

Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation Newsletter

Published for those interested in preserving the memory of St. Nicholas Church, N.S.

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Steve Willing

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Treasurer & Newsletter
Editor**

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St. Nicholas Church, N.S. Bell Dedication

By Steve Willing

The memory of St. Nicholas Croatian Church, N.S. is alive and well and was honored on April 29, 2019, at the CFU headquarters in Monroeville, PA. More than 50 guests including former parishioners, members of Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation, members of the National Board of Directors of the CFU, and other friends of St. Nicholas Church, N.S., were in attendance for the dedication and blessing of one of the historic bells from St. Nicholas.



Three bronze bells were once housed in the Bell Tower of St. Nicholas, the first Croatian parish in North America, recognized as the Mother Croatian Church throughout the United States and Canada. The largest bell was dedicated to Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the second bell to St. George, and the third bell to the Blessed Virgin of Trsat. After Saint

Nicholas was demolished in 2013, the third bell was eventually obtained by the CFU, restored to its original condition, and is now on permanent display at the main entrance of the CFU.

Ed Pazo, National President of the CFU, welcomed those in attendance. He said: "This bell which now rests here at the home office of the CFU serves as a lasting reminder of our forbearer's faith in God and desire to praise Him in our mother tongue through worship with a Croatian priest from the old homeland."

Bernadette M. Luketich-Sikaras, National Secretary/Treasurer of the C.F.U., and Franjo Bertovic, National Vice President/ Member Services of the CFU, also spoke highly of St. Nicholas and the rich history of the Croats in Pittsburgh.

Adorned with red, white, and blue ribbons with a large Croatian flag hanging behind it, the bell was then blessed and sprinkled with holy (see Page 2)

Children's Plaque Update

By Kathleen Buric

The St. Nicholas Church N.S., Cemetery located on Hahn Road, Ross Township, PA is in the process of revitalization. The Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation volunteers have completed their research to find the names of those children known to have been buried in the Children's Section in that cemetery.

A contract has been signed with Franklin Bronze of Franklin, PA, and deposit made, to prepare a bronze plaque listing the names of the children found to have been buried in that section. It will have a dark oxide background, with a graphic of Jesus with children at the top and a double border around the perimeter, with the bronze color evident in the names, border and graphic. It is now completed, and we await the arrival of its granite backer.



(see Page 2)

St. Nicholas Church, N.S. Bell Dedication

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water by the Rev. Phillip Pribonic, Retired Pastor, St. Joan of Arc R.C. Church, Library, PA. The bell, silent for many years was then rung, resonating with the same rich sound as it had for over a hundred years, rekindling many emotions for those in attendance.

A bronze plaque below the bell reads: "One of the historic Three Bells Housed in the Bell Tower of St. Nicholas R.C. Croatian Church, First Croatian Parish in America Est. 1894, Northside Pittsburgh, PA. Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, June 15, 1901. Refurbished and Preserved in Tribute to Croatian Immigrants and Families by the Croatian Fraternal Union, April 2019". A reception followed in the CFU afterwards. Please make time to visit the CFU so that you can see this most important piece of history on permanent display at: 100 Delaney Drive. Pittsburgh, PA 15235.



Children's Plaque Update

Continued from Page 1

The Pittsburgh Catholic Diocese Cemetery Association has offered, free of charge, to pour the concrete footer that will hold the completed bronze and granite memorial. Upon completion this fall, the memorial will be a beautiful addition to the N.S. St. Nicholas Cemetery. We are sure that those little angels will be smiling down on us as we remember those infants and children who had been tragically lost so very young.

If you wish to donate to this worthwhile endeavor, please make your check payable to PCHF (for Infants Memorial), and mail to:

Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation
P.O. Box 5812
Pittsburgh, PA 15209

MAY GOD BLESS!

