

WHO WOULD STEAL COPPER FROM A CHURCH?

Talk about gall.

This happened at a landmark Syracuse church, Grace Episcopal on Madison Street, last week.

In daylight, as the priest of the congregation worked in her office, thieves stripped all of the copper-lined downspouts from the church's exterior. The Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows said the thefts took place Dec. 6, 7 and 8. Replacement value is between \$5,000 and \$7,000, she explained.

"We'd just finished construction and moved back into the sanctuary a month ago," the pastor said. "I guess people must have figured the work still was going on."

The ceiling in the main church — which dates to 1876 — was replaced because of water damage, and the interior repainted, at a cost of \$120,000.

The stolen spouts prevent just the sort of water damage the work in the sanctuary was designed to repair. An insurance settlement is pending.

The rip-off is especially puzzling because the price of copper dropped in the past year, according to Sgt. Tom Connellan, of the Syracuse Police Department. Tom says the city saw a rash of saleable metal thefts a year ago when prices were sky-high. Now, he says, the thefts are up again and he's not sure why.

Detectives say they've checked with merchants who buy used metal but they haven't a clue as to what happened to Grace Episcopal's fixtures. The reverend says she's scratching her head over the burglary because the downspouts were colored gray on the outside. How would the thieves know they are copper inside?

Swaneola?

The state Board for Historic

Got memories of Swaneola?

The Onondaga Highlands-Swaneola Heights in the Strathmore area of Syracuse has been added to the registers of historic places. This newest historic district is bounded by Bellevue Avenue, Onondaga Avenue, Onondaga Park and Clairemonte Avenue. Do you have any memories of the area? You can share them at www.syracuse.com/case.

Preservation last week announced that the Niagara Mohawk building on Erie Boulevard, a gem of its kind, had been added to the state and national registers of historic places.

Also put on the list was a Syracuse neighborhood: described as "Onondaga Highlands-Swaneola Heights."

Huh?

This turns out to be one of three sections researched by my neighbors in Strathmore.

Two are on the list, a third is on the way, according to Dennis Connors, curator of history at Onondaga Historical Association and a neighbor, as well. This newest historic district is bounded by Bellevue Avenue on the north, Onondaga Avenue to the east, Onondaga Park at Crossett Street, south, and Clairemonte Avenue, west.

According to Nancy Wolcott, who did research for the nomination, Swaneola was the first name of the street now known as Beverly Road, at the north side of Onondaga Park. The street, Swaneola Place or Terrace, had that name between 1903 and 1911, when it was officially changed by the Common Council.

According to newspaper clippings Nancy supplied me, Hiawa-

tha Lake, in Onondaga Park, once had the name Swaneola, also, in the early years of development.

As for the origin of Swaneola, there are few clues.

One 1911 newspaper story reported "Swaneola is an Indian name, which was brought from the South by a property owner by the name of Hawkins (Edward?) a few years ago. The new inhabitants, however, have taken a dislike to the name . . . and it was decided to change the name to Beverly Road."

One of the partners of Swaneola Land Co. was John T. Roberts, who lived on the family farm along Roberts Avenue. He was a lawyer and historian who was the namesake of Roberts School, on Glenwood Avenue.

Dennis tells me that Swaneola Heights was involved in the swap of land by the city to acquire a grove of trees on the south side of Onondaga Park. It traded the property for land on the north side of the park, which had been part of Wilkinson Reserve when the city operated water system on Skaneateles Lake.

Dennis also says: Onondaga Heights was owned by Lyr of the typewriter firm who gave it up when he bought a James St. mansion as his home. Apparently Mrs. Smith thought the property was "too remote from the city."



DICK CASE WRITES TUESDAY, THURSDAY AND SUNDAY. REACH HIM AT 470-2254 OR DCASE@SYRACUSE.COM

Cooper downspouts stolen from Syracuse church during the day; Do you remember Swaneola neighborhood?

By [Dick Case](#)

December 17, 2009, 6:14AM

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Dennis also says most of the Onondaga Heights tract once was owned by Lyman Smith, of the typewriter family, who gave it up when he bought a James Street mansion as his home. Apparently Mrs. Smith thought the property was "too remote from the city."

Dick Case writes Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Reach him at 470-2254, or by e-mail, dcase@syracuse.com.