

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

*"Come unto me all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Matt. 11:28-30

This large stained glass window which depicts Jesus is located in The First Baptist Church of Albion. To date, the origin or maker of this Tiffany Style representation is unknown. However, in 1912 we do know that "The trustees were authorized to arrange for a suitable window to be erected in memory of William Swan." A local newspaper goes on to say "The trustees were authorized to accept other windows members might wish to place for departed friends."

In 1915 the Baptist Church received the gift of a companion window portraying St. John the Apostle which is located directly across the sanctuary from the one of Jesus. The overall character of the color scheme in both windows is one of earth tones in appearance. Somber browns predominate with dull ivory, muted greens and solemn golds. The color hues alone suggest the Tiffany Style. Much of the window gives the effect of marbelized glass. Only the face, hands and feet are painted on the figure. The rest of the window is made with blends of colored glass.

The slightly larger than life size figure of Jesus is posed with arms outstretched as though he might be saying "Come unto Me." This therefore, is the title given the window which appears on an imaginary banner just under the landscape. Jesus is clad in a golden colored mantle. Here, this color is the emblem of the sun and of divinity, symbolizing sacredness. Underneath this garment appears a white robe which color is accepted here as a symbol of purity and holiness of life. Jesus is depicted in an ethereal landscape with mountains in the background. He wears a halo symbolic of His divine nature. Above this and in the background is a beautiful blue sky which suggests heavenly love. Blue is also the color of truth, because blue always appears in the sky after the clouds are dispelled, suggesting the unveiling of truth. In the lower portion of the sky directly behind the halo, the color is much lighter and brighter. This light is symbolic of Christ as it relates to His own words in John 8:12. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

I might note here that the First Presbyterian Church in Holley has a window of Jesus posed in the same manner as this one although the color scheme is much different. On a panel of glass in the base of the window it states: "In Memory of William Gere Swan." Mr. Swan was born in Galway, Saratoga County, N.Y. in 1822 and came with his family to Albion in 1835, where his father established a general merchandise business. William Swan took over the business and later became a partner of Joseph M. Cornell. In 1855 Mr. Swan became the superintendent of the International Railway Suspension Bridge Company which position he held until 1893. He was also a director, treasurer and a large stockholder of this corporation. Likewise, he was a large stockholder in the Pullman Palace Car Company. Mr. Swan was actively identified with the business history of Albion and Western New York and lived in one of the finest mansions ever built in Orleans County. It was located on the south east corner of Main and East Avenue in Albion. His first wife was Catherine Paine who died in 1853. In 1860 he married Emma Etherbridge of Hastings, Minn. There were no children from either marriage. However, William and Emma Swan adopted a daughter whose name was Ada. She married Herbert Rollins, who superintended the Albion Power Company of which William G. Swan was President. Throughout his lifetime in Albion, Mr. Swan was an ardent supporter of the First Baptist Church serving in many capacities including president of the Board of Trustees for many years. When he died in 1896 his will directed the organization of an association to be known as Swan Library. For this purpose he bequeathed the sum of \$35,000 and specified that



his executors were to procure a building and equip it. By March 17, 1900 the trustees had completed the directives of their benefactor as Swan Library opened to the public and circulated its first book. William Swan stated in his will: "Feeling a deep interest in the Village of Albion and in the County of Orleans, and especially in the young people of said village and county and believing that I can in no way better promote their welfare than by founding a permanent library and reading room..." Consequently, since 1900, the wishes of William G. Swan have been carried out.

To celebrate the 90th anniversary of this important institution a sixty-four page history of the library will be published and released on May 7. Anyone wishing to be a sponsor for \$10-\$24 or a patron for \$25 and up, may do so and have their name listed in the book. Checks may be made out to Swan Library, 4 North Main St., Albion, N.Y.

It was indeed only logical for the trustees of the First Baptist Church to think it very appropriate to have this stained glass window as a memorial to such an influential person as William G. Swan. Although he has been dead almost 100 years his name remains with us not just as this stained glass window, but in our community with the Swan Library which will continue to perpetuate his name for time to come.