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\$3.00 | MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026 | STANDARDSPEAKER.COM

RING THE BELLS

Far from the original in Philadelphia, these fans hunt for the Liberty Bell replica in each state



A person walks by a Liberty Bell replica at the Oregon state Capitol on April 14 in Salem, Ore. JENNY KANE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Allen G. Breed ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, N.C. — Want to see the Liberty Bell this semi-quincentennial but don't have the time or cheese for a pilgrimage to Philadelphia? Have no fear: Chances are, there's one at a state Capitol, museum or even a fire station near you.

It won't be the original, but it'll be a dead ringer.

For a savings bond drive in 1950, the Treasury Department commissioned copies of the famously broken bell, one for each U.S. state and several territories. Except for the serial numbers, they were faithful replicas — right down to the Pass and Stow trademark and a faux crack.

There's a small but growing group of "bell hunters" who've dedicated themselves to visiting as many of the replicas as possible. If they were a gang, Tom Campbell would be the ringleader.

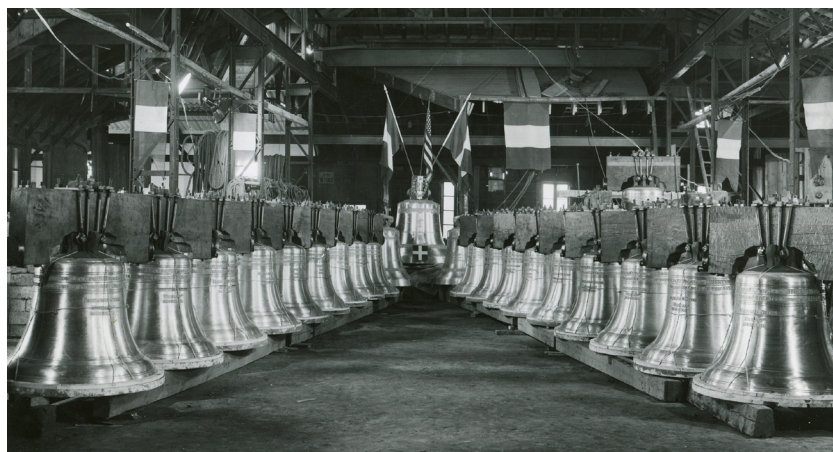
"It was a casual thing that turned into an obsession," Campbell, a graphic designer, said.

LET FREEDOM RING!

Although Fort Collins, Colorado, is now his home, Campbell was born and raised in Philadelphia and visited the original Liberty Bell as a boy.

Ordered for the Pennsylvania State House, now known as Independence Hall, the bell cracked on its first test ring in the 1750s, was melted down and cast anew. There's no evidence it was even rung on July 4, 1776; abolitionists rechristened it in the 1830s for the Bible verse encircling its crown, "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants thereof."

No one knows exactly when or how the bell cracked again, but the last major



This 1950 photo provided by Paccard Foundry shows rows of replica Liberty Bells, ordered by the U.S. Treasury for a savings bond drive, as they await shipment at the Paccard Foundry in Lac d'Annecy, France. PACCARD ARCHIVES/PACCARD FOUNDRY VIA AP



Tom Campbell, who is trying to visit as many replica Liberty Bells in the United States as possible, at his home in Fort Collins, Colo., on April 10. THOMAS PEIPERT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

attempt to restore it to ringing condition was in the 1840s.

Campbell didn't know about the replicas until he moved to Denver in the late 1990s.

"I was wandering around, meeting a friend at a bar for a drink, and cut across

the Capitol lawn and saw a full-size Liberty Bell sitting there," he recalled. He read about the bond drive on a small bronze plaque, and a quest was born.

As Campbell and his wife, Dawn Putney, traveled the country, they began building bell trips into their itinerary. One day, she surprised him with his own website: tomlovesthelibertybell.com

"It was just a kind of a fun goof," he said. But three decades after he stumbled on that first bell, Campbell has become the go-to expert on these pieces of Americana.

FROM FRANCE, AVEC AMOUR

The replicas were cast by the Paccard Foundry, run by a family who've been making bells in southeastern France since 1796.

They weigh the same as the original

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U.S. Supreme Court ruling restricts Voting Rights Act

Effect on Pa. likely limited

By Carter Walker SPOTLIGHT PA

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in a Louisiana voting rights case will make it harder to challenge political maps as being racially discriminatory, but the ruling will likely have limited effect on statewide district maps in Pennsylvania, where the state constitution provides stronger protections against gerrymandering.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6-3 decision split along ideological lines that raises the bar for proving illegal racial gerrymandering.

The case revolved around Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, a Civil Rights era protection that prohibits racial discrimination in voting and has historically been used to challenge how voting districts are drawn and require that members of a racial minority have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. In the most recent round of redistricting, Louisiana's legislature drew a map that would create a second congressional district that was majority-Black, instead of the single majority-Black district it had previously. The new map was challenged on the grounds that it explicitly used race as the basis in determining the districts.

"Allowing race to play any part in government decisionmaking represents a departure from the constitutional rule that applies in almost every other context," conservative Justice Samuel Alito wrote for the majority. He argued that compliance with Section 2 "could not justify the state's use of race-based redistricting here."

Election law experts in Pennsylvania have

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Your climate impact doesn't end when you die

More people considering 'greener' death options

By Dorany Pineda ASSOCIATED PRESS

After Moira Cathleen Delaney was diagnosed with an aggressive form of intestinal cancer, her thoughts eventually turned to her eventual death and what she wanted done with her body. Delaney's love of gardening, birds and the forest inspired her decision to be transformed into soil — literally — through a process known as natural organic reduction.

When she died in October at age 57, her family sprinkled some of her remains under her favorite backyard tree and gave some remains to her closest friends and relatives in glass jars to keep or plant things with.

"For her, it was a very comforting thought to be able to return to the earth in that kind

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A converted church in Pa. is becoming an incubator for Amish roots music

By Mark Scolforo ASSOCIATED PRESS

McCOYSVILLE — Conrad Fisher's musical journey has taken him from an Amish country upbringing in Pennsylvania to Nashville and back. These days the singer-songwriter has been making videos and recordings of musicians with Amish and Mennonite roots — building audiences well beyond the conservative

religious communities.

Last weekend Fisher took the stage in a former Presbyterian church that he bought for a song and converted into a performance space and recording studio he calls Ragamuffin Hall, in the rural Pennsylvania community of McCoysville.

Fisher performed two sold-out concerts with Ben and Rose Stoltzfus, a married couple whose Amish background and church choir harmo-

nies have drawn millions of YouTube clicks. It was a sort of warmup for shows they're playing together in the coming months at much larger theaters in Pennsylvania and Indiana.

"Ragamuffin Hall," Fisher said, "is supposed to be a place where those weird things that'll get you ostracized everywhere else, we're like, 'Oh, no, that's a gift. And here's how you use it.'"

Fisher's parents were both

raised in Amish families but his father joined a Mennonite congregation as a young adult. Among the Mennonite churches Fisher attended as a boy, musical instruments were rarely used.

Nonetheless, his father was a fan of Johnny Cash and didn't look too closely at what was on Fisher's MP3 player. When Fisher's brother came

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Conrad Fisher, Rose Stoltzfus and Ben Stoltzfus perform at Ragamuffin Hall in McCoysville on April 25. MATT ROURKE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

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