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF DONORS TO THE CHILDREN'S PLAQUE TO BE ERECTED IN THE ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, N.S. CEMETERY, HAHN ROAD, PITTSBURGH, PA

Buric, Michael, Glenshaw, PA
Crnkovic, Paul, Pittsburgh, PA
Happy Hearts Tamburitians, Newton Falls, OH
Hrovat, Mary Jane, Bradfordwoods, PA
Ivko, David (President Holy Name Soc), Poland, OH
Pavlechko, Ron, Boalsburg, PA
Poropatich, Andrea, Brooklyn, NY
Pozar-Keeter, Sandra, Harvest, AL
Rohrkaste, Shirley, Pittsburgh, PA
Santucci, James Louis, Seven Fields, PA
Sestrich, Isabel M., Pittsburgh, PA

Sibenik, Thomas, Pittsburgh, PA
Sibenik, Steven, Pittsburgh, PA
Sladack, Peter, Staten Island, NY
Sladack, Bill, San Diego, CA
Srsic, Bill, Indiana, PA
St. George Lodge #66, Ohio
Tokich, Catherine, Pittsburgh, PA
Trubic-Belcher, Jeanne, Pgh PA
Vergot, Bill, Washington, PA
Vierthaler, John, Littleton CO

The following piece was written by Lorraine Turkall, Editor of the Zajednicar and Secretary to C.F.U. National President, Ed Pazo, and was published in the May 15, 2019 Issue of the Zajednicar.

The Sound Still Resonates

There was just something about hearing that Church Bell ring...

At the conclusion of the brief ceremony held on April 29, 2019 at the CFU Home Office establishing the permanent residency of one of the three historic bells which was once enshrined at St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church on Pittsburgh's North Side, the majestic bronze bell was rung for all to hear. Those

in attendance—including CFU National Officers, Board Members, and Staff, as well as CFU members and friends from the local community, and former parishioners of St. Nicholas Church—were astounded to hear the melodic deep tone that emanated from the bell which had been silent for far too long.



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The Sound Still Resonates

Continued from Page 2

First installed at St. Nicholas Church in 1901, the bell was one of three which resounded in full glorious volume to welcome the faithful to mass, to announce a holy day of obligation, to ring out in celebration and to bid farewell to parishioners who were being laid to Eternal Rest. Now, the bell is permanently affixed outside the entryway to the Croatian Fraternal Union, ensconced in shrubbery with a beautiful bronze plaque, which reads, "One of the historic Three Bells Housed in the Bell Tower of St. Nicholas R.C. Croatian Church, First Croatian Parish in America Est. 1894, North Side Pittsburgh, PA. Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, June 15, 1901. Refurbished and Preserved in Tribute to Croatian Immigrants and Families by the Croatian Fraternal Union, April 2019.

Honored to take part in this blessing ceremony in April of 2019, I stood entranced for a moment, thinking of those who laid the first cornerstones, at the turn of the previous century, for St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church, North Side Pittsburgh, the first Croatian Church in America. I conjured up images of the first parishioners who stood proudly at the groundbreaking for this massive structure, those who offered their hours of labor in the building process and those who watched as it grew from the earth, reaching for the sky and the heavens above.

Built to glorify God and to provide a home for the Catholic faithful to practice their religion and to secure their Croatian identity in America, St. Nicholas R.C. Croatian Church was far more than a building, far greater than a house of worship...it was a "home" to Croatian immigrants, to Croatian families born in America of Croatian heritage and to all who sought refuge through years of reflection and turmoil, be it

personal, economic or spiritual.

Sadly, some of the men and women who offered their back-breaking labors, their financial contributions, no matter the amount, and their devout dedication to the project, never lived to see the fruits of their efforts.

Yet, St. Nicholas R.C. Croatian Church surpassed all expectations and fiercely endured for more than a century. To the unmitigated disappointment of many in the greater Pittsburgh area and throughout the world, the church was razed in 2013. This grand monument to God, built by our Croatian faithful, laid in ruins.

Just as we witnessed this beautiful church wiped from the Pittsburgh landscape, and just as much of Notre Dame recently fell in fiery ruins in Paris, and just as many other beloved longtime parishes have ceased to exist, we may all take heart that the essential elements of what St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church, North Side represented remains intact.

The beautiful bell that once hung in the church belfry now resides at the Croatian Fraternal Union of America, "home" to many of the same people who built the church and who shared the same core values, family life, joys, hardships and friendships.

As the bell resonates with echoes of our past, it remains as a tangible monument to God and to our Croatian Catholic Faithful...those gone before us who left a lasting imprint on our hearts, those of us who have the privilege of following in their footsteps, and those who will carry our faith, our heritage and our Croatian identity forward.

