

HISTORIC ST. MICHAEL'S

Travelers passing through Sellersville invariably pause to admire the beautiful structure of St. Michael's church. They are impressed by its



chaste architecture, its sturdiness and pleasing proportions. It is thus that those who live within its shadow are sharing with others a thing of rare charm and good taste.

But strangers, if they have any God-fearing sensibilities at all, must see in this structure something else—a symbol of a Christian community and all which that so happily implies.

St. Michael's, inside as well as outside, has long stood for the fulfillment of desires on the part of Christian men and women to have a place set apart for worship, for inspiring fellowship and, to no small extent, as physical evidence of Godliness in their community.

In the old days, it was customary to build a church near the congregational center of the community as, for instance, was the case at Almont, Ridge Valley and places elsewhere. But Sellersville, although in 1738 had been a well-established community was for 130 years without a church. Steps to fill the need were taken in 1868 when three acres of land were purchased from W. S. Schlichter, which became the present site for the church and cemetery. With the purchase, came into being the congregations of St. Michael's Lutheran and St. Paul's Reformed.



Church Altar—1903



Rev. J. H. Waidelich, D.D.

Through the sale of cemetery lots sufficient funds became available to justify breaking ground and building—but only the first floor. A year later plans were made, not by a professional architect, but by Mr. Sellers (father of Monroe D. Sellers), who completed the structure.

Both congregations were allied with neighboring churches. St. Michael's pastors were Rev. Samuel A. Ziegenfus, Rev. James L. Becker, Rev. J. H. Waidelich, D.D., Rev. Ralph Kerstetter, Rev. Robert Horne and the present pastor, Rev. Elwood Reitz.

Before 1900, the Sunday School was conducted as one body without distinctions, the pastors alternating in church services. German services were

conducted on specified Sundays until World War I, when it was discontinued due to patriotic protests.

In June, 1900, the two congregations separated, with St. Michael's taking title to the original place of worship while St. Paul's built a new structure on Green Street. Extensive alterations were made to St. Michael's, including enlarging the building in length. This called for a new altar section and a place for the choir which, in the old days, occupied the present balcony. The pipe organ came as a gift from Andrew Carnegie, steel magnate, whose hobby it was to give organs to deserving congregations. Re-decorating plans included the installation of stained glass windows, paintings for the altar reredos by Nicola



St. Michael's Church, Sellersville, Built 1870

D'Ascenzo and, of course, refurnishing both the church proper and the Sunday School room.

In 1927, the beautiful chapel for children's Sunday School and small services was erected; the same quality of native stone was used to match the main structure. Behind the chapel altar is a painting by the late John Conner, known for his religious themes, which adds greatly to the aura of Godly significance.

St. Michael's, keeping apace with the Christian needs of an expanding community, has been and will continue to be the benign factor in the way of life of its members and others as well.

Moreover, it has fulfilled the hope of its founders—it is through its stones and mortar, and the devout souls of its men, women and children, a symbol of Godliness of the community it serves.

WALTER E. BAUM



Our Church Interior before 1945