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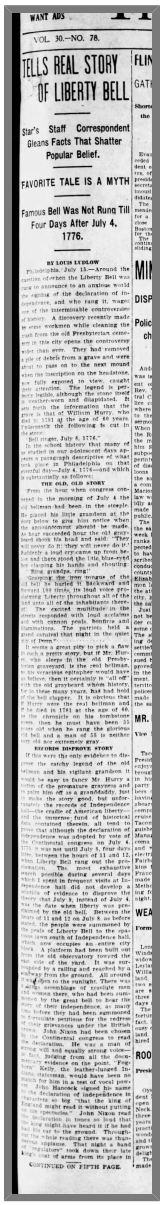

WANT ADS

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TELLS REAL STORY OF LIBERTY BELL

Star's Staff Correspondent Gleans Facts That Shatter Popular Belief.

FAVORITE TALE IS A MYTH

Famous Bell Was Not Rung Till Four Days After July 4, 1776.

BY LOUIS LUDLOW

Philadelphia, July 15.—Around the question of when the Liberty Bell was rung to announce to an anxious world the signing of the declaration of independence, and who rang it, rages one of the interminable controversies of history. A discovery recently made by some workmen while cleaning the vault from the old Presbyterian cemetery in this city opens the controversy wider than ever. They had removed a pile of debris from a grave and were about to pass on to the next mound when the inscription on the headstone, now fully exposed to view, caught their attention. The legend is perfectly legible, although the stone itself is weather-worn and dilapidated. It sets forth the information that the grave is that of William Murry, who died in 1781 at the age of 80 years. Underneath the following is cut in the stone:

"Died August, July 8, 1776."

It is the school history that many of us studied in our adolescent days appears a paragraph descriptive of what took place in Philadelphia on that eventful day—July 4, 1776—and which is substantially as follows:

THE OLD, OLD STORY

"From the hour when congress convened in the morning of July 4 the old beliman had been in the steeple. He placed his little grandson at the door below to give him notice when the announcement should be made. An hour succeeded hour the old grandsire shook his head and said: 'They will never do it!' They will never do it!' Suddenly a loud cry came up from below and there stood the little, blue-eyed lad, his face all aglow and shouting 'Ring, grandpa, ring!'

"Grasping the long tongue of the bell he hurled it backward and forward 100 times, its loud voice proclaiming Liberty throughout all of the land unto all of the inhabitants thereof. The excited multitude in the room responded with loud acclaims and with cannon peals. Bonfires and illuminations. The patriots held a festival that night in the quiet city of Penn."

It seems a great pity to pick a flaw in such a pretty story, but if Mr. Murry, who slept in the old Presbyterian graveyard, is the real beliman, as his veracious epitaph would have us believe, then it certainly is "off" with the old greybeard whom history, for many years, has had the honor of the long clapper. It is obvious that if Murry was the real beliman and if he died in 1781 at the age of 80, as the chronicle on his tombstone avers, then he must have been 35 years old when he rang the glorious old bell and a man of 35 is neither old nor extremely gray.

SECOND DISPUTE STORY

If this were the only evidence to disprove the catchy legend of the old beliman and his vigilant grandson it would be easy to fancy Mr. Murry a victim of the premature gravestone and to pity him as a grandfather, but to make the story good, but unfortunately the records of Independence hall—the cradle of American liberty—bear the lie to the fond tradition. The journal of congress all tend to prove that although the declaration of independence was adopted by vote of the Continental congress on July 4, 1776, it was not until July 8, four days later, between the hours of 11 and 12, when Liberty Bell rang out the proclamation. The most exhaustive search possible during several days I spent in frequent visits at Independence hall failed to unearth a single scrap of evidence to disprove the theory that July 8, instead of July 4, was the date when liberty was proclaimed by the old bell. Between the hours of 11 and 12 on July 8, as before stated, the people were summoned by the peals of Liberty Bell to the open lawn south of Independence hall, which now occupies an entire city block. A platform had been hastily erected on the lawn and covered with the flag of the union. It was surrounded by a railing and reached by a railway from the ground. All around it was open to the sunlight. There was a large assemblage of municipal men and women there, who had been summoned by the great bell to hear the news of their independence, as heard from the lips of John Nixon, who had been in Carpenter's pertinent for the redress of our grievances under the British crown. John Nixon had been chosen by the Continental congress to read the declaration. He was a man of strong will and equally strong voice—if we judge from all the documentary evidence on the point. "Fogy" Nixon, as he was called by his cronies, Patriotism, weather-hardened, was the man for him in a time of moral power. John Hancock signed his name to the declaration of independence in "bloating so big 'that the king of England might read it without putting on his spectacles.'" John Nixon read the declaration in tones so loud that he should have heard it he had not his ear to the ground. "Throughout the hale country," he cried, "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." That night a band of "regulators" took down their lantern and carried it to place in

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Real Story of Liberty Bell - Part 1

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