

Guide to the images on the choir desks

Starting on the left or font side of the front row of desks facing east, the first panel is decorated with a Bishop's mitre and the arms of the Dioceses of Michigan and Western Michigan.

“The Diocese of Michigan Arms has a field of green with a gold bar at the top. In the centre of the green are alternating horizontal wavy bars of silver and blue, symbolic of the ‘straits’. On either side of these bars are pine cones, suggesting Michigan forests. In the top bar are three bontee (botonée) crosses. The arms of Western Michigan are included because the first Bishop of that Diocese was the Rector of St. Andrew’s, who built the present church building. The Rev. George D. Gillespie resigned as Rector of St. Andrew’s to accept his election as a Bishop. The top of the field of these arms is in red; at the bottom are silver and blue, representing a body of water, on which a fishing boat of gold is sailing. The water represents the Sea of Galilee, the boat, an ancient fishing vessel. Visible in the boat is a figure with a halo, representing the Christ. Above the sail of the boat, in letters of gold, is inscribed the word ‘Pax’ (peace). In the center of the carving of this screen, above the shields, a Bishop’s mitre, symbolic of the Episcopacy and the type of government of this Church, is so carved as to be visible from either side of the screen and is tinted in gold.” (Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the *Michigan Churchman*, April 1939.)

The stylized roses on either side of the mitre are assumed to refer to our English heritage. According to *Saints, Signs, and Symbols* by Ellwood Post (1962, Moorehouse Barlow Co.) a gold ship on a red field represents St. Jude (1st cen.). “The sailing vessel here represents the Church, which St. Jude (also known as Thaddeus or Lebæus) carried to many ports as he journeyed as a missionary.”



The carving on the right panel was originally an arch over the entrance from the north aisle into the Baptistry, where the wheelchair ramp to the altar now begins.

“The carving above the entrance represents historic associations with the Sacrament of Baptism. On the left is depicted St. Augustine [of Canterbury] and his band of monks being received on their arrival in England in 597 A. D. by King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha, who were the first Christian rulers of England. The figures on the right are taken from the scene described in the Book of Acts, 8:27-39, when St. Philip baptized the Ethiopian.” (Quoted from a clipping of a mimeographed document, possibly a Sunday bulletin.)

The shield on the left is the emblem of St. Augustine of Canterbury. “7th cen. Missionary to the Engles, member of the Benedictine Order, and the first Archbishop of Canterbury, is assigned the cross and pall [or pallium, see

below] to indicate his archepiscopal rank. The lily of the Madonna is believed to have been included because he died in May, the month of Mary. Silver cross, gold pall, silver lily, on a black field.” (Saints, Signs, and Symbols)

The shield on the right is the Agnus Dei. (The Memorials and Gifts at St .Andrew’s Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1949) The Agnus Dei appears also in the center of the left hand lancet window at the west end of the Sanctuary. The medallions between the carved scenes have not yet been identified.



The next panel was originally an arch at the end of the south aisle near the organ console. “The carving above the entrance depicts on the left [now the right] the shepherd boy, David, playing the harp for King Saul, and on the right [now the left], a group of choir boys with a figure bearing several organ pipes. Both carvings are symbolic of the gift of music to the church.” (Quoted from the mimeographed document already mentioned.)



The shield beneath the choir boys shows a beehive and scourges, the emblem of St. Ambrose, the father of church music; some of his hymns are still sung. St. Ambrose (4th cen.) was the Bishop of Milan. The scourges represent his strict discipline. “The beehive refers to his eloquence as he labored to maintain and clarify the need for proper respect of the Church. He assisted in the conversion of St. Augustine [of Hippo] and baptized him.” (Saints, Signs, and Symbols) The shield beneath David is the Lion of Judah. (Memorials and Gifts) The significance of the acorns in the center medallions is not known.

The right hand panel is decorated with a golden chalice and shields that relate to the University of Michigan.



“The first shield on the outside of the screen on the north side of the church represents the Rev. John Monteith, who was an energetic worker with Father Gabriel Richard in the founding of the University of Michigan. The arms are those of the Presbyterian Church, of which Monteith was a member. The shield has a blue field, with a gold, red, and green burning bush in the center (from the Biblical experience of Moses) surrounded by silver rays for the Holy Spirit. The second shield on the outside of this screen represents the University of Michigan and Father Richard.” It shows a golden lamp of knowledge on a field of blue, as found on the seal of the university. The medallions appear to depict roses.

