

Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation Newsletter

Published for those interested in preserving St. Nicholas Church, N.S. and our Croatian Heritage

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St. Nicholas Church, N.S. Memorialized in Highway Project - Artwork will greet motorists as they enter City of Pittsburgh

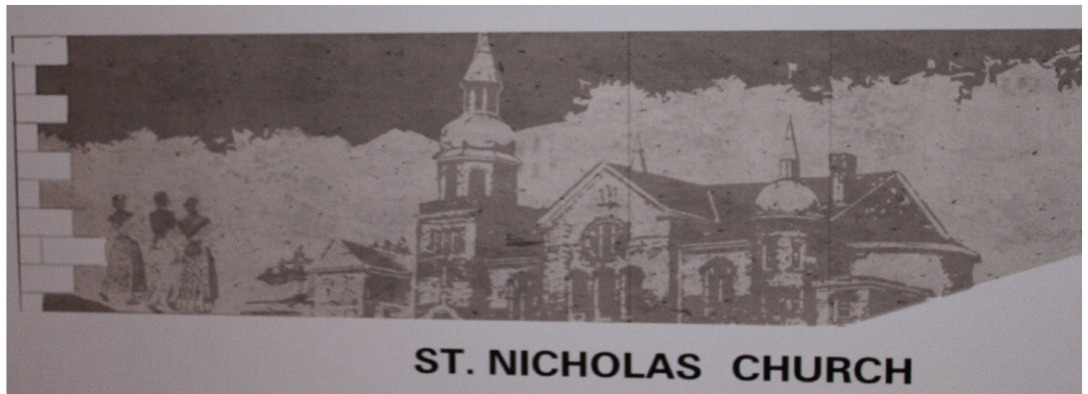


Image of St. Nicholas Church to be Sandblasted into Memorial Wall

rendering provided by PennDOT

Route 28 is the main artery accessing Pittsburgh from the northeast. PennDOT sought to improve safety and mobility through the corridor when initiating the Route 28 East Ohio Street Project. By engaging the public and stakeholders, the project was developed, which not only accomplishes these goals, but also carefully blends the highway in between a steep hillside, the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and the Allegheny River. By doing so, the green hillsides were preserved, retaining walls were minimized, and safe pedestrian access to the Riverfront Trail from the Northside via the renovated 31st Street Bridge was provided.

Interestingly, Allegheny City's East Ohio Street corridor was one of the earliest Croatian enclaves in the country. Understanding the rich culture of this community, PennDOT worked closely with Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation, Preservation Pittsburgh, Troy Hill Citizens and other area stakeholders throughout the planning, design, and construction stages of the Route 28 roadway improvement project in order to document, preserve, and promote the area's cultural legacy for future generations.

(see Page 2)



Last Corridor of E. Ohio Street Project

rendering provided by PennDOT

The Saint Nicholas Roman Catholic Parish, dating to 1894, is significant as the first Croatian national parish in the United States. The East Ohio Street (North Side) church building and adjacent rectory were built in 1901. The three octagonal copper onion domes were prominent characteristics of the church building and became local landmarks. An elaborate hillside grotto, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, was constructed in 1944, taking advantage of the surrounding terrain by continuing the common area with steps between the church and rectory. After closure of the East Ohio Street (North Side) church building in 2004, the building remained vacant until it was razed in January 2013 by the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

After the removal of the church, PennDOT initiated design revisions to the Route 28 improvement project, which included the incorporation of elements considered

over the course of many years through coordination with community stakeholders and interested parties. A significant priority was the desire for safe pedestrian access from the 31st Street Bridge to the North Side. In response, a major project alteration was replacing the standard sidewalk, adjacent to Route 28, with a wider walkway shifted away from the roadway. This walkway will safely bring pedestrians from the Riverfront Trail across Route 28 via the 31st Street Bridge and will continue along Route 28 to a newly paved parking lot adjacent to Troy Hill Road and the Penn Brewery. At the former site of Saint Nicholas Church, the walkway will be expanded and will feature an octagonal concrete area. This area will consist of an exposed aggregate finish including a bronze octagonal ring in the center. The octagon shapes are inspired by the domes that once topped St. Nicholas Church.



Future seating area where St. Nicholas Church once stood



Rendering proposed by PennDOT

Bordering the octagonal walkway area will be a seating area and an architectural panel with an ashlar stone pattern and natural stone color stain reminiscent of the walls along the stairs that led to the grotto.

