

For Immediate Release

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Community Invited to Historic School Bell Dedication
Saturday, October 1, 2016 from 1 – 1:30 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM, MI, September 20, 2016 – A half century after it was removed from the Hill School’s roof, the Hill School Bell has a new permanent home, and the Birmingham Museum invites the community to join the celebration. A dedication ceremony will take place on Saturday, October 1 from 1 – 1:30 p.m. and will include local officials, school board members, museum representatives, and Birmingham history buffs who will help dedicate the bell in its new structure between the Allen and Hunter Houses at 556 W. Maple. Attendees will enjoy a unique opportunity to ring the historic bell at the event.

The current project has been five years in the making, from concept to design to fundraising to construction. The outdoor structure mimics the original cupola on the roof of the Hill School building. The total project cost has been about \$65,000, and has involved a number of major stakeholders, including the City of Birmingham’s Museum Board, the Friends of the Museum, the Birmingham School Board, and the Rosso Family Foundation, which has provided major grant funding. Key contributions have also come from the community through cash donations and with commemorative pavers that have been installed around the bell.



The two-story Hill School was built in 1869; the Village of Birmingham had experienced sudden growth after the Civil War and required a new building for all its students. The bell itself was not installed on the roof until 1902, but thereafter was rung for students at the beginning and end of every day. It remained in place even after the school became an administrative building, but when the Hill School was demolished in 1969, the bell was saved and prominently displayed in the school administration building. Former school superintendent David Hoeffler was especially attached to the bell and its history, often ringing it for visitors to the administration building.

In 2007, the bell was donated to the museum and some initial planning began for placing it in an outside structure or memorial to Birmingham’s school heritage. However, the recession and funding challenges tabled the project until 2010, when the matter re-surfaced with additional public and stakeholder input. All of Birmingham’s superintendents from 1869-2016 are recognized in commemorative pavers, as well as members of the Rosso family, whose foundation made the project dream a reality. John Harvey Rosso and Beryl McClelland Rosso both graduated from Hill School in 1915, and John Harvey Rosso later served on the school board from 1932-1944.

A special treat at the dedication will be guest speaker Randy Forester, whose father George Forester attended Hill School as a boy and was charged with ringing the bell every day. Forester will ring the bell to bring its new home to life. Attendees will enjoy seasonal refreshments and snacks, and the museum will offer free admission to all. For more information, call 248-530-1928 or visit us at www.bhamgov.org/museum.