Bethinking of Old Orleans

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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

"....He entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him to her home. She had a sister named Mary, who took a seat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha got worried about much housework; so approaching Him, she said, "Lord do you not care that my sister left me to do the work alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and bothered about many matters, when there is need of but one thing. Mary has selected the good portion which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10: 38-42

This is the story of Mary of Bethany which is our fifth subject in a series on stained glass windows in Orleans County churches. This beautiful window is located in the First Presbyterian Church of Albion. In the upper portion Mary of Bethany is portrayed in an attitude of spiritual adoration under a pseudo Gothic structure. She is clothed in garments of red and white. The white signifies her purity and the red implies her divine love. She is pictured in a garden landscape done in greens which are more decorative than symbolic.

In the bottom portion of the window Mary is seen in her home seated before Jesus listening to His great words of wisdom as her sister Martha stands behind the table performing her household duties. It is plain that this particular scene is taken directly from the above Biblical quotation. It presents two kinds of discipalship. Martha represents the decipalship of service, Mary that of devotion and worship. In other words, while there was bustle and activity in the kitchen, there was also prayer and fellowship in the parlor.

A border of ivy leaves surrounds the entire window, the ivy being a symbol of rememberance. This window unlike many, bears its title "Mary of Bethany" placed near her foot in the upper section. To the best of my knowledge this is the only window in Orleans County which portrays Mary of Bethany. At the base of the window a banner states "In loving memory of Marjorie King Reed".

Marjorie L. King was born in Albion June 26, 1880. In 1902 she married Herbert T. Reed (1872-1945) a well-known local attorney and for many years chairman of the Orleans County Republican Party. The Reeds had two daughters who are: Mrs. Mary Martillotta and Mrs. Marjorie Mahoney, both of Albion. Their mother Marjorie King Reed died December 1, 1933 following complications which resulted from choking on a piece of a skewer in some meat at a Rochester restaurant. She was only fifty-three. In October 1934 less than a year after her untimely death, Herbert Reed and his daughters presented this Tiffany Style window to the first Presbyterian Church in her memory. The window was created by the Pike Stained Glass Studio of Rochester. In some portions two layers of glass are leaded over each other to achieve various shading effects. We notice this particularly in the robe of Mary and also in the tablecloth where some of the outer folds are not as distinct. In the strict sense of terminology, this is not a stained glass window at all because it is made of colored glass as opposed to painting (staining) clear glass and then firing. The faces however, are painted on. It is for these reasons we call this a Tiffany Type because it resembles the famous Tiffany windows. Here this is only natural as William J. Pike had worked for Tiffany Studios before establishing his own business in 1908.

The First Presbyterian Church in Albion was erected in 1874 in the Gothic Revival Style from Medina Sandstone. In the early part of this century all the original stained glass windows were replaced with Tiffany Style geometric windows which were popular at the time. During succeeding years, three memorial windows including the Reed window of Mary of Bethany, have also been added.

"Life does not end,
It only passes on, and as I go
Beyond the veil,
Within the shadows still I stand
Unseen - yet seeing you and
For you waiting."

--Dorothy Signor Blake
(from a poem written as a tribute to Mrs. Reed)