

**THE STAINED GLASS OF MARKET SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**



An audio-visual presentation given by
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EARLY WINDOWS (Sanctuary)



The Sanctuary contains ten windows, five on a side. Seven are glazed with what is believed to be glass of the period of the Sanctuary's origin, that is, 1860. There is no symbolism in the windows; they are purely decorative. There is no signature or record of the maker. We have the statement from the architect's specifications, which tells us this was to be "domestically made glass, mottled and opaque." This is indeed a textured glass which blocks the view; it is not opaque as Tiffany and his contemporaries would later use the term.

The American-made stained glass in 1860 in the sanctuary belongs to the great volume of ornamental glass being made at the time. To the American firms active then were being added a constant flow of European trained artisans, emigrating for new opportunities, and enhancing the performance level with skills learned in European apprenticeships. So, while the work of



the period appears somewhat naïve, this was the beginning of an upward climb.

Bottom panel of the windows as seen
from the exterior.



THE RESURRECTION WINDOW (Sanctuary)

This beautiful window is from the English firm of Cox Sons Buckley and Co., London, 1888. It's a lovely representation of high-end English work of the period.

The firm was established as Cox & Son in 1837 for all manner of ecclesiastical arts (furniture, stained glass and metal work). They took part in numerous international exhibitions, including the one in Philadelphia in 1876, a possible link to this window. In 1881, the firm merged with Buckley and Co. and continued until at least 1903.

It is part of the tradition of stained glass that each window has a message, an inheritance from medieval times when the ornament of the cathedral was the primer to salvation for parishioners who could not read. So for each window, let us ask what it is saying to us.

In this Resurrection window, Jesus is emerging from his sepulcher. The staff in his left hand is also the cross of death with a banner of victory flying from it. His hand is raised in blessing. Two angels look on in wonder. The guards, set to watch against deceit (Matthew 27:62-66), have become "as dead men," the Bible says. The symbol at the top is the Lamb with the Banner of Victory over Death (the same banner Jesus carries). The symbol below is the intertwined letters of IHS, the first three letters of Jesus' name in Greek.

And there is a stylistic message: this is a bright moment in a genteelly narrated scene. The composition is balanced. The ornament is rich and formal. All bespeaks an orderly universe.

The technique of execution is the best of English Arts and Craft style glass, using all the resurrected techniques from the Middle Ages with a refined drawing style. The background glass in borders and drapery is light in color with copious amounts of silver stain for ornament. This is part of the English tradition, which adapted the jewel-

tone colors of Gothic France to the reduced light of their northern clime. It also works in Harrisburg.

THE ASCENSION WINDOW (Sanctuary)

This signed Tiffany window of about 1908 in manufacture is a lovely example of Tiffany's technique.

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), son of the founder of the jewelry store, began life as a painter, and studied in Europe. There he met the Arts and Craft movement and its exuberance for material and technique. He applied these approaches in America to a wide range of interior treatments, from murals to mosaics, lamps to rugs, furniture to metal work. And to stained glass windows. He traveled and was influenced by a mentor to appreciate the ornamental richness of North Africa and the Middle East. This added an aspect of luxury to his work not seen in other European or American designers. He first worked with world-class glass manufacturers to set up a factory to experiment with color, form and technique. Tiffany was an artist in his training, a marketer without peer, and an impresario of decoration unmatched around the world.

The Ascension Window is a deceptively simple presentation, a single figure in a heavenly realm. Above is a Greek cross (known by its equal arms). The Alpha and Omega flanking the cross are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, used by Christ in the Book of Revelation to proclaim His eternal nature. They are used here as an appropriate symbol for the Ascended Lord. In the panel at the bottom is the Chi Rho, first two letters of "Christ" in Greek.

Let's contrast the Tiffany window with its English neighbor, and see what we learn.

- The light in the English window appears to be evenly distributed and the picture is relatively flat in depth. In the Tiffany, the figure of Christ appears to glow in an infinite space.
- Much of the delineation and detail in the English window is created with paint applied to, and fired into, the surface. In the Tiffany, detail of face, hands and feet is created in paint. The architectural detail of bottom panel and top transom of the Tiffany is created from the careful leading together of varied colored glasses—and no paint.
- The color shifts within the English window are bounded by lead. The background of the Tiffany looks much like a painting, with subtle shifts of many colors apparently within continuous glass.