Let it Ring for All of Us--Neka Zvoni Za Sve Nas!

The following is a thank-you note written by Susan Petrick, Secretary of PCHF, to Lorraine Turkall, Editor of the Zajednicar



CHALICE ARTWORK by artist, Susan Petrick, commemorating the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Grgo Sikiric, T.O.R. 2000

Dear Sister Turkall,
The article you wrote for the Zajednicar on St. Nicholas Church, North Side was absolutely beautiful. Your words

were written with such passion, love, and empathy that tears were pouring down my face as I read them. You captured the very essence of what St. Nicholas Church, N.S. meant to its parishioners and all the visitors who stepped inside its doors. With God the Father on the apse looking down from His throne on all who entered, being in St Nicholas Church was like experiencing a part of Heaven, and many believed you could truly feel God's presence.

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Thank You Letter to Lorraine Turkall Continued from Page 3

As the bell was tolled on April 28, I too envisioned our ancestors who gravitated to St. Nicholas as their home away from home and helped them to make a new beginning in America. I could imagine my poor grandparents offering their meager donations to help build such a magnificent cathedral. I envisioned my grandfather walking the long city steps from Troy Hill to the church for daily mass. The memories of how me and my children experienced the religious and social festivities at St. Nicholas flashed through my mind. Then I was recalling the day I witnessed men desecrating the altars, Communion railings and beautiful marble walls and finally, the day the church was demolished. It is still so painful when I visit the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site -- knowing on that very spot once stood the sanctuary. But you are right about the bell resonating echoes of our past -- the numerous good memories of time spent in St. Nick's can never be erased and will forever be in our hearts and minds.

Thank you for such a profound article and the time you took to write it. Mr. Luketich must be feeling so proud of you and happy that you continued as his secretary. He was right about you using your writing skills and making a difference as the editor for the *Zajednicar*. It may not be students who you are educating, but your words certainly have an impact on readers worldwide.

I believe your article somehow helps to give closure to the devoted St. Nick parishioners who never had a closing mass and encouragement to continue to live the faith passed down from our grandparents and to always be proud to say "I am Croatian" and that "I was a parishioner of St. Nicholas Church, North Side".

Thank you for all your support and encouragement over the years and for your touching article. May God bless you abundantly.

Sincerely,

Susan Petrick/Lodge 1

Allegheny City Society Tour at St. Nicholas Church Historic Site

St. Nicholas R.C. Croatian Church was dedicated in 1901 by the Bishop and Pastor as Saint Nicholas, the Traveler Church, as a way of connecting members with their travels across the seas from Croatia. Today, over 60,000 vehicles travel by this public dedicated historic site and continue to see it visually and to receive blessings from the presence of the historic memories the new structures represent.

In May 2019, the Allegheny City Historic Society scheduled a special Sunday morning tour for their members to the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site. Susan and Denny Petrick provided the color brochures containing the history and architecture of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. which so beautifully were given out as "take-home" souvenirs. Five people gave talks about the murals, the neighborhood, and St. Nicholas Croatian Church, North Side. A member of the PCHF Board was on hand to tell about the existence and contributions of church



members of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. with Grotto, Convent, Grade school, Rectory and Church. About 42 people participated. The morning was bright and sunny; it was a very nice tour!

The St. Nicholas Historic Site is open for visitors, and many do come weekly. Each of the murals has a small plaque describing part of the local heritage that our immigrant Croatian families experienced. The St. Nicholas Church Historic Site itself has a bronze octagon in the ground where the altar once stood. Part of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes has been rebuilt, and part of the original Grotto is visible among the hillside vines. The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was dedicated by a priest who was born blind; but after Lourdes water was poured on his eyes, regained his sight is a couple days. He then dedicated much of his life to promoting devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes by assisting with the building of grottos

(see Page 5)



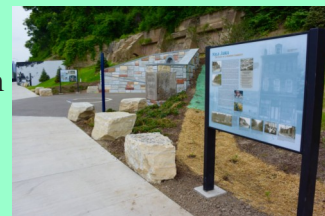
Allegheny City Society Tour at St. Nicholas Church Historic Site

