

# Let's think of Old Orleans

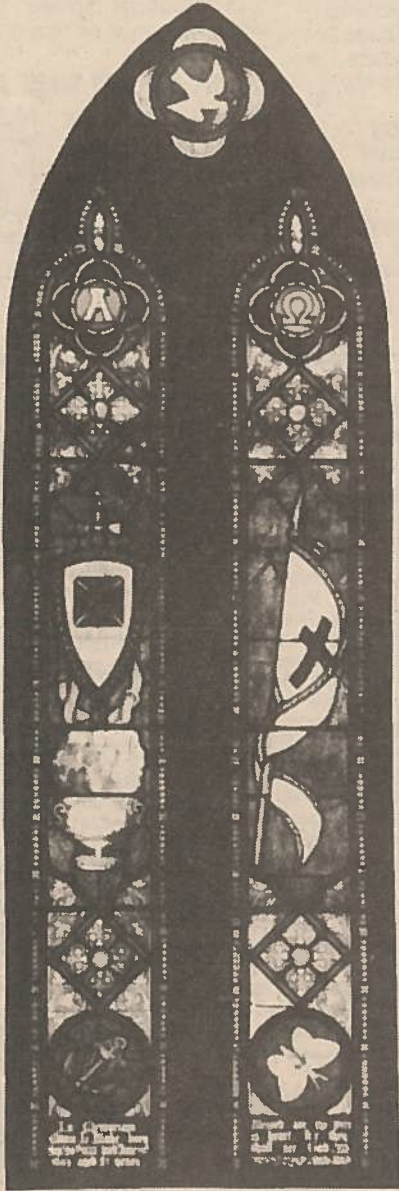
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## LUMINARIES IN THE FIRMAMENT



*Onward, Christian soldiers! Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before  
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle, see His banners go!"*

Among some of the oldest stained glass windows in Orleans County is this one from the mid-1860's, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Medina. It wasn't until this period of time that stained glass started to appear in local ecclesiastical architecture. What little information exists on this window, indicates that it is Bohemian glass constructed in England. Primary colors dominate throughout this very Anglican-appearing window.

Let's begin in the upper left lancet and move counter clockwise around the window and through the symbolism. In the top of the left lancet we see the Alpha sign in the letter A for the beginning. Below this we see the crusader's sword and shield with cross Patee Formee' inscribed IN HOC SIC-

NO VINCES which means "In the sign conquer." This is attributed to the Emperor Constantine.

The next symbol is the censer which is shown with a pierced cover emitting incense. In the Old Testament the censer symbolizes the pleas of the worshiper that his prayers would be acceptable to God. "Let my prayers be set forth before thee as incense." (Psalm 141:2). Hence the censer has become a symbol of prayer, the smoke signifying the prayers of the faithful ascending to Heaven. Incense was first used in ancient temples to cover the smell of sacrifices and therefore, found its way even into contemporary use. In the lower portion of the lancet an anchor appears which is the traditional sign of hope. It is also green in color which in itself, also symbolizes hope. In the very bottom of the panel it states: "In Memory of Edwin L. Blake born Sept. 26, 1833 died June 19th 1864 aged 31 years." We know that Major Blake was killed in the Civil War and that his widow gave this window to St. John's Church.

Beginning now in the lower portion of the right lancet and thus moving upward, we first see in the panel a quote: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8) The butterfly appears next, which is a symbol of resurrection. This meaning comes from the three stages in its life as represented by the caterpillar, the cocoon and the butterfly which may be interpreted as life, death and resurrection.

A Christian Church pennant is also illustrated with a white field which stands for joy, purity and victory while the cross in red stands for the blood of martyrs and the flame of the Holy Spirit. "Glory, Glory Hallelujah! His truth is marching on." Higher above we see the Omega symbol indicating the end as it refers to the Alpha sign in the left lancet. "Do not fear. I am the First and the Last and the living One." (Rev. 1:17)

In the quarterfoil shape in the windows apex we note the dove of peace with the olive branch which refers to the dove returning to Noah's ark.

Although all the symbols used here are traditional in nature and may be seen in various forms of Christian art they somehow take on a personal meaning to honor Major Edwin L. Blake. They were not just randomly selected, but were appropriated to personalize and give homage to one who had made the supreme sacrifice for his country. In essence, an adverse situation for Mrs. Blake and Major Blake's untimely death have been symbolized in a most positive Christian manner by grouping these particular ideas together which make the window very unique and highly personalized.

Luminaries in the Firmament - A Guide to Stained Glass Windows in Orleans County, will be published by the Cobblestone Society this Fall. Anyone wishing to support this effort may do so and have their name listed within the book either as a \$25, \$50, or \$100 patron. Contributions may be sent by Sept. 15 to the Cobblestone Society, Box 363, Albion, N.Y. 14411. Expected date for release of the book will be in late October.