

The upper gallery

BY C.W. LATTIN

It is my privilege to announce the opening of a newly established gallery at the Cobblestone Society Museum in Childs, to be known as the Upper Gallery.

It will be dedicated to George W. Zeis (1918-2002) with a ribbon cutting at 7 p.m. June 15 at the 1836 Brick House (pictured) next to the Cobblestone Church. The gallery will remain open that evening until 9 p.m. The first exhibit is entitled "Victorian Angels." A reception will be held to which the public is most cordially invited.

This has come about for several reasons.

In 1998, the Cobblestone Society purchased the Brick House and restored it to its original size and rebuilt the Greek revival roof line.

In 2001, the first floor was made into the present Cobblestone Society Resource Center, this space being known as the Robert W. Frash Room. The second floor was left with no immediate plans at the time.

In December 2006, I suggested to the Cobblestone board of directors that this space could be used as a gallery by reworking the second floor. A budget was adopted with the suggestion that this Upper Gallery be dedicated to Zeis, who was president of the Society when he died. The museum also received a bequest from his estate.

Consequently, over the past several months, the second floor has been transformed into an attractive gallery designed to feature an extensive collection of Victorian religious prints on a rotating basis. This collection of prints has come together during 30 years through my personal interest and at my own expense.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

About 30 years ago, I started looking for religious pictures that could have been used to decorate the interior of the Cobblestone Church from the 1880s. We are aware that such decorative components were hung there back then. As a result, I started to collect such images whether appropriate or not. I now have an extensive collection which was recently loaned to St. Bonaventure University for a display in the Quick Center for the Arts.

This collection represents the

Victorian time period (1837-1900), when many households had religious images hanging in their various rooms. These subjects were both devotional and instructive in nature. Many Roman Catholic families had pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Protestant families had mottos such as "God Bless Our Home."

By the latter part of the 19th century, printing techniques had developed so prints were

easily mass-produced through chromolithography. However, the Currier-Ives prints using earlier methods were all hand-colored.

The Cobblestone Society Museum will ultimately be the repository for this unique collection of Americana. It is my sincere hope that the Upper Gallery and its ability to provide ongoing exhibits of this collection will be seen as a community treasure.