

Catholic Children's Home investigating destruction of Virgin Mary statue

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
July 28 2017 12:02 PM



ALTON - Whether it was the weather or vandals, something or someone destroyed the Italian soft marble sculpture of the Virgin Mary at the Alton Catholic Children's Home.

The statue, which research conducted in recent days by staff at the children's home shows was dedicated as long ago as 1924, was found smashed Tuesday morning by

maintenance crews at the home. Catholic Children's Home Administrator Michael Shelton-Montez said the statue was broken from its ankles and the head was separated from its torso. Due to its age, condition and recent large weather events, Shelton-Montez is not sure if the statue was destroyed by vandals or time.

"She has been there since the 1920s," Sheldon-Montez said. "We're not sure about the estimated worth of the statue, but it was hand-carved soft Italian marble. It was commissioned for us, and erected and dedicated. It has been rededicated several times throughout the years. We are now in the process of trying to find the exact history of it."

Sheldon-Montez said the statue was very recently cleaned. He said years of weathering, mold and attempts at painting it were removed by that cleaning, and the statue was stripped to its original Italian marble.

"It could have very well broken and cracked on its own due to age and weather, but we're not really sure," he said. "There are no witnesses, and no one is coming forward. I left that Monday - the day before - at 5 p.m., and the statue was there and O.K. That morning, when we got here, it was down. The weather could have very well had something to do with it. It was pretty bad."

In the event the priceless statue was destroyed by vandals, however, Sheldon-Montez said a report was filed with the Alton Police Department, just because the staff was not aware of what happened.

If anyone has any information regarding the destruction of the statue, Sheldon-Montez invites people to contact the Catholic Children's Home at (618) 465-3594 ext. 333.