

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XIX

9-19-97

No. 38

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS HEAVENLY LIGHT



Our photo this week shows the interior of St. Joseph's R.C. Church in Albion shortly after it was dedicated on Sept. 1, 1897. During the past forty-five years parishioners have become accustomed to an interior decorated with Italian marble and a beautiful mural depicting the "Glorification of St. Joseph."

However, in the beginning, the sanctuary was flooded with heavenly light which filtered down upon the altar. If you look closely at this picture you can see the whole ceiling above the altar is a blaze of light. From a news account about the church printed almost one hundred years ago, we find this interesting bit of information. "The glass of the dome in the sanctuary is amber color, and beneath, are five windows representing the Five Joyous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary". Indeed, the whole ceiling over the altar was a skylight. I'm sure it must have looked like a sieve. With extreme heat and cold causing expansion and contraction, and glazing of flashing around such a skylight would have become inadequate. Altar cloths would have become wet and soiled as problems continued to persist. St. Mary's R.C. Church in Holley had at

one time a similar skylight over its main altar. At some point early in the history of St. Joseph's Church the skylight was boarded up on the outside to prevent leaking. But the under layer of amber glass which the congregation could still see remained in place for a number of years.

The afore mentioned news article also notes that "The high altar is in white and gold. The coloring throughout is in light terra cotta. The side altars are the same in design and color as the high altar".

In 1952 when the whole church interior was renovated the former skylight and three of the stained glass windows of the Joyful Mysteries, were covered over with the mural. The original intent of the skylight was obviously to allow heavenly light to flow down like the Holy Spirit upon the altar, the focal point of worship. It was a neat idea but it just didn't work out in a pragmatic way. I'm sure too that the loss of heat causing the melting of snow and ice didn't make it any better. It has now been so long that the sky was boarded up that there is no one left who even remembers the abundance of natural light which once flooded the sanctuary of St. Joseph's.