

## At the altar

### Descendents of Holy Family's woodworkers visit church

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*Editor*

The 52-foot altar bears short cantilevered ledges, small grottos for the Catholic saints, Gothic trim and meticulous detailing, down to a portrait near the floor of Jesus at the Last Supper flanked by the 12 Disciples, who are shown, in a contemporary twist, with cutlery next to their plates.

It was all hand carved, and Holy Family Catholic Church, 1080 W. Roosevelt, got it for the price \$1,453 dollars back in 1863, when uncle-and-nephew team Anton and Sebastian Buscher were hired by the then relatively new parish, which was dedicated in 1860.

Last weekend descendents of the Buschers returned to Chicago for a family reunion and passed through Holy Family to examine the altar and meditate on their forebear's contribution to the Near West Side parish.

Christine Simon, of San Diego, is Sebastian Buscher's great granddaughter. She didn't know about the work he completed until the mid-1990s. But upon learning the family history, the artistic abilities of relatives — like one who carved her own doors for an adobe house in California — fell into place.

"I could see that was all from Sebastian," she said. "It was so clear in my mind."

Sebastian Buscher was born in Baden, Germany in 1849 and started work on the Holy Family altar in Chicago in 1868. He joined the Royal Academy of Arts in Munich before returning to Chicago in 1879, where he and a brother operated a carpentry shop at 11th and May.

One descendent of Sebastian Buscher is still alive, Simon noted, but was unable to attend last weekend's reunion. Still, several generations of the family circled back to Chicago for the event.

Holy Family is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

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