With the removal of numerous buildings along this corridor, an additional wall to retain the adjacent hillside will be needed. This retaining wall presented an ideal “canvas” to incorporate public artwork. PennDOT sought the assistance of the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council in selecting an artist with the most appropriate experience for this transportation project. The inclusion of artwork will further celebrate the history of a variety of people and community institutions that

played an important role in this part of the North Side. The retaining wall will include a large stone pattern with staining, similar to the walls recently constructed along this corridor. The selected artist wanted to blend the wall style as a platform to metaphorically “chip away” the familiar stone block and reveal vignettes from the past via sandblasted images. The images will be approximately 14' high and 30' to 60' wide.

Route 28 is a gateway to the North Side and Greater Pittsburgh. Saint Nicholas Church was a prominent part of the East Ohio Street community and thus a significant feature to include within the artwork. The images to be incorporated into the wall and the history about them are as follows:

1. St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church, North Side,
Croatian National Parish, 1326 E. Ohio St.
In use 1901-2004; razed 2013



Allegheny City's East Ohio Street corridor was one of the earliest Croatian enclaves in the country. Established in 1894, St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Parish was the first Croatian national parish in the United States; the East Ohio Street church building, dates to 1901 and was designed by prominent local architect Frederick Sauer. The windows and bells were purchased with donations from Croatian societies and lodges throughout the United States and Canada. At the time of the construction of the East Ohio Street edifice, St. Nicholas Parish split between the North Side (Allegheny) and Millvale locations, and the newly-formed St. Nicholas, Millvale Parish contemporaneously erected a new house of worship in Millvale. The North Side and Millvale parishes were merged in 1994, though the East Ohio Street building continued to be used for worship until 2004.

2. Josip Marohnic Bookstore, 1420 E. Ohio Street
Operated circa 1898-1914

The Marohnic Bookstore image is being appropriately placed adjacent to the church image, as Josip Marohnic was a leader in the Pittsburgh Croatian community and instrumental in the formation of the St. Nicholas Parish. By 1898, Lorenz Roessler, a German carpet weaver, was renting both commercial and dwelling space at 1420 East Ohio Street to Marohnic, a Croatian printer and bookseller. Marohnic (1866-1921) immigrated from Hreljin, Croatia to Chicago in 1893 and subsequently settled in Allegheny City in 1897. In the 1890s and early 1900s, the part of East Ohio Street near the subject property transitioned from a predominantly German to a predominantly Croatian neighborhood. It is believed that Marohnic's bookstore may have been the first Croatian bookstore in the United States. Marohnic imported and published Croatian books, a humor magazine, an English-Croat dictionary, and a weekly newspaper, Hrvatski Glasnik, and collections of his own poems -- 1420 East Ohio Street is the earliest documented location of Marohnic's bookstore and one that the local community most associates with Marohnic's business. Marohnic facilitated bringing a Croatian-speaking priest to St. Nicholas Parish and also

solicited national Croatian organizations for donations to purchase stained glass windows and bells for the 1901 church building constructed by the parish on East Ohio Street.

3. Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry, 1600-1646 River Avenue
Operated 1892-1916

The Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry began operation in the 4th Ward of Allegheny City (near Sandusky and General Robinson streets) around 1860 under Thomas A. Carlin, Sr. After Carlin's death in 1884, the foundry was operated by his three sons, and the business was reorganized as Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry. The foundry's production grew steadily in decades following the Civil War, and by 1892 a second and larger foundry building was constructed on River Avenue. The firm was well known, both nationally and internationally, for its production of engines, boilers, industrial shears, and grinding equipment. Locally, the foundry produced a great number of cast iron street furnishings, such as sewer inlets, manhole covers, curb and building protectors, fire hydrants, and street lights. The foundry ceased production in 1916, but a number of its sewer inlets and manhole covers survive on Pittsburgh-area streets.