Turning now to the shields on the choir side of the desks, begin on the left or south end.



“On the inside of this screen are the Arms of George Washington, an early Episcopalian who also frequently worshipped with the Presbyterians. This shield has a field of silver, with two wide red bars, and three red stars. The other shield on this side of the screen is the Arms representing the Rev. Richard Fish Cadle, an early Missionary to the Northwest Territory. He founded St. Paul’s Church, Detroit, now the Cathedral of the Diocese, and helped to organize St. Andrew’s Church, Ann Arbor. His Arms have the field divided lengthwise, one side blue, one side silver. On the blue side is half of a pair of silver swords, crossed, representing St. Paul, and on the silver side is one-half of a St. Andrew’s cross, in red. Above these shields, carved of wood and visible from both sides, is a Chalice, symbolic of Holy Communion.”

There is an eagle above the arms of Washington and, for reasons unknown, a thistle above the arms of Cadle. For

a full account of Cadle's life and work see this [document](#). His ancestry was English, not Scottish.

To the right are the music carvings, David playing the harp and choristers with organ pipes. The ravens on the shield below Saul are said to refer to Elijah, calling to mind Mendelssohn's oratorio. (Memorials and Gifts). The shield below the choristers displaying a gold star on a blue diamond may be the Epiphany Star (Saints, Signs, and Symbols), calling to mind Handel's Messiah. The medallions display acorns.



Next to the choristers are the Baptismal carvings. Below Philip are the arms of Jerusalem, a Jerusalem Cross. (Saints, Signs, and Symbols) Below Ethelbert are the arms of the See of Canterbury. "All successors of Simon Islip, fifty-fourth Archbishop of Canterbury, have employed these arms, which were engraved on his seal. A gold crozier, silver staff, white pall edged and fringed with gold and bearing four black crosses, all on a blue field." (Saints, Signs, and Symbols) Islip was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1349 to 1366. The white object in the shape of a Y, called a pall in the quotation, is a pallium, a garment of woven wool worn by Prelates of the Roman Catholic Church. Crosses in this shape are called Patée Fitchée. (Saints, Signs, and Symbols) The pallium appears also in the stencil decoration of the east wall of the Chancel, along with the St. Andrew's Cross and the triangular emblem of the Holy Trinity.



On the end, below the Bishop's Mitre, "the first shield is the Arms of the Diocese of New York, representing Bishop J. H. Hobart, who undertook the then long and hazardous journey from New York to Detroit in 1827 to lay the cornerstone of St. Paul's, Detroit. Harris Hall, [built in 1890 as the] Episcopal Student Center for the University, was originally named Hobart Hall in honor of this great Churchman and educator. The field of these Arms is divided into quarters, with opposite sections in silver and red. On the silver portions, the arms of a windmill are painted in black, symbolizing New York, which was originally New Amsterdam. The upper red quarter carries an eagle in gold, bearing the spirit of truth to the world. The lower red quarter has crossed silver swords, symbolic of St. Paul. The second shield on this side represents the Arms of the Diocese of Connecticut and of Samuel Seabury, first Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, consecrated immediately after the Revolutionary War. The shield has a field of blue, with a smaller shield in the center. The bottom of this small shield is of dark blue; across the top is a bar of gold, with small grape vines inscribed on the bar. In the dark blue section of the small shield are an Episcopal, or shepherd's staff, crossed with a key, symbolic of St. Peter's key to heaven. Above the small shield is a large silver St. Andrew's cross. Between the top bars of this cross are crossed silver swords, symbolic of St. Paul.



The significance of the thistle above the arms of New York is not clear. Bishop John Henry Hobart had no apparent connection to Scotland. The medallion above the arms of Connecticut is half rose and half thistle. Perhaps the reference is to our Anglican heritage combined with the Scottish bishops who ordained Samuel Seabury.

Copies of the documents quoted here are in the parish archives. I am grateful to Barbara Becker for finding these documents for me.

James Wessel Walker
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