



## Spring Garden Celebrates 75<sup>th</sup> Jubiläum



*Karl R. Cole, President*

This year Spring Garden is celebrating its 75th Anniversary. A mutual appreciation of the out-of-doors, a desire to share in the peace and beauty of the woods, streams and hills plus the willingness to work and make it all possible is where it began.

In 1938 a group of friends, under the leadership of our first president, Emil Auer, formally requested a Charter from the State of New York. The Charter was granted on April 1, 1938 and the Spring Garden was born.

A search was made to find a suitable place. Many locations were suggested by the Charter members

who drove around WNY seeking the most desirable spot. Finally, our present location was chosen and the reasons are all too obvious – a stream winds gently through the wooded hills where the beauties of nature have remained as undisturbed as possible. In short, it answered all the requirements that had been sought.

A sawmill was rented; trees that were chosen for their suitability; the logs were cut into beams and boards that form the inside of our present hall; the sounds of hammering and the hall took shape. A feverish pace was necessary because a picnic was planned for that May 30, 1938.

From this beginning, we now have one of the finest recreation spots in WNY. Summer cottages are used by members.

Many changes have taken place in the past 75 years. Most are cosmetic in nature. A great deal of credit belongs to our resident carpenters and other skilled craftsmen.

Through our annual Maifest, Independence Day, Waldfest, German/Polish and Schlachtfest picnics, we continue to offer traditional German meals, music and beverages. These events are open to the public. All this is the result of a dream that has come to bear fruit over the years

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## St. Ann's annual German Mass at St. Louis Church a successful collaboration



*The Buffalo Schwaben Chor performing at St. Ann's German Mass.*

*Photo by Steve Kroczyński*

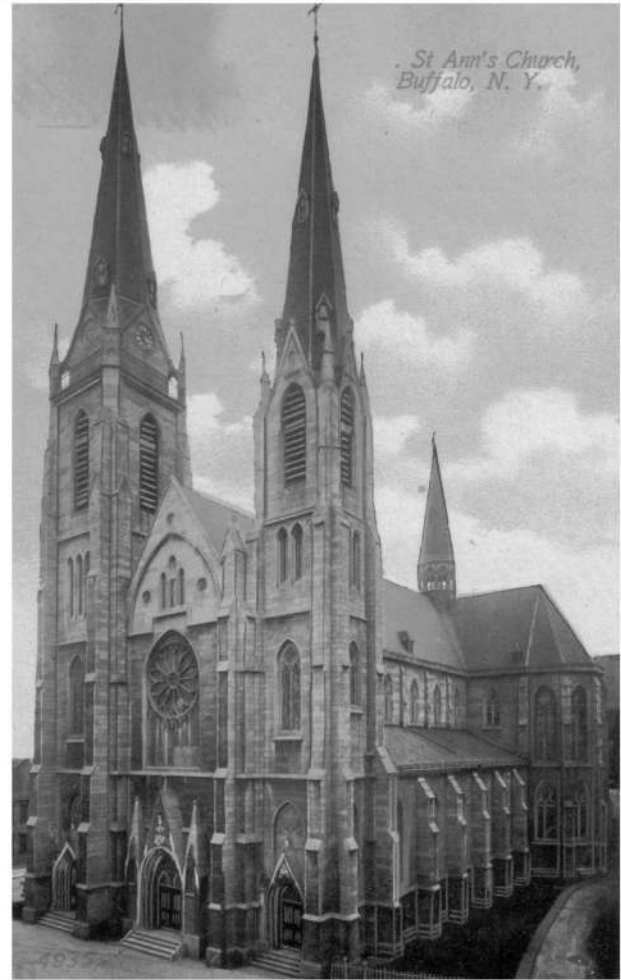
Some 350 people attended St. Ann's annual German Mass, which took place at 12:30 PM on April 21. This year the Mass was held at St. Louis Church in Downtown Buffalo, since St. Ann's Church and Shrine on Buffalo's East Side has remained shuttered since after 2012's German Mass. Plans for the 2013 Mass came together only in January after the St. Louis parish

community graciously extended an enthusiastic welcome to the people of St. Ann's so that they could hold the annual celebration—the seventh—at St. Louis Church.

