

# Local Chapel Approved By Bishop Fabian Bruskwitz *Preserves County Church History*

After nearly two years of construction, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Miller of Superior, Nebraska, have completed the addition of a Catholic chapel to their home. The Historic Chapel of St. Michael, the arch angel, is the result of a lifetime of collecting religious items of historical significance and being interested in local history.

The chapel gets its name from a banner of St. Michael found at St. Stephen's Catholic Church near Lawrence. The Millers built and decorated the chapel to appear similar to the old country churches in the area. "It is completely built of history," Miller said. "It is under our St. Joseph's parish in Superior. Mass can be said with the approval of our parish priest."

A priest, Father Edward A. Valasek, once suggested building a shrine in the yard to showcase the many items the Miller had collected. "I thought about it for four years," Miller said. "The more I tried to talk myself out of it, the more I decided to go ahead and build it."

Ground was broken for the 17' x 20' building in June 1993. Miller has worked on it during his spare time. The Millers have worked hard to ensure everything in the chapel is historical.

A choir loft was constructed above the entrance to the chapel. A pump organ from the St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Superior is located in the loft.

The cross, made of galvanized tin, was constructed by Mick White. It sits at the top of the 40-foot tall structure. Mike Damon helped Miller place the tower which holds the cross. When the tower was placed, the arm of the basket truck was stretched as high as it would go. A steel bar runs through the cross to protect it from high winds. The building is anchored by reinforced cables and has a lightning rod.

The chapel contains four pews which were given by John Price, Jr., Superior. The pews came from a funeral home in Alexandria. The large altar is from the old Catholic Church in Geneva and given by Father John Copenhaver. "We decided to do this at a time when many of the old churches were being torn down." The Millers placed these items on display in their home or put in storage until the chapel was built.

Statues of St. Patrick of Ireland and St. Bonifas of Germany came from Sacred Heart Church in Lawrence. A statue of the Blessed Mother came from St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Superior.

Carlita Price restored and painted two holy water fountains which came from the Catholic Church in Palmyra.

The mass book for the shrine is written in Latin. Other items were acquired from churches in Sutton, Seward, and Concordia. Miller got the Fourteen Stations of the Cross from Father Ed Valosek which he got from the old St. Catherine's Hospital in McCook. We are now looking for a set of angels and a hanging sanctuary lamp.

Nearly everything in the chapel was given to the Millers. They had to travel to different parishes to find the items. Much of what decorates the chapel was stored away and slated for discard.

The Millers plan to continue adding to their collection as items become available. This is a Catholic Chapel the Millers hope people will come and visit.

It is surprising how many highway travelers have stopped to visit it," Miller said. The Millers are willing to show their chapel to anyone by appointment. They plan to prepare in book or brochure about their chapel so visitors will know where the items came from.

Father Frank Machovec dedicated the chapel and said Mass June 23, 1996.

The stained glass windows came from a church in Kearney. Our neighbor, Ray Czirr, rerealed all the windows and did a great job on them. He dedicated one whole summer redoing those windows to fit our chapel.

The Sacred Heart Statue was donated in memory of Father Ed Valasek by Rita Miller.

The picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was brought back from our trip to Rome to place in the chapel in memory of our son, Joseph Alan Miller born April 15, 1951, January 9, 1997.

Mrs. Miller began keeping a photo album of the building's progress just after the ground was broken. "It is full of photographs of construction work, our collection, and of family and friends," Miller said. The Miller's Victorian home was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

The home at 412 East Seventh Street is open for tours during the Lady Vestey Festival and by appointment.

