

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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"Music is well said to be the speech of angels; in fact, nothing is felt to be so Divine. It brings us near to the Infinite; we look for moments across the cloudy elements into the eternal light, when song leads and inspires us."

--Carlyle

St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music, is our seventh subject in a series of articles on stained glass windows in Orleans County churches. The window shown here, is located in St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Holley. In a mood of spiritual adoration, as though having a vision, St. Cecilia is looking heavenward. She holds a small pipe organ which is the typical symbol usually associated with her. She wears a small diadem encrusted with jewels while a halo, denoting veneration, encircles her head. She wears a white tunic symbolic of light, faith, joy, purity, virginity and innocence. Draped over this is a red mantel suggesting divine love while its blue lining symbolizes delicacy, constancy and truth.

In the base of the window, the letters L.C.B.A. No. 366 appear. This indicates the Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association, Branch 366 gave the window to St. Mary's Church. This impressive Medina sandstone ediface was dedicated on Dec. 24, 1905. All of the windows which are original to this church, were created at the Leo P. Frohe Studio in Buffalo. They consist of bold dominating figures like St. Cecilia done in vibrant colors.

It is believed that St. Cecilia was martyred about 300 A.D. The legendary story concerning her is as follows: "St. Cecilia was of a noble Roman family, and brought up in the Christian faith. She early took a vow of chastity, shunning the pleasures of the world. She excelled in music and sang with such heavenly sweetness that angles came to listen to her. She played on all instruments, but as none sufficed to express the harmony which filled her soul, she invented the organ and consecrated it to the service of God.

"When about 16 her parents desired her to marry Valerian, a young Roman, rich and of noble birth. Cecelia accepted him, but beneath her bridal robe she wore a course garment of penance and renewed her vow of chastity; and by her eloquence persuaded her husband Valerian not only to respect her vow, but also converted him to the true faith.

"Cecilia had told Valerian that she had a guardian angel, and upon returning to her chamber, behold the angel with two crowns of roses gathered in paradise; with these the angel crowned them and told Valerian that whatever he asked for should be granted him. Valerian replied: 'I have a brother named Tiburtius; grant that his eyes also may be opened to the truth.' And the angel answered 'Thy request, O Valerian, is pleasing to God, and ye shall both ascend to his presence bearing the palm of martyrdom,' and the angel vanished. Soon after, Tiburtius entered the



chamber and perceiving the fragrance of the celestial roses, Cecilia explained all to him and he, too, was converted.

"Soon after, the two brothers were cast into prison. They converted their jailer Maximus, who suffered martyrdom with them. The prefect, coveting the wealth of St. Cecilia, commanded her to sacrifice to the gods, and when she refused, put her to many tortures; finally ordering her to be beheaded, but the hand of the executioner trembled so that he inflicted three wounds in her neck, and fled. She lived three days, praying and distributing all she had to the poor, and died 'singing with her sweet voice praises and hymns to the last moments.' She was buried by the side of her husband, and, according to her wish, her house was consecrated to a church."