Monsignor John Zeitler, who as a seminarian studied at the Canisianum in Innsbruck, celebrated the Mass. Mass began with a formal welcome from Michael Riester, the parish archivist at St. Louis and

organizer of St. Louis Church's part in the collaboration. Martin Ederer from St. Ann's Church joined him in welcoming all present. Music was provided by the Buffalo Schwaben Chor, who have brought their talents to the German Mass since its inception at St. Ann's Church in 2007. St. Louis Church's music director, Frank Scinta,

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*Postcard of St. Ann's Buffalo, NY c. 1908*

## Why Saving St. Ann's Church and Shrine Matters

*Martin Ederer*

The Diocese of Buffalo recently presented us with the results of a structural analysis of St. Ann's Church and Shrine. This came a year after we were informed—after our 2012 German Mass—that the church was too unsafe for any further activities inside. We continued to look after the place after we were no longer permitted to have Mass in the church. In November, we were forbidden from even doing that, except after going through a much more complicated formal procedure to gain entrance.

The recent structural analysis places repair costs at 8 to 12 million dollars. We have yet to fully digest and dissect what the diocese has told us. Still, we're talking a lot of money. That is perhaps reason enough to give up and resign ourselves to an imminent demolition of St. Ann's Church. But speaking as co-chair of a committee of parishioners, friends and volunteers that has worked seven years to avoid that fate, we have not given up.

Stupid? Possibly. Especially since few, if any, of our committee or our faith community have actually seen even one million dollars.

Over the course of the last several years, numerous people we have welcomed into St. Ann's Church have asked why we continue to advocate for St. Ann's Church in what seems to be a losing struggle.

There are numerous reasons. Here's the short list:

- St. Ann's Church is a living monument to what German Buffalo was, to our area's German immigrant heritage and to its hopes and ideals. It is also an important monument to Catholic evangelization efforts among Buffalo's African-American community.

- Buffalo has recently rediscovered—and has begun to showcase, recover and rebuild—its cultural and architectural heritage. We have been given stewardship of one of Buffalo's finest churches. We have inherited a responsibility from poor donors who had nothing, but still gave all to build St. Ann's

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# Save Saint Ann's

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Church. We should honor their memory and their sacrifices. If the church is about people, as we are frequently reminded, we must remember that real live people made sacrifices so that we have St. Ann's Church.

•Culture matters. Architecture matters. Beauty matters. Buildings are never just bricks and mortar. They are always about people. They always say something about the people who build and maintain them. If we compare St. Ann's Church to any average suburban church, we need to ponder who we have become. The average suburban church is usually a practical, uninspiring design that is surrounded by a vast parking lot. Have we become people who are so dominated by our automobiles and by comfort, ease and pragmatism, that culturally we have become empty shells? Cars and comfort and practicality are all good things. But are they the *only* things?

Christianity — and most reputable religious and philosophical traditions — teach that we do not live by bread (or money or material comforts) alone. A place like St. Ann's Church serves as a reminder that there are beings out there more powerful than us, and concerns more important than our own individual material existences. While a church building, strictly speaking, is not the heart of Christianity, most of us need physical reminders in our world. A church is a symbol of our faith: it gives us a sense of place. A splendid

*We face a crossroads at St. Ann's Church, and we face it now.*

church reminds us of the splendor of God. We are not pure spirits. We have bodies. Some people come to their faith by reasoning their way to it; some need music; others need art and architecture. Why should Christians artificially limit the means of evangelization at their disposal? If we are believers, we take care of our bodies despite the knowledge that the life of the spirit is far more important. So how should the physical embodiment of a church community be any different?

•We have been told that splendid churches are a luxury we can ill-afford when so many people have so many basic needs, especially in a neighborhood like that around St. Ann's Church. That may be true. But what does it say when we have unilaterally decided for a troubled neighborhood that the people there deserve no beauty, that beauty should only be something permitted to those who have money?

•The Buffalo area has a long and lamentable record of the myopic destruction of its cultural monuments and its heritage. One need only mention the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Larkin Office Building. And then there is the long list of structures that we now celebrate as important pieces of our community heritage that were saved or restored only after long and exhausting battles: the Darwin Martin House, Shea's Buffalo, King



Interior photo of St. Ann's as it appears today.

Urban Life Center, ECC City, Michigan Street Baptist Church, Corpus Christi Church. To be blunt, will we ever learn?

We face a crossroads at St. Ann's Church, and we face it now. If we decide badly, future generations will condemn us for our lack of vision and for our barbarism in allowing our local cultural treasures to be plundered and destroyed. Or we could rally to this cause. In the 1870s, the German people of St. Ann — most of them poor — made an act of faith to build something splendid for God and for Buffalo.

In 2013 dollars, their project would have cost millions. But they did it. Now it is our turn, and we have a choice. What are we going to do, and what will that decision say about us? We can get this right, or we can recriminate ourselves—yet again—after it is too late.

*Martin Ederer is professor of history at Buffalo State College. He co-chairs the St. Ann's Church and Shrine Revitalization Committee.*

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