



Kay Mowson, a lifelong parishioner of Rochester's St. Michael Church, stands in the church's choir loft. Mowson is chairperson of the committee charged with planning the city church's June 13 festival. S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Fest to raise funds for church's upkeep

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Every Sunday, parishioners of St. Michael Church, 869 N. Clinton Ave., are treated to a world-class view when they look up at a stained-glass rendition of the Old Testament tale of Daniel in the lions' den.

The window shows Daniel kneeling in prayer with lions lying around him, with an angel and the prophet Habacuc in their midst.

Designed by a firm in Innsbruck, Tyrol (a region that lies in both modern Austria and Italy), the stained-glass window was exhibited at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, where it won first prize for ecclesiastical art.

"A visit to this church will repay a lover of ecclesiastical art if he studied this window alone," noted the author of a parish history published in 1984.

Fortunately, St. Michael's visitors need not rest content with gazing at this stained-glass prize-winner. The entire church bespeaks an architectural magnificence that echoes the dedication of the German immigrants who

built the church in the last century.

The church was the second building to house the St. Michael congregation, established in 1872. The original church, built in 1874, stands at the back of the current structure and now serves as the parish center.

To introduce more visitors to the church's grace — and to raise funds for its upkeep — St. Michael is hosting a "Spring Concert" on Sunday, June 13, from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. In addition to music and live entertainment from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., former Monroe County Executive Tom Frey will host church tours from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Frey noted that the building of St. Michael's represents just one example of the Gothic revival that swept architecture in the last century. Built by German immigrants hoping it would become the cathedral — a hope later dashed when the former St. Patrick Cathedral was selected — St. Michael Church boasts a number of impressive features that churches built more recently could not hope to match:

- Four clock faces that stand 14 feet high on a 240-foot steeple.

- Gables over each door, with ribbed ceilings inside.

- Ornate stations of the cross, altar decorations and saints' statues.

- A pipe organ originally installed for \$3,400 and now probably worth more than \$300,000.

- Spiral staircases leading to a choir loft that seats about 100 people.

- A electrical/manual chime system comprising 13 bells.

- A stained-glass window depicting the Nativity with Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid as one of the wise men presenting gifts and Father Fridolin Pascalar, St. Michael's second pastor, as a shepherd. Interestingly, Frey noted that when someone asked Father Pascalar where his assistant pastor was depicted in the window, the pastor pointed to one of the scene's lambs.

All together, the church, built and dedicated in 1890 at a cost of \$150,000, is probably worth more than \$20 million today, the church history noted. And, as Bishop McQuaid noted at the time of its dedication, most of the funds to build the edifice were drawn "from the small contributions of the masses of the faithful."

"The amount of real effort, artisanship and quality that went into the church is outstanding," Frey said. "It was the way the immigrants expressed their faith."

The church is selling \$5 tickets for the event. Call the rectory, 716/325-4040, for information.

Race-week auction will help the hungry

HORSEHEADS — Race cars and feeding the hungry aren't normally linked together, but they'll make a favorable fit this coming August.

An auction benefiting the Southern Tier Community Food Bank, 175 Grand Central Ave., Elmira Heights, will take place on Tuesday, Aug. 3. The event is scheduled to begin at approximately 6 p.m. at the Village Plaza, corner of Westinghouse and Gardner roads.

This second annual affair serves as part of that day's Race Week Spectacular, which commemorates the NASCAR Bud at the Glen race being held later in the week at nearby Watkins Glen International race track.

According to Prudy Georgia, Southern Tier Community Food Bank's community director, nearly 35,000 people attended the 1992 Race Week Spectacular, which featured several NASCAR drivers and their show cars filling the plaza's parking lot.

Concluding the daylong festivities will be the auction, which includes a number of racing-related items to be peddled from the back of a food bank truck. Last year's auction raised approximately \$3,000, Georgia said.

"We expect to double that this year," she predicted. "We also expect it to grow beyond the confines of what it is now."

Georgia noted that she has contacted a number of organizations nationwide — "racing teams, drivers, publicity agents, manufacturers" — to donate merchandise.

"NASCAR has traditionally been very supportive of food drives," she acknowledged.

In addition, Southern Tier Community Food Bank is tapping the local community for auction items such as restaurant gift certificates and travel packages.

Georgia emphasized that the food bank would greatly appreciate donations from the local community such as helmets, drivers' suits and door panels. Non-racing collectibles will also be accepted.

"If somebody has a wonderful item that isn't necessarily related to NASCAR, we would be delighted to have it," she said.


Donations can be made by contacting the food bank at 607/732-1837.

— Mike Latona

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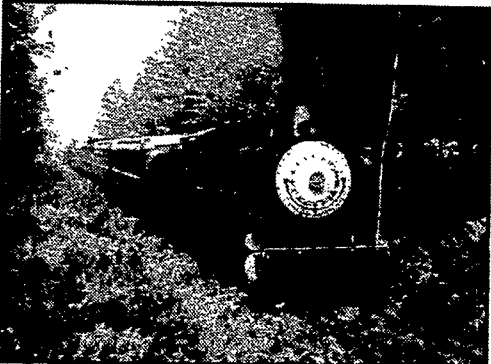
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