

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone listens to My voice and opens the door, I shall come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

— Revelation 3:20

"I am the Light of the World, the one who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

— John 8:12

Jesus knocking at the door is our ninth story in a series on stained glass windows in Orleans County churches. This familiar scene is located in the new Carlton United Methodist Church on Archbald Road at Route 18. Basically, there are two things which occur in this window: 1. the knock and 2. the light. Revelation 3:20 and John 8:12 give the biblical validation for such a depiction. Symbolically, Jesus is knocking at your door, but since there is no latch on the outside of this door, you must open it up from the inside in order to let Jesus into your own heart. The lantern which Jesus holds in His other hand, is the light which has become symbolic of Him. Phillips Brooks (1835-93) in his famous hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" wrote "Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light." In fact, the correct title for this particular scene is "The Light of the World." Here Jesus is dressed in a white robe which in itself is a symbol of light, faith, joy, life and purity. Over it is draped a red mantle which symbolizes divine love. Although somewhat difficult to see here, Jesus is wearing a golden crown which denotes Him as Christ the King. Entwined with this is also a crown of thorns which signifies suffering and the crucifixion while the halo signifies His holiness.

This particular window was created by the Haskins Studio in Rochester, N.Y. around 1935 and was first installed in back of the pulpit at the Waterport Methodist Church. The Haskins Studio however, did not actually come up with this design, but rather copied a famous painting. The original painting, "The Light of the World" was done in 1853 by an English artist named Holman Hunt (1827-1910). He was born in London and studied painting at the British Museum and the National Gallery. In 1844 he entered the Royal Academy where he joined with two other artists, Sir John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti to develop the Pre-Raphaelite theories of art. In 1848 they formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. During the 1850's, Hunt went to the Holy Land to portray scenes from the life of Jesus of Nazareth, aiming to achieve historical and archaeological truth. He returned to Palestine in 1869 and again in 1873 for further study. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood attempted to restore the artistic principles and practices regarded as characteristic of Italian Art before Raphael. They seemed to lower the exalted to the commonplace, but never aimed to protest injustice, ugliness or misery. Holman Hunt strove to fuse truth, beauty and decorum in biblical and evangelical culture with which he was absorbed.

We must remember in interpreting this window, we are really looking at something through the eyes of a Victorian. I am not familiar with this depiction of Jesus in early art forms. There may have been, but it is Holman Hunt's painting, the "Light of the World" with



which we have all become familiar in one form or another. To the best of my knowledge this is the only such stained glass window in the county.

Just prior to Easter, the window was installed at the Carlton United Methodist Church and is now back-lighted incandescently. It is signed by the maker in the lower left corner and was recently restored by the Pike Stained Glass Studio in Rochester, N.Y. This new church building, which opened in December 1988 is the result of combining the Kenyonville, Kuckville and Waterport United Methodist Churches into one congregation. Many antique ecclesiastical furnishings such as the aforementioned window, from the former churches adorn the new sanctuary.