

LAST LOOK

People from all over the world coming to see Frank Lloyd Wright's Graycliff have been puzzled by a prominently positioned nondescript building surmounted by a colorful mural. It is not part of Wright's design and been an obstacle to the understanding of Graycliff. The removal of the building this summer will be a major step in the overall restoration plan for Graycliff.

The large sgraffito mural mounted on the building is an important artwork by Joseph Slawinski. It should be saved. The mural depicts St. Joseph Calasanctius in Rome as founder Europe's first free school for poor children in 1597. He established the Piarist order, known in modern times for their excellent schools in Hungary and Poland. The massive 12x18 feet piece is important as a tangible and symbolic reminder of Calasanctius Prep, the school they founded here which is well remembered for the intellectual challenge it presented to Buffalo life.

The artist's favorite medium was sgraffito, an ancient technique which in his style involved four layers of cement, each in a different color, which are removed while still wet to create the image. Born in Poland in 1905, and trained as a muralist in Poland and Italy, Józef Slawinski settled permanently in Western New York in 1964 and worked here until his death in 1983.

In 1951 the Piarist fathers purchased Graycliff from the Isabelle Martin estate to be the mother house of their order in the United States. In 1956 after Soviet troops marched into Hungary to suppress the new government, the fathers had a dormitory built for the influx of young refugees. In 1967 they commissioned the mural on the front wall of this structure. The property was obtained by the Graycliff Conservancy in the 1997. Removal of parts of the estate not original to the Frank Lloyd Wright design is an important part of the Conservancy's mission to restore the site; stringent guidelines must be met for Graycliff to continue to qualify as a state and national landmark.

The Polish Arts Club has mounted an effort to remove, restore and relocate the mural. It will cost about one hundred thousand dollars to complete the project.



Józef Slawinski mural of St. Calasanctius.

The Polish Arts Club has compiled information the rich legacy of Joseph Slawinski's life and works, including about 30 pieces in Western New York which are a vital mix of civic and spiritual subjects. To learn more, call them at 837-8879. Contributions to save the mural can also be sent to The Polish Arts Club of Buffalo, 3210 Main Street Suite 4, Buffalo 14214. —D. O'M.

ESTATE TOURS FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S GRAYCLIFF



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Phase I of \$3.2 Million
Historic Restoration In Progress
Call For A Free Graycliff Brochure
<http://graycliff.bfn.org>

■ GRAYCLIFF ■ EVENTS

Call for Complete Schedule & Details

Fri., June 21 • 7:00 - 9:00
WNED Guitar Festival
Concert By J. Piorkowski & D. Ihasz

Sat., June 22 • 11:00 - 3:30
Graycliff's
75th Anniversary Party
Live Music • Refreshments
"Wright In The USA" Display

Sat., July 13 • 1:00 & 3:30
July Tea Party
Presentation • Tour • Refreshments

Fri., Sat., Sun. • July 26-27-28
Larkin Premium Expo
Displays • Books
Posters • Presentations

Sat., August 3 • 7:00 pm
Moonlight & Jazz
Live Music • Drinks • Hors d'oeuvres



The mural showing its placement on the former dormitory on the grounds of Graycliff.