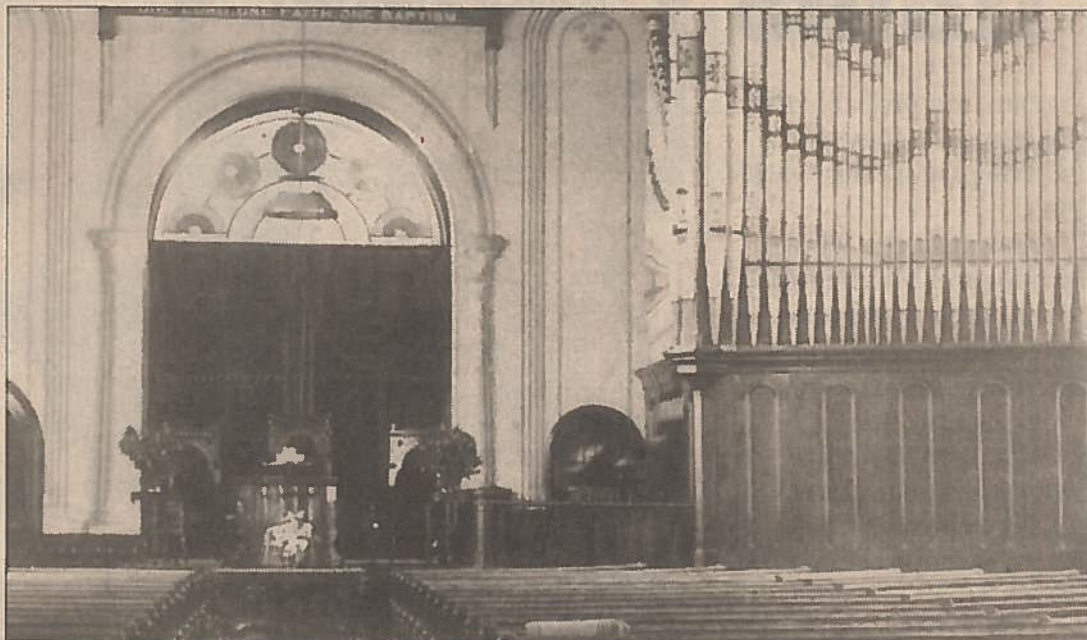


BETHINKING OF OLD ORLEANS

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Albion First Baptist Church



BY C.W. LATTIN

Our photo shown here was taken during the mid-1880's in the Albion First Baptist Church. The focal point and setting is typical of the time frame for not only a Baptist Church, but also Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, Free Methodist and Universalist churches.

Particularly in these denominations, the emphasis of worship centered upon the word or preaching. Hence the pulpit was located in the middle of the platform as the center of interest. The Bible being prominently displayed on the pulpit, as the great Protestant symbol of the word of God through man.

The communion table on the floor level, also centered, was simply a table often used for floral display as we see here. Protestants, like those mentioned above, only observed the Lords Supper, when the picture was taken, on a quarterly basis.

We note two flower stands either side of the pulpit on the platform. A pair of stands like these were common in this

arrangement of pulpit furniture.

Three ceremonial chairs were normal with a center one usually a little larger. This was for the minister, the other two for perhaps other participants but probably most often unused. They at least served as balance and decorative pieces to the ambiance of a dignified setting.

Behind them in this case are drapes, which cover over the baptistery when not being used. A stained glass transom appears above the baptistery.

To the right in our photo we see a huge pipe organ, which was installed in the Baptist Church in 1883.

Notice the organ pipes which have been highly decorated with stenciled designs. This was also typical of pipe work during the 19th century. Organ pipes were not painted plain gold. That is something that was done to pipes in the 20th century. We also observe here a modesty curtain to hide the organists' legs.

There is however no seating here for choir. Choirs were for the most part during the first half of the 19th century in the back of the sanctuary, not up in front. Protestants started

putting the choirs up front during the third quarter of the 19th century.

In fact, at one time, all Albion churches had the choirs in the back including; Baptist, Methodist, Free Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Roman Catholics.

At the time this picture was taken, it was not uncommon to have the organ up front and the choir in the back.

Prior to the organ shown here, Albion Baptists used a melodeon with the choir in the rear balcony, as well as an orchestra.

With the performers in the back of the sanctuary, the focus was specifically directed upon the preacher and the word. Here the word is also painted as a motto on the cornice over the transom. "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" from St. Paul.

Victorians truly loved mottoes, which were often used as decorative features in their houses of worship. However, there are no religious symbols and no candlesticks on display here as decorative accouterments. These elements were introduced into Protestant sanctuaries during the 20th century.