Continued from page 4

to Our Lady all over Pittsburgh. One surviving Grotto of his is at St. Patrick in the Strip District. Continuing the tradition of praying for help and refreshment in life are the small religious artifacts being left at the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site. The St. Nicholas Church Historic Site was built by Penn-DOT with public tax money. These structures are a way that PennDOT was required by Federal Law to find ways to preserve heritage when a highway project had to destroy a part of American heritage. The St. Nicholas Church Historic Site walkway is part of a nice, one-mile hike that crosses Rt. 28 at the 31st Street Bridge and goes down Water Street to the Heritage River

Trail, to Heinz Street and past Sarah Heinz House into the park and across Rt. 28 on the walk bridge named after the owner of the auto shop that once stood beside the St. Nicholas Rectory, The Charles Lieberth Pedestrian Walkway. One can walk this in about 45 minutes. Parking is along Water Street and in the lot provided at the bottom of Troy Hill Road at the entrance to the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site. It is free and good exercise!

By Jack Schmitt



3 BAGS OF GOLD FUND



All donations to the 3 Bags of Gold 2019 annual fund are truly, very much appreciated. The donations help pay for the basic costs of PCHF which was founded to keep the memory and traditions of the Croatian Mother Church, St. Nicholas, North Side, in Pittsburgh alive.

DONORS

Barczy, Helen
Bukovan, Elaine
Buric, Kathleen
Bursick, Helen
Crnkovic, Paul
Curran, Ann
Gundy, Virginia
Hrovat, Mary Jane
Iski, Mary
Kowalski, Wm.

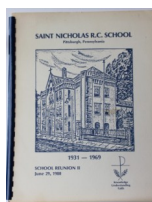
Kriebel, Kathleen Florijan
Lane, Danielle & Dennis
Majersky, Paula
Pascarella, Jean
Pavlechko, Barbara
Plantz, Anton
Plavac, Sr. Ann Barbara
Pope, Helen Hodnik
Ralutz, Thomas
Santucci, James

Sibenik, Steve
Sladack, Pete
Spudic, Linda
Srsic, Michaeline
Srsic, Wm.
Stoechr, Kathleen Srsic
Tokich, Catherine
Vergot, Bill
Yonick, Joan
Matesic, Joseph

Update from Heinz History Center for On-line Searchable Database for Croatian Artifacts Donated to HHC Museum

by Steve Willing

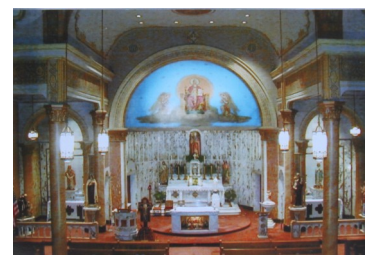
PCHF has an update for those generous members who donated Croatian artifacts to the Heinz History Center (HHC).



Emily Ruby, Curator at the HHC has informed PCHF that the artifacts will first be processed and catalogued, which is a time consuming process. The HHC will then place those items online in a searchable database. So as

the material donated is processed, it will become part of this valuable online record. HHC is hoping to have this material available for viewing in the Fall of 2019.

PCHF will keep everyone updated when more details are released.

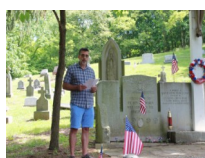


Honoring Veterans of St. Nicholas R.C. Parish. North Side



Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation wishes to thank all who participated in this year's Memorial Day service at the St. Nicholas N.S. Croatian Catholic Cemetery in Pittsburgh and who have made this traditional, yearly memorial event possible.

The morning dawned beautiful as the crowd gathered at the cemetery memorial bell to honor those who gave their lives to make freedom a reality. Flags were given to each attendee. Bernice Goyak welcomed the crowd and joined Donna Zivic as the sound of her guitar pierced through the air to accompany the many voices singing God Bless America. The service proceeded with an especially noteworthy and touching eulogy given by David Sladack...



"Happy Memorial Day..."

When we say those words together it sounds like a contradiction. How can we be happy and celebrate such a somber day? We come to this setting, here at St. Nicholas Cemetery, every year to somberly remember 26 names—26 young members of the St. Nicholas parish; 26 young men who made the ultimate sacrifice in serving their country during times of conflict; 26 members of the St. Nicholas community who had their own lives cut short, missing out on many milestones and moments that comes with living a full life.

