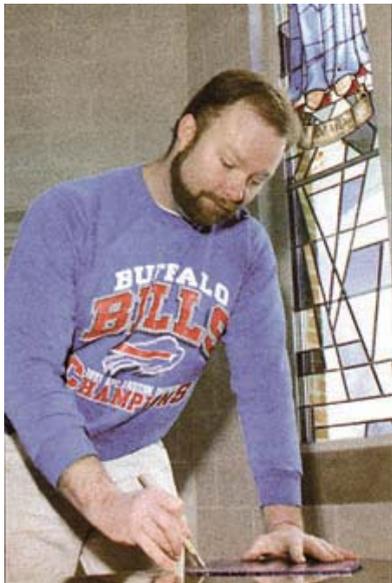


McHugh Studio only does windows

BY JANE SCHMITT

To the delight of churchgoers and others who appreciate the extraordinary beauty of stained glass, Western New York is home to an impressive collection of windows by world-renowned artists.

"In this area we have everything that anybody ever made," says Ted McHugh, President of McHugh Art Studio, Clarence. "Buffalo is a treasure of stained glass. We have Tiffany. We have LeFarge. We have it all here."



Pat McHugh cuts a piece of glass that will be used to repair a window that could be used in a church like St. Leo the Great, Amherst.

McHugh should know. With more than three decades of restoration work under his belt, he caters to a long list of churches in and around the Buffalo Niagara region. He's at the helm of a family business that also offers design and manufacture of new windows; ventilator and storm glass repairs; and protective glazing.

"We have been all over the place. I don't think there's (more than) a couple of churches in Buffalo that we haven't worked on at one time or another in 34 years," McHugh says.

His reputation is as splendid as the stained glass windows that he so painstakingly restores.

- "Superb and one-of-a-kind," says Sister Patricia Schoelles of St. Bernard's, a graduate school of theology and ministry in Rochester.

- "Outstanding. He is the best," says Michael Mikos, business manager of St. Louis Church, Buffalo.

- "Exquisite work," adds Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski of Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral, Lancaster.

- "Excellence, always," says Michael Sullivan, Diocese of Buffalo director of buildings and properties.

It's the McHugh way, says the company founder, who grew up on Buffalo's West Side and attended art school as a youth. He took a job with a local art glass company and it was there that he developed his skills in the trade and "fell in love with stained glass," he says.

McHugh eventually started his own business and spent the first 15 years in the Southern Tier, he says, serving a customer base of country churches. He later moved McHugh Art Studio to Williamsville and expanded again when he relocated his workshop to Clarence four years ago. The company also employs his wife, Barbara, as bookkeeper and son, Patrick, who handles the outside work.

"We specialize in turn-of-the-century windows like LeFarge and Tiffany, the older windows not many people can do," McHugh says. "We are full-service. We repair them and we make brand-new stained glass windows. This (past) year our business was completely dedicated to one church, and that was St. Louis."

The landmark church at 780 Main St., considered one of downtown Buffalo's architectural gems, underwent a multi-year \$1.5 million restoration. The interior / exterior project included reframing / releading of the stained-glass windows.

"We started a major restoration of the church interior in March and Ted has removed and restored probably 90 percent of the stained glass windows, which are priceless. "He is the best" says Mikos, who was on the restoration committee. "We are the mother church of the diocese. Our current church here was opened in 1898 and these are the original windows. He came in and did a dynamite job for us."

Sister Schoelles, meanwhile, says McHugh is highly respected not only for his profes-

sional skills, but also for his vast knowledge of the stained glass industry and its rich history. St. Bernard's recently built a new facility on the Rochester campus, where McHugh restored and installed Austrian-made windows.

"It's so rare to have someone who can do this kind of work, and then to have his background," she says. "He knows the history of the windows and their origins in Europe and their relative value and worth here."

McHugh radiates a passion for his work and prides himself on meeting diverse challenges, including the recent creation of an 8-by-24 foot altar window for a church in Lancaster. When necessary, he utilizes a manlift and other equipment to tackle jobs, adding: "I'd like to say that they don't make a window big enough or high enough that we can't fix."



A typical church window, above, begins with a painstaking cut (left). The final result includes a process where McHugh Art Studio paints portions of the glass and then glazes the window at the McHugh's facility in Clarence.

Or old enough. Currently in his shop is a circa-1780 window from an Episcopal church in Rochester.

"I really believe in customer satisfaction," says McHugh, adding that silicon-based compounds are commonly used for divider bar sealants these days, compared to the oil-based formulas of yesteryear. "People don't know an awful lot about stained glass and it's really a pleasure teaching them about some of the treasures they have in their churches."

Jane Schmitt is a frequent contributor.