

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

*"Serpentes et omnia venenata animalia
ex Hibernia baculo Jesu expulit."*

*"He cast out snakes and every poisonous
animal from Ireland by the staff of Jesus."*

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland known as the Apostle to the Irish, is our subject in this stained glass window from St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Holley. Patrick was born about the year 389 A.D. but the place of his birth, possibly in Britian, is unknown. It is believed that his father was a wealthy alderman and a Christian. When Patrick was sixteen years old, pirates captured him during a raid and sold him as a slave in Ireland around 405 A.D. He served as a shepherd for an Irish chieftan in Ulster and it was during this period of captivity that he dedicated himself to religion. After six years of slavery he managed to escape. From this point on he pursued a religious education. As a result of his experiences in Ireland, Patrick became driven by the idea of converting the Irish to Christianity. He studied in the monastery of Lerins, on an island off the southeast coast of France and he also went to Auxene, France and studied religion under St. Germanus a French bishop. Partly because Patrick's earlier education was inadequate, his religious superiors were reluctant to let him return to Ireland as a missionary. But Palladius, the first Irish missionary bishop died in 431 A.D. Pope Celestine I sent Patrick to Ireland about 432 A.D. following his consecration as a bishop by St. Germanus.

Patrick began his work in northern and western Ireland, where no one had ever preached Christianity. He gained the trust and friendship of several tribal leaders and soon made many converts. He traveled throughout the countryside preaching, teaching and establishing churches. In other words, Patrick was the first organizer of the Irish church. Legend suggests he used the shamrock to explain the idea of the Trinity. Another name for the shamrock, which is a three-leaved clover, is "trefoil." Many people believe the shamrock came to be the traditional symbol of Ireland as a result of this legend.

Through Patrick's endeavors, he was thereby able to establish what was to be the cathedral church of Ireland at Armagh about the year 444 A.D. It is said that he founded more than 300 churches and baptized more than 120,000 people. Much of what is known about Patrick is vague and legendary. He preached in Ireland for the rest of his life and died at Saul on Strangford Lough about 461 A.D. Today, Irish Catholics throughout the world celebrate St. Patrick's Day on his feast day, March 17. In fact, many people who are not even Irish and/or Catholic take advantage of this day for party purposes. The first St. Patrick's Day celebrated in the United States was held in Boston in 1737. Indeed, St. Patrick fully deserves his title of "Apostle of Ireland."

As to the window shown here, we see St. Patrick as a bishop, venerated with a halo and portrayed as a wise old man with a long white beard. He is wearing an emerald green chasuble with a rose colored lining. Because the chasuble covers the other vestments, its symbolic meaning is Christian Charity and protection. It is green like the shamrock which is the color typically associated with the Irish. As a liturgical color it would be worn by the celebrant on the Sundays after the Octave of the Epiphany through to the Eve of Septuagesima and the Sundays after Pentecost through to Advent. Under the chasuble is a gold colored rochet which is a knee-length tunic with a border of gold lace. Under this is the alb which is a white linen robe symbolizing chastity, purity and the eternal joy of those who have been redeemed by



the Saviour. St. Patrick is also wearing a mitre which is a pointed liturgical hat worn by the Pope, Cardinals, archbishops and bishops. The two points of the mitre are symbolic of the Old and New Testaments. Attached to the back of the mitre and falling over the shoulders of the wearer, are two flaps or fanons, which are symbolic of the spirit and the letters of the testaments. We see here such a fanon on St. Patrick's right shoulder. In this devotional picture St. Patrick holds a crozier which is a Bishop's symbol of authority and jurisdiction. It is supposed to resemble a shepherd's staff and symbolizes pastoral care by the crook at the top which alludes to drawing in those who stray from the flock. He is also wearing a bishop's ring on his left hand which suggests his union with the church. St. Patrick is pointing downward to a big green snake which relates to one of the best - known tales about him. According to legend, St. Patrick charmed the snakes of Ireland into the sea so they were drowned. In this window he seemingly has charmed the snake toward the sea pointing at him as though saying, "Be gone with the likes of you!"

The window was installed in 1904 when St. Mary's Church was completed. It was designed by the stained glass studio of Leo P. Frohe in Buffalo and as you might well guess was paid for by an Irish family as it states in the bottom panel: "Gift of W.M. O'Brien & Family."