4. Silhouette of Troy Hill with Canal Boat in Tow
Pennsylvania Canal Operated 1829-1864

The Pennsylvania Canal was part of the "Main Line of Public Works" constructed by the State of Pennsylvania in the late 1820s to provide a coordinated system of transport between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The system utilized a railroad between Philadelphia and Columbia (on the Susquehanna River) and a network of canals and inclined planes between the Susquehanna River and Pittsburgh. The Main Line of Public Works reduced the travel time between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh from 23 days to 4 days, and it was heavily used for both freight and passenger transport. In 1857, the Main Line of Public Works was purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad for \$7,500,000. The section of canal near Pittsburgh operated until 1864. The Pennsylvania railroad then filled the canal and constructed a subsidiary line, the Western Pennsylvania Railroad, along the former canal alignment linking Allegheny City (Pittsburgh's North Side) with Butler and Blairsville.

5. Allegheny Institute and Mission Church, "Avery College," built 1849; razed 1969, Nash and Avery Streets, Rev. Elijah Pettus (1905-1987) in foreground

The Allegheny Institute and Mission Church was constructed in 1849 by wealthy Methodist lay preacher and abolitionist, Charles Avery (1784-1858). Avery intended the institute, known colloquially as Avery College, to provide a classical education for African Americans of both sexes. The three story building contained a sanctuary and classrooms on separate floors, and its basement is said to be a stop on the Underground Railroad. The college ceased operations in 1873, but the building continued to be used as a house of worship by African Americans until it was demolished in 1969, in anticipation of the construction of I-279. The congregation of the Avery Memorial AME Zion Church relocated to the Brighton Heights section of Pittsburgh's North Side, where it remains active to the present day.

6. Pittsburgh, Allegheny, and Manchester Traction Co.,

Streetcar at 916 East Ohio Street Circa 1889-1891

The Pittsburgh, Allegheny, and Manchester Traction Company, ran streetcars along East Ohio Street in the late nineteenth century. The PA&M Traction Company was later consolidated with the Pittsburgh Railways Company. The

streetcar line was the principal means of transportation along the East Ohio Street corridor from the 1890s until the 1920s, when it began to be superseded by the automobile. In response to increasing automobile traffic, the City of Pittsburgh widened East Ohio Street from two to four lanes in 1921; thus, the Ascension of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. The Church was moved 10 feet away from the original foundation and eight feet up.

The wall will begin at the former Saint Nicholas Church rectory site—an appropriate position for the church image showing off its landmark domes to the 60,000 daily Route 28 travelers. Complementing the artwork will be landscaping and seating that will also have a historical flair: large stones salvaged from the Pennsylvania Canal will serve as seating areas.

As construction gets completed late this year these exceptional features will take shape providing future generations a glimpse of this area's significant history.

Authored by: H. Daniel Cessna, P.E., District Executive, Engineering District 11, Greg Cerninara, P.E., Project Manager, Michael Baker, Jr., Inc., and Jesse Belfast, Architectural Historian, Michael Baker, Jr. Inc.

Final Corridor of Highway Shows Great Promise for the North Side by Ruth Ann Dailey

During the years of wrestling over the fate of Saint Nicholas Church, an idea emerged that would bring attention and foot-traffic to its possible repurposing: a public walkway connecting it to the Riverfront Trail.



Even when it became clear that St. Nicholas Church would not be saved, PennDOT still agreed to build the planned walkway.

But the first plan for the pedestrian-bike path placed it in a sea of concrete pavers, running the length of East Ohio Street from the 31st Street Bridge to the Penn Brewery Parking lot.

The East Deutschtown and Troy Hill neighborhoods, backed by the North Side Leadership

Conference and Preservation Pittsburgh, argued strenuously for green spaces to soften the bleakness of all that concrete.

And PennDOT responded with a terrific plan that will provide year-round color and includes dogwoods, redbuds, blue and green spruce trees, winterberry, wildflowers and purple-leaf winter creeper.

All this beautiful landscaping along with the art-filled retaining wall and the seating area with canal stone benches will invite visitors to linger and reflect on our area's rich past.

But these amenities will also invite them to become part of our exciting future, because the path will lead them into our neighborhoods, to our businesses and homes.

Corridor Shows Great Promise for the North Side cont'd. from P. 5

The path ends in the Penn Brewery parking lot, which should be a boon for that vibrant and historic business as hungry and thirsty visitors make their way to its benches and taps.

But just to the west lies East Ohio Street, where highway construction turned a thriving business corridor into a wasteland. Anchored by the Workingman's Savings Bank at the corner of East Ohio and the I-279 overpass, this corridor is poised for quick and powerful redevelopment.

