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A Tale of Two Bishops

Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center hosts exhibit devoted to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Albany, NY – The Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center is proud to host a new exhibit that chronicles the history of one of Albany’s most beautiful buildings, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception: A Legacy of Faith, A Vision of the Future tells the story of this magnificent 165-year old Albany landmark and institution through artifacts and images from the Cathedral’s historical collection—some dating back to the Cathedral’s founding in 1848 and being publically shown for the first time. The exhibit focuses on the building and restoration of the Cathedral, the community it serves, as well as the lives of two of Albany’s Bishops—the first Bishop, John McCloskey, and Thomas Burke, whose tenure covered a period of incredible growth in the late 19th-early 20th centuries. Viewers will learn about the role and impact of the Cathedral on local, state and national history.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is the Mother Church of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, and a parish community serving as the spiritual home to people from within and outside its inner city setting.

John McCloskey, the first Bishop of Albany, envisioned a Cathedral that would be prominent in the city and serve as a center for his flock. He commissioned Patrick Charles Keely to design a Cathedral in the neo-Gothic style. On July 2, 1848, the cornerstone was laid in the presence of 10,000 people. Four years later, on November 21, 1852, people from all over Albany, from laborer to merchant king, gathered for the Cathedral’s dedication. The Cathedral is modeled after the Cathedral of Cologne, Germany.

From 2000 – 2004, the restoration of the Cathedral first addressed the critical sections of the Cathedral’s brownstone surfaces and to provide for the waterproof integrity of the entire structure. From 2008 – 2010, the spacious and soaring interior of the Cathedral was repaired and renewed to its original artistic beauty, to bring a fresh vitality to the Cathedral’s role as the center of Diocese liturgy and community celebration. Current restoration efforts are focused on the sacristies.

This traveling exhibit was designed and curated by volunteers from the Cathedral’s History & Heritage Program and is based on the full exhibit, which ran at the Cathedral this past November and was viewed by over 2,000 people. The exhibit will be on display at the Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center now through February.

About the ACCVB

The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. was established in 1976 to promote the civic and commercial progress of the community through increased development of conventions and tourism. ACCVB currently represents more than 300 member businesses and assists each year in hundreds of regional meetings. ACCVB also operates the Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center, Henry Hudson Planetarium, and the Albany International Airport Information Center. For more information, call 518-434-1217 or 800-258-3582 or visit www.albany.org.

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