

## **Audio Stop: New York's Liberty Bell**

Narrator:

1731. A merciless smallpox epidemic ravages New York City. Inoculation meets with some success yet half of the city's residents are infected and hundreds of souls are lost. On one of these gloomy days, an oxcart slowly makes its way from port to the New Dutch Church on Nassau Street — the first sanctuary of the Middle Collegiate Church. It carries something big—a 900-pound bell that just arrived from Amsterdam. It carries hope.

News is, the bell was donated by the late Colonel Abraham de Peyster. News is, it was cast by the famous city bellmaker Jan Albert de Grave. News is, the fine citizens of Amsterdam threw silver coins into the metal mix to make the bell sound better than any Other.

Take a closer look. Can you tell how many cherubs adorn the bell? Can you imagine it ringing for the very first time?

During the Revolution, the bell is moved temporarily to York, Pennsylvania, for safekeeping. The bell echoes throughout 19th-century New York City from Middle Church's bell tower at Lafayette Place, and later St. Nicholas Collegiate in Midtown. In 1949, the bell is relocated to Middle Church's present East Village location.

As a 290-year-old "resident of New York," the bell witnesses both celebration and tragedy. It rings when the Declaration of Independence is read for the first time in front of Washington's troops on July 9, 1776; announces the inauguration and death of every American president; and tolls in remembrance of the lives lost on September 11, 2001.

The bell miraculously survives the devastating fire that destroyed Middle Collegiate Church on December 5, 2020. News is, once the sanctuary is rebuilt, the streets of New York will be filled again with its sound of resilience and love.