By restoring a connection between the North Shore,

the North Side and the Riverfront Trail in such a convenient and attractive way, the bike/pedestrian path will highlight our great location and its accessibility to Downtown and to many other destinations and amenities.

The path takes the highways that gobbled up so much of neighborhoods and turns them into a positive feature for us. Our communities are now well-positioned for an economic boom, as outsiders discover the charms of our historic neighborhoods, perched right at the gateway of the city.



PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL MARKER UPDATE by Steve Willing

PCHF and its loyal supporters are hopeful that an application submitted in late November 2013 for a Pennsylvania Historical Marker to be placed at the site of the former St. Nicholas Church, North Side will be approved. Over 20 pages of historical documents, letters of support, as well as State of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County, and City of Pittsburgh Proclamations referencing St. Nicholas R.C.



photo by Steve Willing

Croatian Church, N.S. as the "First Croatian Catholic Parish in the Western Hemisphere" were inserted into the presentation packet. A photocopy of the first page of the Petition for Pittsburgh City Council to designate St. Nicholas a City Historic Structure was included. A beautiful 8 x 10" color photograph of St. Nicholas with the Troy Hill neighborhood above will be the first thing a panel of independent experts will see. They are currently evaluating the over 50 applications for the marker program. A decision will be made by mid March 2014.

The Healing Process of Losing St. Nicholas Church by Susan Petrick

For 14 long years, members of PCHF were relentless in their plight to save St. Nicholas Croatian R.C. Church, N.S. Throughout those years, there were many successes including: St. Nicholas designated as a City Historic Structure; a highway plan designed by preservationists was adopted by PennDOT that spared St. Nicholas and saved \$40 million tax payers' dollars; PCHF commissioned for two feasibility studies that confirmed a national museum was in fact feasible; and in the final days before demolition, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, with encouragement of Preservation Pittsburgh and PCHF, made an offer of \$380,000 to the Pittsburgh Diocese for the purchase of St. Nicholas Church.

But the Diocese's refusal to accept any of the numerous offers to purchase St. Nicholas Church made all PCHF's efforts to save the Church futile. While Diocesan officials succeeded in choosing the destruction of St. Nicholas over a viable immigrant museum, all is not lost. PennDOT has turned this travesty into something incredibly respectful. Instead of the site where St. Nicholas proudly stood left as a barren, weed infested hillside with St. Nicholas erased from the earth, that very site will be beautified with lush greenery and flowers, an inviting trail that will lead hikers and bikers to the seating area and bronze ring reflective of the onion-domed Church steeples, and they will have an



Healing Process of Losing St. Nicholas

cont'd. from P. 5



opportunity to reflect on the interpretive panels filled with the rich history of St. Nicholas, the First R.C. Croatian Parish in the Western Hemisphere. But most important, the image of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. will be sandblasted into a 14 foot tall concrete wall for the 60,000 motorists who travel that highway everyday to see. St. Nicholas Church will not be wiped from the face of the earth as some preferred; instead, its image will live on for generations to come.

When all seemed lost with St. Nicholas Church, God stepped in as He has done so many times in the saga of St. Nicholas Church. He did not desert St. Nicholas Church nor its faithful parishioners and supporters. God had His own plan and has made clear the phrase we have been taught, "God works in mysterious ways".

We are grateful to PennDOT for engaging in

constructive discussions with PCHF, Preservation Pittsburgh and Troy Hill Citizens to include St. Nicholas Church in the Route 28 E. Ohio St. Project and for making St. Nicholas Church a permanent part of Pittsburgh's North Side -- keeping the image of this important piece of Croatian history alive.

We are hopeful that the St. Nicholas Church memorial will help to heal the wounds of the faithful who grieve their Church, and it will bring closure to all those who mourn its loss. The memories we have of special services and events held at St. Nicholas Church will always be in our hearts, and PCHF will continue to provide a wide selection of photographs of St. Nicholas Church, the Grotto and rectory to view whenever you desire through its website, www.stnicholasns.org.

Purpose and Future Plans of PCHF

by Susan Petrick

From the moment of its inception in 2000, Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation's mission has been to "Save and Preserve St. Nicholas Church, N.S." -- a mission PCHF worked towards with great diligence. While it is no longer possible to save the physical structure of St. Nicholas, PCHF continues but with a revised mission -- "To Preserve the Croatian Culture of Saint Nicholas Church, North Side".