These 26 men were young parishioners who probably never had a chance to get married standing at the altar of our beautiful church, as they dreamed of a long, bright future while peering into the eyes of their very new bride; nor the opportunity to hold their child in their arms, filled with joy and hope, during a family rich St. Nicholas baptism ceremony or watching their child march down the aisle on a warm spring Sunday afternoon, making their First Holy Communion. And most of these 26 young men never experienced the grief and honor of burying their own parents as incense filled the air during a funeral mass under the cover of those distinct, green onion domes.

But, despite sacrificing all of those moments and a lifetime of other unfulfilled experiences, these 26 young men would indeed be happy --. happy that many of us in attendance today, DID have the opportunity to experience and celebrate a number of milestones like the ones I just shared. Happy that generations of Americans have an opportunity to celebrate a holiday each year – called Memorial Day Weekend – as the official kickoff to summer. Happy that each of us has the freedom to choose, really just about anything we want to do with our lives all because they – and many other brave young American men and women – sacrificed for us – so we can maintain our freedom today.

But this comes with a large burden of responsibility for each and every one of us.

I'm sure many of you have seen the brilliant World War II film, "Saving Private Ryan." The plot is centered on a platoon of grizzled, experienced soldiers making a daring sacrifice to find and bring back Private James Ryan, who's other three brothers were just killed in the war. The motivation for the mission is to not let Ryan's poor mother lose her only remaining son, after feeling the heavy sacrifice of losing her other three. There's a scene in the movie where the platoon leader, Captain Miller, played by Tom Hanks, is dying after an epic battle to save Private Ryan – and he says to the young Ryan with his last breath — "EARN IT."

Well, each of us needs to continue to EARN this gift of freedom. It's rooted in living the best possible lives we can — with an attitude toward sacrifice, charity, compassion and duty. For each of us to do some thing good — for our community, our neighbors and ourselves — all to continually make us better -- better citizens. better people, a better world. That is something that would make each of the 26 men we are remembering today — very happy. So HAPPY Memorial Day — and let's pray that we all "EARN IT."



As the Service continued, Jim Vinski rang the bell one time as each deceased veteran's name was called out by Kathleen Buric. Frank Sestric lit a candle for each in their honor.

The St. Nicholas Church Memorial Day Service ended with the playing of "TAPS"... always somber, touching and mindful of those who gave the ultimate to preserve our freedom!

by Susan Petrick and Kathleen Buric

Brochures of St. Nick's at the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site by Susan Petrick

To educate the general public about the history and architecture of St. Nicholas Church, North Side, Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation Board members compiled an informative brochure with colorful photographs of the Church and made them available for visitors at the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site to take free of charge. It is the intention of PCHF that the brochures will help to keep the memory of St. Nicholas Church, N.S. alive. Since 2015 when the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site was dedicated, over 270 brochures have been distributed at the historic site, indicating that people are still interested in learning about St. Nicholas Church, N.S. The brochures in the brochure box at the historic site are replenished periodically,

Bikers, hikers, walkers, visitors and tourists spend time at the historic site. Some come to view the beautiful, new statue of our Lady of Lourdes or read the three interpretive panels filled with rich history of St. Nicholas Church, N.S., Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto and the Croatian neighborhood of Mala Jaska. Some people are so moved that they bring flowers in vases, place small religious statues or prayer cards at the feet of Our Lady. And some people come just to meditate and pray. Whatever the reason, people continue to visit the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site. If you haven't done so, we invited you to take the time to visit this significant historic site.

You can also view the St. Nicholas brochure on our website: stnicholasns.org



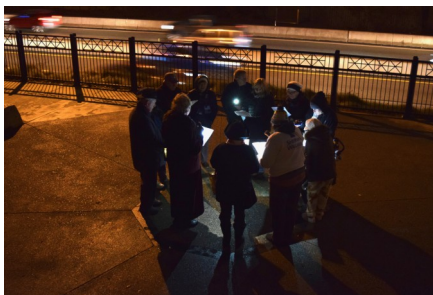
Candlelight Prayer Service at St. Nicholas Church Historic Site

Faithful supporters of St. Nicholas Croatian Church, N.S. gathered on Thursday, December 6, 2018, the Feast Day of Saint Nicholas, as they have done year after year on the exact spot where St. Nicholas Church, N.S. once stood, honoring its memory and historical significance.

