

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XIV

6-22-92

No. 23

LUMINARIES IN THE FIRMAMENT



The wealth of stained glass windows with various subjects and techniques is a bountiful treasure trove to be found in Orleans County churches. Luminaries In The Firmament (Gen. 1:5) A Guide to Stained Glass Windows of Orleans County is the title of a forthcoming book on stained glass to be published by the Cobblestone Society this fall. Pictures in both black and white and color by local photographer James Orr will be used to illustrate over forty windows in twenty churches of various denominations. Patrons are now being sought to defray publication costs. See Vol. XIV No. 20 of this column for details about becoming a Silver, Gold or Platinum Patron.

The beautiful devotional window shown here may be found in the Albion First Baptist Church. Installed in 1915, it depicts St. John the Apostle. The window is one which is done in the Tiffany Style using opaque and marbled glass with earth tone colors predominating. Only the letters and flesh parts are painted i.e. the face, hands and feet. Layers of glass are leaded over one another to create various shading effects, particularly noticeable in the sky.

The window's title "Saint John", which is painted on, is almost unnecessary as the likeness is unmistakably St. John the Apostle. You ask "How's That?" It seems that during the Renaissance artists and painters began to somewhat standardize depictions of religious personna. Because St. John was the youngest of the disciples, he is always therefore portrayed beardless. Likewise, because of his great writing ability, he will almost always be shown with a book and quill pen, symbols to denote his particular attribute. The book also symbolizes the New Testament while a scroll would suggest the Old Testament. We know too that this figural image is a sacred personage because of the halo which venerates our subject.

In the base of the window in a glass panel it states: "In Loving Memory of Charles Roswell Burrows and wife Ann Jeanette Burrows." As a side note, it was Mrs. Burrows from whom George Pullman bought the lot and her house for the site of the Universalist Church in Albion.

The companion window to St. John is entitled "Come Unto Me" Vol. XII No. 12. It was installed in 1912. Like many older churches around the turn of the last century, the Baptist Church in Albion built in 1860 had more popular Tiffany Style Windows made to replace earlier ones of painted and stenciled colored glass. Originally this window opening was divided into two equal parts with a mullion up the middle making two round headed lancets filled with diamond-shaped leaded glass.

The figural image of St. John is larger than life size and remains an excellent example of the Tiffany type mode of window design which became so fashionable ninety years ago. Another devotional window also depicting St. John may be found at Christ Episcopal Church in Albion. There too, he is shown beardless and with a book and quill pen.