

## “City of Bells” Warren, Pennsylvania

This brochure is provided  
courtesy of the  
Warren County Historical Society  
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In appreciation of the support  
provided by the  
City of Warren  
local fire fighters—past & present  
local police officers—past & present  
and  
Joseph H. DeFrees.



“Bicentennial Bells”  
Municipal Building, 318 West Third Avenue

In 1973, Joseph H. DeFrees began a bicentennial project to erect three bells in tribute to our local firefighters. Joe’s dream eventually became 24 bells throughout the City of Warren. The three bells, located in front of the municipal building, were originally from Warren’s fire departments Centennial, Struthers and Central.

The Centennial bell is brass, weighs 700 pounds and was cast in 1868 by Clinton H. Meneely. The bell summoned volunteer fire fighters to the old Centennial fire station on Warren’s east side at Madison and Buchanan Streets for over 40 years.

The Struthers Bell was from the Struthers Independent Hose Company organized in 1862 by Struthers Iron workers to fight blazes in the neighborhood of the iron works. The bell weighs 1,200 pounds and is made of iron. The Struthers Bell was discovered at the Girl Scout Camp Birdsall Eddy. Joe DeFrees negotiated with the Girl Scouts to have the bell donated for the Bicentennial project.

The Central Bell made of bronze and weighing 1,700 pounds, was also cast by Meneely and shipped to Warren on December 10, 1884. The Bicentennial Bells Design Contest was held in 1975, where Albert Kondak’s design was selected, and the bell tower was erected in 1976.

“Shrine of Socrates”  
419 West Third Avenue



This was the first bell tower to be erected by Joseph DeFrees in July of 1975. Joe DeFrees designed this tower to stand next to his business Allegheny Valve. The frame is formed from stainless steel tubing and the three bells are bronze, founded by Meneely Bell Co. in Troy, New York.

The top bell weighs 1,100 pounds and was cast in 1895. The middle bell weighs 450 pounds and the bottom 300. Joe purchased these bells in 1974 from I. T. Verdin Company, a bell foundry in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The bell tower plaque reads:

*SHRINE OF SOCRATES*

*To Socrates himself are usually ascribed an intense ethical devotion which influenced all later Greek philosophy, the development of the inductive method, and the conception of knowledge or insight as the foundation of virtue.*

Joseph H. DeFrees  
The Man Behind the Bells



Joseph H. DeFrees was born September 1, 1905, and lived most of his life in Warren. He graduated from Warren High School in 1924 and received a civil engineering degree from Cornell University in 1929.

Joseph DeFrees was a key to the community and left behind a legacy of generosity and community involvement. Joe traveled the world, but felt that Warren was the best town in the world. His philanthropic character has preceded him in death with the creation of the DeFrees Family Foundation operating as an active funding source for the area.

Joe DeFrees was extremely accomplished having invented and developed valves used to transport liquids by rail and truck throughout the nation. He was the founding director for our county senior citizen program and co-founder of Hospice of Warren. Joe served as a member of Warren Borough Council, Zoning Commission, county director of Civil Defense, Planning and Zoning, director of the Warren County Historical Society, building committee for the Boy Scouts' Camp Olmsted, director of the Warren County Chamber of Commerce and director of the Warren County Probation Association.

Joe loved his bells and Warren County, Pennsylvania.

Joe DeFrees was a true humanitarian and great contributor!

“Beech Street Bells”  
Fourth Avenue and Beech Street



In 1982, the final bell tower was erected. Joe DeFrees passed away on July 16 and the construction was completed by Jeff Werner of Bill's Welding. The largest bell weighs 5,500 pounds and the smallest 750. The bells were cast in 1884 at the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland. Each of the eight bronze bells bear a Catholic inscription in Latin. This provides evidence to their value and significance. They were originally from Saint Mary of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church in Buffalo, New York. Saint Mary of Sorrows was constructed between 1886 and 1891.

The church was built for a primarily German congregation in a Rhenish Romanesque revival style with the floor plan laid out as a Latin cross. The church was shuttered in 1985 and the bells were sold to a demolition company. Joe eventually acquired them and as his final gift to Warren's bell lovers he quotes the 5th century Hindu philosophical poet Kalidasa.

*AN ANCIENT POEM*

*Look to the day, for it is life; the very life of life. In this day's  
brief pause lie all the verities and realities of your existence;  
the bliss of growth, the glory of action, the splendor of beauty;  
for yesterday is gone and tomorrow is only a vision. But today  
well lived makes of every yesterday, a dream of happiness,  
and every tomorrow, a dream of hope.*

The Honorable Charles Warren Stone Museum Bells  
710 Pennsylvania Avenue West



This bell tower was erected in July of 1976. It is made of CORTEN steel, also known as weathering steel. CORTEN steel is popularly used in outdoor sculptures, such as in the large Chicago Picasso sculpture, which stands in the plaza of the Daley Center Courthouse in Chicago, and is known for its rustic antique appearance. Charles Warren Stone (June 29, 1843 – August 15, 1912) was a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Pennsylvania and the second Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania.

Charles W. Stone moved to Pennsylvania in 1863 and settled in Warren. He served as superintendent of schools in 1865. He studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1867 and commenced practice in Warren. He served as member of the PA State House of Representatives in 1870 and 1871, and served in the PA State Senate in 1877 and 1878. He was Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania from 1879 to 1883. The Honorable Charles Warren Stone Museum was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

The Stone Museum was the property of the Warren County Historical Society until 1996 when it was sold into private residence. Joe DeFrees was instrumental in maintaining the Stone Museum for the historical society, as it was named after his grandfather.



“Truth, Right and Good”  
Corner of Fourth Avenue and Beech Street



This bell tower was designed by Joe DeFrees, constructed in 1981 and also made of CORTEN steel. The top bell was purchased in 1978 from Stockton Sales in Columbus, The top bell weighs 1,400 pounds and is 40 1/8 inches in diameter. The middle bell was purchased from Thomas Carroll of Youngsville in 1978. It weighs 600 pounds and is 30 1/2 inches in diameter. The bottom bell was purchased from Stockton Sales in 1979. It weighs 350 pounds and is 25 1/2 inches in diameter.

The plaque on the base of the bell tower reads:  
*Ring in the lover of truth and right.  
Ring in the common love of good.  
Tennyson*

“A Touch of Modern Art”  
Fourth Avenue and Union Street



This bell tower was designed by Joe DeFrees and built by Jeff Werner. The top bell was founded in 1882 by McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland. It weighs 1,250 pounds and is 38 3/8 inches in diameter. The middle bell was founded in 1868 by Jones & Company in Troy, New York. It weighs 600 pounds and is 31 1/8 inches in diameter. The bottom bell was founded in 1882 by Henry McShane & Company in Baltimore, Maryland. It weighs 250 pounds and is 23 1/2 inches in diameter.

The plaque on this bell tower reads:  
*A continuing tribute to Warren,  
its pioneers, its citizens,  
its beauty, its progress.*