Vibrant, multicolored solar luminaries were placed around the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes and along the seating wall of the St. Nicholas Church Historic Site creating a beautiful ambiance that shined throughout the night and many nights

thereafter. The vivid votives along with former parishioner, Scott Bonicky, dressed as Saint Nicholas, drew the attention of the motorists on Route 28 as many beeped their horns in support as they drove by.

Bernice Goyak led the group in prayer and song. Silent Night was sung in both English and Croatian. Biblical reading by various board members and visitors were read out loud. The Croatian hymn, Radujte Se Narodi closed out the solemn ceremony.



St. Nicholas Day Banquet Fills Javor Hall

Loyal supporters and friends of St. Nicholas Croatian Church North Side gathered at Javor Hall on Pittsburgh's North Side on December 1, 2018, to once again celebrate the annual St. Nicholas Day Banquet. A large crowd of nearly 100 were greeted at the door by PCHF Board members Bernice Goyak, and Pat Polaritz, who have volunteered at many St. Nicholas events.

The St. Nicholas Banquet is very traditional, as guests look forward to meeting and reconnecting with former parishioners and supporters of St. Nicholas. Many of those friendships have endured for decades.

Happy Hour started at 5 PM, and the bar was humming with activity. Whether someone was in the mood for a soft drink or a nice cold bottle of their favorite Croatian beer, Karlovacka, or a taste of Slivovitz, the friendly staff at Javor Hall was ready to quench their thirst.

To everyone's delight, Javor Hall was beautifully decorated with Christmas wreaths, and a table-sized Christmas tree was adorned with red bulbs and gold stars near the front entrance. Tables were decorated with red and green placemats with various pictures of St. Nicholas Church at the ends of the tables.

After guests took their seats, a traditional Eastern European meal was once again served by Nova Catering. No one left hungry that night after being served a delicious mix of salad, rolls, stuffed cabbage, chicken, pierogies, and kielbasa. Homemade desserts and cake were provided by PCHF board members. To the delight of children and adults alike, St. Nicholas made his annual rounds handing out gold, chocolate coins and special treat bags to the younger children.

Co-chairs, Bill Vergot and Stephen Willing, updated the audience with the PCHF related events of 2018. The St. Nicholas Memorial Site continues to draw visitors. PCHF hopes to continue to share the rich history of St. Nicholas by supplying and replenishing the box of brochures, which are available at the site. Two gift baskets containing St. Nicholas memorabilia were given away as door prizes.

Guests were updated with the St. Nicholas Cemetery Children's Plaque project, which will be installed in the children's section of the cemetery on Hahn road in 2019 memorializing the children buried in that section of the cemetery.

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See Page 9



St. Nicholas Day Banquet Fills Javor Hall

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Once again, the beautiful voices of the Javor Pittsburgh Ensemble filled the banquet hall, entertaining guests with Croatian melodies, and The Mikey Dee Band played throughout the evening, entertaining guests with lively tunes. All joined in singing Christmas carols in Croatian and English. The dance floor was filled until the evening's end with dancers of both the younger crowd and the young at heart. It was truly an evening enjoyed by all.



Receive Newsletters via E-mail



To help PCHF expedite our newsletters to our readers, we are asking anyone who uses email but does not already receive the PCHF newsletters via email to please send your email address to:

sypetrick@hotmail.com.

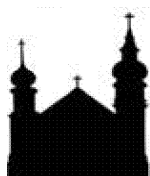
This will help defray photocopying and

mailing costs,. You can then easily forward our PCHF newsletters to friends and family members.

Best of all, you will be able to view the newsletter in "color".

Thank you for your cooperation.

By Susan Petrick



Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation

P. O. Box 5812

Pittsburgh, PA 15209-0812

Address Service Requested

How to Reach Us

E-mail us at pchf@stnicholasns.org

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



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Bernice Goyak	412 335-2780
Bill Kurtek	724 625-9145
Susan Petrick	412 821-3725
Jack Schmitt	412 322-8223
Jane Sestric	412 231-8134
Bill Vergot	724 941-8673
Steve Willing	412 527-5764



**Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation
St. Nicholas Church, N.S. WEBSITE**

www.stnicholasns.org