February 18, 2018



Bas relief in the garden wall behind the Pool of St. Catherine

Designed by All Hallows Guild member Florence Bratenahl, The Pool of St. Catherine is located in the Bishop's Garden and is placed at the west end of the Upper Perennial Border.

A Bas Relief of St. Catherine and other figures is located in the wall above St. Catherine's Pool. It is constructed of Aquia Creek sandstone in the shape of a primitive cross, and was dedicated in 1929 – a gift of the Lake Forest Garden Club of Illinois.

The 15th century granite bas-relief depicts St. Catherine holding the wheel on the far left along with three other figures.

The bas-relief was acquired from the collection of George Grey Barnard. Interested

in medieval art, Barnard gathered discarded fragments of medieval architecture from French villages before World War I. In 1925, the collection was purchased by John D. Rockefeller Jr. It now forms part of The Cloisters collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria, also known as Saint Catherine of the Wheel, was martyred in the early 4th century.

Over 1,100 years following Catherine's martyrdom, at the age of 18, St. Joan of Arc identified Catherine as one of the Saints who appeared to her and counseled her. Her principal symbol is the spiked wheel, which has become known as the Catherine wheel. Her feast day is celebrated on The 25th of November.



The Aquia Creek sandstone that forms the pool was quarried in Virginia.

George Washington selected Aquia sandstone as the primary material for use in Washington's government buildings. In 1791, and acting on the Government's behalf, Pierre L'Enfant—the architect and engineer selected to design the new city of Washington, D.C.—purchased a quarry about 40 miles south of Washington along Aquia Creek in Stafford County, Virginia. The peninsula on which the quarry is located subsequently became known as Government Island and today is a natural park preserve and archaeological site. Stone from this quarry was used for the original portions of the President's House (later known as the White House), some older portions of the U.S. Capitol building, the oldest portions of the U.S. Treasury building, and numerous other smaller structures around the city.

Florence Brown Bratenahl, wife of the first Dean of the Cathedral, was an early All Hallows Guild member who designed many elements of the Cathedral's gardens.

Her first endeavor was the Bishop's Garden. She led a fund-raising campaign and in 1925 had the resources to begin development of the garden according to the plan created by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.



Florence Bratenahl speaking at an early All Hallows Guild meeting

Mrs. Bratenahl served as the Cathedral's landscape designer from 1928 until 1936. The pool of St. Catherine is one piece of her large body of work on the Cathedral Close.

Individuals and garden clubs from across the country donated funds in support of the Bishop's Garden.

The Lake Forest, Illinois Garden Club was founded in 1912 as a volunteer organization dedicated to horticulture and conservation. They chose the Pool of St. Catherine as their gift to the Garden, and it was dedicated in 1929.