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## Local skilled craftsmen deliver work in Washington

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Special to The Journal

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The forge is clean and organized. Tools, which, at one time, were the lifeblood of a community, are laid out within easy reach. Various sized hammers sit on a rack, waiting to be used, for a special need, on the custom work that Anvil Works of Hedgesville is commissioned for. The fire burns hot, as more metal is added to the flame.

Lee Badger and partner Steve Dykstra spend many hours working on custom-made items for historical houses, government buildings and local customers; their client base covers the Mid-Atlantic region. Complicated assignments are brought in monthly.

Nearly one hundred miles away, a new client is waiting.

St. Dominic Church, in Washington, D.C., has a strong history, going back more than 125 years, and is located near the National Mall; a majestic building spiraling high above government offices.

The church is an architectural delight, with twenty-four large stained glass windows celebrating the life and times of Saint Dominic. A real bell tower is used to ring the Angelus daily. A Roosevelt Organ, installed in 1887, is in use, and the acoustics in the world-renowned cathedral produce sound that enhances the music and prayers.



Submitted photo  
Steve Dykstra and Lee Badger start loading the truck with tools for the trip to St. Dominic Church in Washington to deliver commissioned work from their blacksmith shop The Anvil Works located in Hedgesville.

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## Anvil FROM PAGE A1

For an artist to be commissioned for work from the prestigious church is a once in a lifetime event. Anvil Works was hired to produce a large double gate and sixty-five feet of fence for the inside. This custom work was built from a design by the world famous McCrery Architects, located in Washington.

The production of a gate, of this design, is labor-intensive, requiring skilled craftsmen. Lee Badger has been pounding metal for over 20 years and did most of the work required. The job was so large and required so much detail that they were behind schedule. That's when they decided to bring in Dmitry Volkov, from St. Petersburg, Russia, to assist in the construction.

"We take too long. We always take too long, but we go way beyond what we have to do for work as far as the quality and finish," Badger said. The architect and church were patient,

they knew this was a difficult job requiring "Old World" skills.

The gate was loaded onto a truck, from the forge in Hedgesville, and recently driven to Washington, D.C. Father George Schommer, O.P., oversaw the installation. The gate is being used in a new bridal room. "It looks great, I'm very happy," Father Schommer said.

Catherine and Wayne Maffett drove from their home in Hedgesville to see it last month.

"It's gorgeous. We saw it when it was mid-process," Catherine Maffett said.

Dimitry Volkov is not only a master blacksmith, but he also has his work on display at the Moscow Museum and other museums in Europe.

"What a beautiful country! It's interesting to walk in town, along the streets, to hear; to see. I like Washington; yes, the people are very friendly here.

American people are very kind," Volkov said.

Ron Herr, from McCrery Architects, inspected the work.

"I'm happy with it, and I'm sure our principal will be," Herr said. "It is a complicated piece. We looked at a lot of work by a famous metal worker," but in the end they decided on Anvil Works. "This is a first step of a larger project. We work in a traditional style; we look for skilled contractors. We develop relationships based on trust, and that's important."

In addition to Mass, many people come to the church for their weddings and other special events. The high ceilings, large sanctuary and stained glass windows help the church grow. People in attendance are from southwest Washington, Virginia and Maryland.

Parochial Vicar, Father Hyacinth Cordell, O.P., admired the gate.

"It's beautiful. Father

Schommer is the one that spearheaded all of this. It's nice for weddings, but we could also use it for an overflow confessional, too. We open our doors and make ourselves available for weddings, if you want to get married here, so, having a bridal room is just another draw for the church. [People] like to come here for Mass; and some, to join the parish as well, because of the community, but the church is also a draw, too," Father Cordell said.

After a long, hard day, it was back to the forge for the men from Anvil Works to continue on the construction of the fence. Badger summed it up with, "Quality pays." They are highly skilled craftsmen working in an almost forgotten tradition.

"We're keeping with the beauty of the architecture that is here; preserve the heritage [and] respect the architecture of the building," Father Schommer said.