

THE CATALINA CHIMES TOWER IS HEADED FOR REFURBISHMENT!

Plans are being developed and fundraising has started to restore the Catalina Chimes Tower, one of the most unique buildings in Avalon.

Completed in 1925 by Ada and William Wrigley Jr., the chimes and its tower were a gift to the residents of and visitors to Avalon. The couple commissioned a special set of melodic Westminster chimes from Deagan and Co. of Chicago at a cost of \$25,000, and built a beautiful tower to house them.



Ada and William Wrigley Jr.

The chimes were designed to strike on the hour, quarter hour, half hour and three-quarter hour. They were also designed so that

one could manually play songs from an electric keyboard console, which was originally located in a glass-fronted room at the foot of the Steamer Pier. When the ships arrived in and departed from Avalon, people could watch a musician carefully play the notes of songs that would ring out from the Chimes Tower high above the town. Mr. Wrigley had plans to install additional keyboard consoles in the St. Catherine Hotel in Descanso Canyon and in his home on Mt. Ada; however, these were never added, due to the challenges of running wires over the hillside and across Avalon.

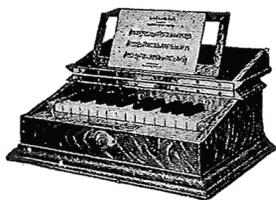


THE CATALINA CHIMES TOWER

By Blanny Avalon Hagenah

DEAGAN

pioneered the playing of Tower Chimes
from Electric Keyboard



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In the early 1950's, the cable connecting the Chimes Tower to the Steamer Pier became defective, and the keyboard was moved to a small room located directly below the pipes/chimes in the Tower. The console is a miniature piano-like keyboard with 20 keys. When you press a key, the corresponding mechanism in the tower registers the sound. Playing the keyboard requires a slow, deliberate touch - hitting only one key at a time, so chords are not possible.

The first notes from the Chimes Tower rang out in March of 1926. At that time, a "chimes test" was attended by Mr. and Mrs. Deagan and Island Company General Manager D.M. Renton, who stood across Avalon on the front porch of the Wrigleys' Mt. Ada home, and stated that every note was heard distinctly. The citizens of Avalon stopped in the streets to enjoy the beautiful tones. Since then, the chimes have entertained millions of Avalon residents and visitors.

The chimes were played by assorted musicians until 1967, when islander Jani Eisenhut took over, performing on holidays and special occasions, as well as at other times, just for the sheer enjoyment of it. Jani has played them now for almost 50 years, except for a brief period from 1980 to 1982, when the chimes went silent due to aging electrical wiring and various mechanical issues.

At that time, The Santa Catalina Island Company located and hired Joe Burns, a retired Deagan Co. electrician living in Hawaii, and brought him to Avalon to repair and update the chimes. Burns was assisted by Martin Jeffries, a retired clock specialist living in Avalon. Together, the two men replaced the original equipment with a solid state rectifier, giving the mechanism more modern operating abilities. Martin Jeffries maintained the chimes until 1985. Islander Charlie Canby took over maintenance duties the following year, and continues to ensure that the chimes remain operational today, setting the stage for the Westminster melodies, as well as Jani's delightful impromptu concerts, to serenade the town.

Although the chimes are functioning well, the 90 years that have passed since they were first heard in Avalon have taken their toll on both the tower that houses them and the terraces surrounding it. Fortunately, according to an engineer brought in to evaluate the building, the deterioration appears to be cosmetic, rather than structural.

In 2013, the board of the Santa Catalina Island Company began to look at how best to address the issues with the tower - now and in the future. Recognizing that it was cherished by many, and that individuals, corporations and more wanted to help with its care and restoration, the company decided to create a non-profit foundation and deed the chimes

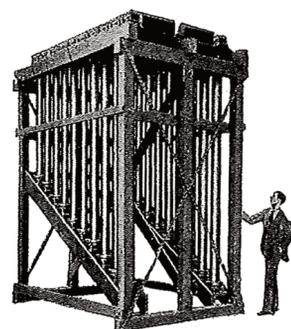
and tower to it. In 2015, the Catalina Chimes Tower Foundation (CCTF) was formed, had its first meeting, and took ownership of the building. Today, having met several times, the CCTF board has a better grasp on how to go about restoring and beautifying this unique and beloved building.

As the CCTF board works on the plans and costs of this project, many residents and visitors from the mainland have begun making donations to CCTF, and a number of others have asked how they can help. The CCTF welcomes donations from individuals, organizations and businesses as it launches fundraising efforts for restoration and an endowment to support ongoing maintenance in the future.

For those who would like to help, tax-deductible contributions may be sent to the Catalina Chimes Tower Foundation at P.O. Box 677, Avalon, CA 90704. For questions and comments please e-mail info@catalinachimes.org.

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Deagan Tower Chimes

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Catalina Chimes Tower Foundation is a non-profit public benefit corporation. Our mission is to restore and maintain the Chimes Tower, a historic landmark in the town of Avalon on Santa Catalina Island, for the community and future generations to enjoy.

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