literally thousands of students during her 50 years at Ballard's Webster School, was one of the original citizens who worked intensively to have the bell returned to Ballard. She, at age 96, can remember back to when the bell rang every day and has recently put forth the idea of finishing the project that was started two decades ago by installing a mechanism so that the bell will ring automatically and Ballard can reclaim a piece of its history and originality. The Ballard Historical Society supports this idea and would like to work with the Ballard community to achieve this end.

The Ballard Historical Society will help host a 97th birthday party for Bertha Davis at the Ballard Landmark where the bell will be rung in her honor on February 12th at 2:15pm. Her birthday will be the kick-off event for the Bring the Ring Back to Ballard! Project. With an automatic ringing mechanism the bell could be programmed, for instance, to ring every day noon and at 6pm.

Additionally a programmable mechanism could be used to ring the bell on special occasions such as at the start of the 17th of May Parade, Seafood Fest and other community activities. It is our hope that by the summer of 2011 an automatic ringing mechanism for the bell will be installed. We plan to have another large community celebration and bell ringing ceremony at that time.

For more information or suggestions, please email [info@ballardhistory.org](mailto:info@ballardhistory.org) or check our blog at <http://ballardhistory.wordpress.com>