

THE TITUS ROAD STATUE OF THE VIRGIN MARY by Leslie Korenko

It seems like every few years, there is a flood of questions about the statue of Mary located on Titus Road. Rumors abound! One person heard it was created in honor of Island fishermen - a fisherman's shrine if you will. Another was sure it was a memorial to a young couple who died in a car accident at the spot on their wedding day. These, and the others, are all quite romantic, but unfortunately, not true.

Several years ago, the best history of the statue appeared in our local newspaper, Kelleys Life (the March/April 2012) edition. So, in answer to all those questions, and thanks to Kelleys Life, here is the real story about the Statue of Virgin Mary that we all love so well.

The KI Grotto and statue of Mary

Kim Bolden

Did you know Kelleys Island has its very own grotto? The grotto and statue of Mary is situated toward the western end of Titus Road on the north side of the road. A small path leads to the statue of Mary, housed in a crèche, overlooking a grotto in natural rock. The statue is set back a bit from the road but is easily seen. Many pass by the area without noticing the statue and others have wondered about it. Yet many others have left mementoes ever since the statue was put in place in 1948. Rosaries, flowers, coins, obituaries, personal memorabilia, photographs, rocks, beach glass and handwritten notes are among the many items left at the grotto. "Some of the notes are heartbreaking," said Fran Minshall, the owner of the property and statue.

There is a small area where you can park your bikes, golf carts and vehicles to reflect for a moment and enjoy the quiet and beauty of the wooded area. It is especially pretty in the fall when the leaves are donning their fall colors and the solitude is most remarkable.

Fran Minshall reflected on the history of the statue of Mary. According to Fran, her sister in law, Evelyn Minshall (sister of husband William E. Minshall) successfully located a



Photo by Kim Bolden

Statue of Mary today.

medieval French Madonna and Baby statue while in France. She brought the statue back from Europe and a carpenter built a crèche. The crèche you see today is the original one and has remained in that location since 1948. The area was well maintained with numerous daffodils and ivy planted. "It was lovely, just

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lovely," Fran reminisced.

Fran recalled that sometime around 1970 the statue was found broken. A search of the debris resulted in her finding only the head of the child Jesus. She saved the head and today it is displayed on her fireplace along with a photograph of the original statue. A Good Samaritan, whose name is long forgotten, replaced the French Madonna and Child statue with the statue of Mary that you see today. A subsequent prank resulted in the new statue's temporary disappearance. Once the statue was located, it was promptly returned and has remained in place for over 15 years.

Take a few minutes to enjoy the solitude of Titus Road and the statue. A close look at the postcard of Titus Road will reveal the statue on the lower right hand corner peeking between the trees.

Photo Left: Fran Minshall with photo of original statue.

Photo Right: French Medieval original version of the Statue of Mary.

Photos by Kim Bolden