The traditional St. Nicholas Day Banquet will continue to be held at Javor Hall in December. The annual Memorial Day Service held at the Hahn Road Cemetery will continue each May to honor the fallen soldiers from St. Nicholas Church, N.S. Once the St. Nicholas memorial on East Ohio Street is completed, candle light Prayer Services will be held at that site.

Updates on the developmental stages of the final corridor of the Route 28 East Ohio Street Project and the St. Nicholas Memorial will be reported through the PCHF Newsletters, in mass e-mailings and in the

www.stnicholasns.org website. Periodic PCHF meetings will continue to be held at Javor Hall.

PCHF's funds will be used to: maintain and cover the costs of the www.stnicholasns.org website that provides a wide variety of photos, Church and Grotto history, architecture, and newspaper articles. Funds will also be used to cover photocopying and mailing costs of PCHF newsletters, annual PCHF membership mailings, liability insurance premiums and donations made to Javor Hall for hall rental. Once the Pennsylvania Historical Markers are approved, PCHF will cover the cost of those markers to be installed along the hiking/biking trail. PCHF will also cover the cost of interpretive panels planned for installation along Troy Hill Road.

The PCHF Board will continue to work with surrounding neighborhood groups for any additional memorialization plans for St. Nicholas Church and will continue to keep our supporters abreast of these future plans.

Memorial Day Ceremony Set for May 26 at St. Nicholas, Hahn Rd. Cemetery by Jane Sestric

On Memorial Day we honor members of the Armed Forces who gave their lives for their country during wartime and all men and women who served their country at home and abroad. This year, the ceremony is scheduled for Monday, May 26, 2014 at 11:30 a.m. at the St. Nicholas Cemetery on Hahn Road.



Each year Bill Vergot, Co-chairman of PCHF, welcomes those attending. Then Rich Sestric and Joseph Belobrajdic present the colors. All join in the singing of "God Bless America", led by Bernice Goyak. Adrian Vergot delivers a eulogy in tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in wartime. Next follows the names of each serviceman from the St. Nicholas Northside parish who has died in service to their country, as Joseph Belobrajdic rings the large cemetery bell one time for each decedent.

Our honored veterans will light a candle for each service person listed during the calling of the names. During a moment of silence, in memory of those who gave their lives, those present express their own prayers for deceased family veterans and those in service around the world today.


During the past few years, the attendance has been very strong, and we hope that you can join us this year. Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation extends sincere appreciation to the pastors and numerous volunteers who have prepared the grounds, candles, and flags and for those who have attended this ceremony each May to honor our family members who put their lives on the line to safeguard our freedom. We hope you can join us and raise your voices and prayers for our Veterans and those who serve around the world on Monday, May 26 at 11:30 at the St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Cemetery, Hahn Road.



To view the PCHF Newsletter in COLOR, go to the home page of www.stnicholasns.org. Historical photos of the interior and exterior of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. and the Grotto can be viewed by clicking on the "Gallery" tab on the home page. Detailed history, architecture, news articles and more are at your fingertips. Just log onto www.stnicholasns.org.



Three Bags of Gold Special Fund by Jack Schmitt

All donors to the Three Bags of Gold annual fund are truly, very much appreciated.  Donations from people in Canada and people throughout the United States have been heartening. The \$3.00 donated for each person of Croatian ancestry in your family is a good memorial to your parents, grandparents, children, and friends. The donation helps pay for the basic costs of Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation which was founded to protect the heritage of the Croatian Mother Church, Saint Nicholas, North Side, in Pittsburgh.

Since last December 6, the feast of Saint

Nicholas, \$615 has been donated to the 2013 Three Bags of Gold Fund. Your generosity helps pay for postage for the Newsletter and for the insurance cost which is necessary for the organization to be faithful in promoting the valued heritage of Croatian Americans in their first settlement in the New World. Thank you all.

When the 2014 Fund drive begins next fall, please contribute as a token of honor at least \$3.00 for each Croatian in your family and send in their names to Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation.



Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation
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Address Service Requested

How To Reach Us

E-mail us at **pchf@stnicholans.org**

You may call any of the following Executive Committee Members by telephone as shown below

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UPCOMING PCHF EXECUTIVE AND GENERAL MEETING

All are welcome to attend!

Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 7:00 P.M.

JAVOR HALL

805 EAST STREET, PITTSBURGH, PA 15212