The Westminster Chimes play every 15 minutes from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Approximately 15 minutes before Amphitheater lectures and programs, a peal of five bells is automatically sounded as a signal for the upcoming program.

Tunes are played by the chimemaster for 15 minutes at 8 a.m., noon, 6 p.m., and some-times at 10 p.m. during the season. Tunes from current concert, choir or opera performances often are played.

Visitors are welcome during performance times. Birthday, anniversary and tune requests are often on the agenda, but with only 14 bells, there is a limit of range.

Statistics of the 14 Bells
- In honor of Lewis Miller – 3,033 lbs.
- In honor of Bishop John Heyl Vincent – 2,023 lbs.
- Class of 1888 – 1,525 lbs.
- Class of 1887 – 1,247 lbs.
- The Bryant Bell – 1,000 lbs.
- Class of 1882 – 824 lbs.
- Class of 1886 – 517 lbs.
- Class of 1884 – 453 lbs.
- Class of 1885 – 414 lbs.
- Class of 1889 – 370 lbs.
- Class of 1883 – 275 lbs.
- In memory of Ira A. Miller – 198 lbs.
- In memory of Grace Hitchcock – 176 lbs.
- In memory of Mina Miller – 141 lbs.

The Bryant Bell was raised to the top of the tower in memory of Mary Miller Nichols in 1967. The three bells on the floor of the tower are new to Chautauqua and will be added to the com-pass in the future.

Serving as chimemaster is Carolyn Benton.

Chautauqua Institution is a non-profit organization, dependent upon your gifts to fulfill its mission. Gate tickets and other revenue cover only a portion of the cost of your Chautauqua experience.

Chautauqua Institution
PO Box 28
Chautauqua, NY 14722
chq.org
Bells have always played an important role at Chautauqua in signaling activities of the day. In the summer of 1874, the Meneely & Kimberly Company of Troy, New York, provided a bell for use to signal the activities of the very first Chautauqua Assembly. The Assembly was founded by Methodist pastor John Heyl Vincent and industrialist Lewis Miller. Following the Assembly, the bell was sold to the Methodist Church in Mayville, New York.

Meneely & Kimberly continued to provide bells for use at Chautauqua for a number of years. At first, single bells were used. Then, beginning in 1877, a three-bell peal. William Skellie of Mina, New York, was engaged as the bell ringer for many years. Following is a schedule from 1878. Note the times giving Chautauquans opportunity to arrive at the appointed hours.

**Bell Schedule – 1878**
William Skellie of Mina, New York

- 6 a.m. Six Strokes
- 6:20 a.m. Peal
- 6:40 a.m. One Bell
- 7 a.m. Seven Strokes and Peal
- 7:25 a.m. One Bell
- 7:55 a.m. One Bell
- 8:55 a.m. One Bell
- 9:55 a.m. One Bell
- 10:55 a.m. Peal
- After Service Peal
- 1:40 p.m. Peal
- 3:10 p.m. One Bell
- 3:55 p.m. One Bell
- 4:55 p.m. One Bell
- 6 p.m. Six Strokes
- 6:55 p.m. One Bell
- 7:55 p.m. Peal
- 10 p.m. Ten Strokes and Peal

**In 1878,** the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) was formed, and one of the large bells was purchased and named for American poet William Cullen Bryant. This bell is rung to signal the start of the reading year for the CLSC. Originally this event was observed in October, but now is held in late August on Bryant Day.

In 1885, Vincent’s dream of a chime of bells was realized when the 10-bell chime cast by the Clinton H. Meneely Co, of Troy, New York, was put into place on Fair Point. The bells were donated by members of the early CLSC classes. The first program on the bells was played by Wadsworth Meneely on Aug. 2, 1885. This program is repeated on Bryant Day each year.

In 1886, the Pier Building was erected as a main entrance to Chautauqua and to house the bells. Seth Thomas Company donated a tower clock for the building.

In those days, most of the participants arrived by steamer from train connections in Jamestown or Mayville. The Pier Building housed the 10-bell chime and the Bryant Bell through the summer of 1910, but the building shook when the bells were played.

The present Miller Bell Tower was constructed for the 1911 season by donations from many Chautauquans, and dedicated on Old First Night in August 1911.

It is 18 feet square and 75 feet high, constructed of cement, Harvard brick, steel and tile, and has a foundation composed of piling and concrete extending 18 feet below the low water mark. The tower is in the North Italian style, or campanile, and has an open arcade belfry near the top for the bells. Just below the belfry on the four sides are the clock dials with an electric light at each hour point. When planned, it was to honor Lewis Miller, but after his death in 1899, it became a memorial.

The wooden tower was removed from the Pier Building at this time, and the buildings stood side by side until the Pier Building was demolished in 1916 to make way for the new Pier Building.

When the bells and the clock were moved to their new location, the Bryant Bell was not installed in the top of the tower, but remained on the floor level until it was added to the compass in 1967. Also, at that time, three new bells from the Petit & Fristen bell foundry of the Netherlands were added by the Lewis Miller family, making the compass 14 notes.

Originally, the bells were played by levers attached to chains, which pulled the clappers into the sides of the bells. The clock struck once on the half-hour and the number of the hour. In the 1940s, the mechanical action was removed and the first electrical action was installed. In 1967 controls playing the Westminster Chimes were added. The bells are now played from a keyboard at the base of the tower.

Compiled by Thomas J. Wierbowski, chimemaster, 1993–2001