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After 56 Years, Original Bell From Church of the Assumption, Roselle Park, New Jersey Rings in the 2012 St. Anthony's Italian Feast

On June 7, 2012, Fr. James Spera officially opened the Church of Assumption's annual St. Anthony's Italian Feast by ringing the original bell that had been lost to the parish for over 56 years.

This bell was commissioned in 1910 by Anton Kolodzay of Roselle Park in memory of his father, Andreas, and placed in the then new church building that is now the Chiego Center. It's inscription reads "Presented to the R.C. Church of The Assumption Roselle Park, N.J. by Anton Kolodzay in Memory of his father, Andreas. Rev. Salvatore J Lovecchio, Rector". A bronze bell, made up of 80% copper and 20% tin with a 22" diameter and weighing a total of 243 pounds, it was cast at the McShane Bell Foundry Co., Baltimore, MD. When the current church building was completed in 1955 the old bell was no longer needed. For 56 years no one knew what had become of it.

When Fr. James Spera became pastor in 2010 he was curious as to what had happened to the original church bell. He made inquiries of those on staff and others who were involved in the parish at the time of the dedication of the new church building in 1955 as to where the bell from the old church building had been stored. No one knew what had happened to it. Fr. Spera tells the story: "We checked the tower and every inch of the property but no bell! It was parishioner John Ballantyne, who once was the Scout Master for Church of Assumption's Troop, who remembered seeing the bell at Camp Winnebago. He called and inquired and found the bell was indeed at the Camp. It had been given in 1955 to be used as the fire alert for the Camp. The bell was no longer used as they now had a sophisticated fire system and the plan was to sell the bell for scrap. We were just in time! I was asked to give a donation for two scouts to attend summer camp and the bell would be ours."

The bell, however, was in poor condition. Ray Parenteau and Carl Hokenson, Knights of Columbus Msgr. Loreti Chapter 3240, drove to Camp Winnebago to retrieve it and were instrumental in its full restoration. They contacted the McShane Bell Foundry Co. and drove the bell to and from McShane in Baltimore, MD to have the restoration work done. The Knights of Columbus also paid for its restoration through a number of parish fundraising events. And at

Christmas time, small bells were sold as tree ornaments to help with the effort. The restored bell was then temporarily housed in the Loreti Hall and was used to ring in the New Year 2012!

However, the bell was never intended to remain hidden. With the help of Martin Venturo, Ted Grossi and Dominick Procopio and assisted by Carl Hokenson and the Knights of Columbus, as warm weather approached, built a brick platform on the Chiego Place side of the Church. Landscaping by Spano & Sons, and the lighting by Electrical Applications, Inc. (Frank Gallicchio) followed. The final step for this project will be the brick walkway leading up to the bell.

This year's Feast was a tremendous success, weather holding out for all four days. Everyone is looking forward to the 13th St. Anthony's Italian Feast, June 6 – June 9, 2013 where once again the bell will ring in each day's festivities.

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