



WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

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The first membership meeting of the year will be held Monday night, January 26 at 7:30 P.M. at the Washington EMC Building. I look forward to a year of interesting programs and exciting committee projects.

Please make your plans to be in attendance.

Jimmy Boatright, President
Washington County Historical Society

The program for our January 26 meeting will be given by Catherine Knox, Director of Sacred Heart Cultural Center in Augusta. This new project is a fine example of the importance of preserving historical structures and creating contemporary uses for the buildings.

The following is a press release concerning Sacred Heart Church. After reading I believe you will want to come out and hear this most enthusiastic speaker.

SACRED HEART. Beauty. The two words are synonymous. This magnificent edifice is today undergoing extensive restoration that will soon be ready for all to see and enjoy.

Located in the heart of downtown Augusta, Georgia, SACRED HEART CHURCH has been a part of the City's heritage since 1898. Built out of a need for the Catholics in the City, the Church portrays all the beauty, love, and ideals of splendor that was necessary for the Lord's House.

This ambitious undertaking was completed and dedicated on December 2, 1900 and was consecrated on November 17, 1912 when the last cent of debt was paid off. SACRED HEART was loved by all who worshiped there, and it was used by the City as a place for cultural gatherings and festivities.

But the glamour and glow of the Church did not withstand the problems of the Inner City. From 1950 to 1970, Augusta, like most of Georgia was torn by the impact of racial integration, and the Vietnam War. Violence erupted throughout the City and many residents moved out to the suburbs -- taking the Catholic Church with them.

SACRED HEART's last mass was held on July 4, 1971. This was a very sad time for those people whose lives were in some way a part of SACRED HEART. The Church was soon consecrated, and the Diocese of Savannah decided to close SACRED HEART CHURCH.

The Church stayed vacant, silent and still until 1974. In that year, the Diocese of Savannah decided to tear the Church down and sell the property. This threat brought members of all denominations and all walks of life together to save this historic monument.

A group called the Friends of Sacred Heart was created, and they convinced the Diocese of Savannah to sell the Church to them. A price of \$200,000 was set, and another \$500,000 was needed to restore the building. The ideas, hopes and dreams of these energetic supporters soon collapsed when the money was just not available.

Then it happened. In 1982, the Knox family bought the Church, and by 1985 repair work had begun.

Progress, according to Peter S. Knox, Jr. has been slow, but to all other Augusta citizens it has been rapidly making a dream come true.

Once in the door of this beautiful landmark, one will cease to believe that they are in Augusta, Georgia. The European style is breathtaking, and the intricate marble work is extraordinary. Three alters made

of the creamy white Italian marble depict Christ's angels to the right, Mary to the left, and Jesus in the middle. The hardwood floors are empty as the pews were removed years ago. The high arched ceiling towers sixty feet and is a gorgeous sky blue that gives way to the fabulous stained glass windows. Most of the windows were made in Munich, Germany during the 14th century. The strong blues, reds, yellows, purples and greens are placed together to portray biblical scenes and many of them are dedicated to deceased family members of the Church.

The central dome soars ninety-eight feet above the alter steps to create a unique feeling. Ornate wood and plaster work is also abundant throughout the interior.

The outside of the Church is surrounded by an elaborate cast iron fence and will soon be professionally landscaped. The fifteen styles of brick work are best seen when looking up at the steeple while standing on the front steps. A fountain for the courtyard is a new project that will soon be started. The chimney from the old boiler house will serve as the actual fountain and will add a historical touch to the romantic gardens.

The restoration of the organ is another large project to plan. This will be the finishing touch of such a huge undertaking.

SACRED HEART will serve its community. The Sanctuary will be ready for use by Christmas, and the rectory will be completed this spring. Weddings, receptions, parties and performances are now being booked for the 1987 opening year for SACRED HEART. Cost to use the building is purely operational, and people from all religions and backgrounds are invited to use the facilities which includes a new kitchen addition.

The basement will house a community room to be used at no cost. Administrative offices and conference rooms will also be placed there.

All cultural groups will be invited to house their offices in the newly restored rectory at a cost to cover expenses only. The Symphony, Ballet, Opera, Arts Center, and others can then work closer together and help each other by combining resources.

This truly unique edifice will soon be ready to serve the people who come use it, see it and most of all love it.