

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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Stained Glass Windows

.....the shepherds said to one another,
"Let us go straight to Bethlehem, and
let us see what has happened that the
Lord has made known to us. And hastily
they went, found both Mary and Joseph,
and saw the baby lying in the manger.

*The Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 2, verses 15 & 16*

It's probably a fair assumption to say that practically everyone can appreciate the beauty of stained glass windows. Here in Orleans County churches we have a wide and diverse selection of extraordinary windows. This past November as County Historian, I decided to make a photographic survey of all the unusual and figurative windows that I could find in the county. Incidentally, my survey is still in the process, with Dr. James Orr of Albion taking the pictures. We have now taken color slides of over one hundred windows in twenty-three different churches. These pictures have been arranged in a program which I can make available to various organizations.

Naturally, because the windows in the survey are located in churches, they are of religious subject matter. I have found windows dating from the 1860's to the 1980's in my travels. Some churches, of course, don't have any, some churches have stained glass windows with just geometric designs which I can't begin to survey. Some churches have one or two outstanding specimens and some churches are richly illuminated with many figurative examples. In general, I have found the windows in many Protestant churches to be more subdued in color, using earth tones, while the windows in Catholic and even Episcopal churches are more vibrant or brilliant in their color schemes.

It goes without saying, the true beauty of looking at a stained window is the color. Surely a black and white photo such as appears here, is indeed, a great injustice to such an art work. However, from time to time over the next few months I will be showing and describing some of my finds. I hope, by doing this, you will get a chance to see and learn about something locally you've never seen before.

The window pictured here is actually located in a rather obscure place where it is seldom enjoyed. This nativity scene is in St. Joseph's Cemetery Chapel on Route 31 just east of Albion. It is done in mostly rich blues, purples and golden tones. I believe the quotation at the beginning of this article, from Luke, describes it. In the very bottom panel the name Wendel LeFrois appears. To me, this indicates he paid for it. This chapel was built in 1920 and cost St. Joseph's Parish around \$10,000 at that time. Also located in the chapel are three other windows of equal beauty including a window showing the crucifixion directly opposite the one of the nativity. To the best of my research, all these windows were installed at the time that the chapel was completed. The designs, images and numerous colors were painted on the various pieces of glass and then fired, making these windows in the true sense of the word, stained glass. Following the firing the bits of glass were then leaded together at a studio. In articles to follow, we will see many other different types of stained and colored glass windows showing various religious subjects.