- There are more lead lines in the English window than in the Tiffany, at least apparently. The lead lines in the Tiffany don't divide the pieces as much as they "draw" the figure and drapery.
- All other stained glass windows in the church are flat relative to the window plane. The Tiffany has rough-hewn, jewel-like chunks of glass protruding in the bottom panel. The exuberance is a note from Tiffany's education in luxuriant ornament

The type of glass used in the Tiffany window was originated by the painter, muralist, art critic, scholar and stained glass fabricator John LaFarge (1835-1910). LaFarge is a key figure in several ways, and we will be coming back to him. He worked with a glass manufacturer to create the first opalescent sheet glass by mixing the white milky glass used for tableware with molten colored glasses. Opalescent glass captures and diffuses light on the surface, rather than transmitting it, as in the English window. In his patent application, granted in 1880, LaFarge says that his invention allowed him "to gain effects as to depth, softness, and modulation of color [and] gain great advantage as to realistic representation of natural objects." This was an advantage in portraying greater depth, rounded forms, and raised the potential of glass to a more painterly style.



The Ascension window as seen from the exterior.

LaFarge discussed his new glass with Tiffany, who subsequently took up opalescent glass. Not content to simply use the glass, Tiffany applied for his own patent in 1881, a move which LaFarge contested in a lawsuit. Tiffany took the new glass and went on to develop a new concept for stained glass. He would express the window's pictorial elements in glass only: foliage would be expressed in glass formed as leaves or branches; angel wings would be composed of molded feather shapes; flowers would be composed of colorful drops of glass. He made glass to fit the window's needs: the beautifully varying background of the Ascension Window was created by the glassmaker in modulating colors to be a heavenly scene suffused with light. Paint, the universal descriptor in windows up to that time (and in your English window), would be used by Tiffany only for face, hands and feet. (LaFarge lacked the deep pockets to pursue his lawsuit and dropped it after a short while.)

Tiffany and other opalescent glass artists would also use multiple layers to create the color shifts on the viewing surface. A complex

system of leaded glass is later plated by larger pieces, and the complexity underneath shines through as subtlety and modulated color. Plating, or the building up of pieces of glass, can also be used to create a change of tone. Some Tiffanies have as many as seven layers of glass behind the surface. The surface simplicity of your Ascended Christ would probably be contradicted by the structure behind it. The simplicity is artful effect.

FLEMING MEMORIAL WINDOW: “MY FATHER’S HOUSE HAS MANY MANSIONS”



This window is by stained glass artist Mary Tillinghast (1845 – 1912). Ms. Tillinghast worked for both Tiffany (in the embroidery department), and then with John LaFarge (about 1878). She was listed as the “manager” of the LaFarge Decorative Art Company when she left in 1885 to establish her own studio, which continued until her death in 1912.

She was in many ways a child of her age. Like other aspiring American artists of the era, she studied painting in Paris, though she was chaperoned by her well-to-do father during their six-year tour of the Continent. When they returned and her father died (in 1879), Mary realized the necessity of applying talent and education to practical ends. She trained with LaFarge in stained glass. She also worked on embroidered decorative draperies, patenting in 1882 a new device for making tapestry. A project executed in 1882 and 1883 was highly lauded. She dissolved her partnership with LaFarge in 1885, the first of his gifted students to leave and establish their own studio.

And like other studios in our discussion, she approached “design” in its broadest application. She was hard-working and fearless. Gilson Willet’s 1893 article describes her standing on a scaffold for eight hours a day to work on a ceiling, as well as climbing ladders and instructing workmen on a roof. She was a memorable woman artist.

Let us review the window’s statements. This is a teaching Christ, hand raised to make a point. Lettered at the top are words from John 14:2: “In my father’s house are many mansions.” In the arch are the golden domes and columns of the place he will prepare.

This is consoling talk by Jesus to his Disciples at the Last Supper. But pictured is the Jesus who wandered the Galilee, preaching and teaching. Perhaps that is a scroll in his hand, and if it were it might be indicating his knowledge of the scriptures. Three women and a child surround him — again, a Galilean scene like “suffer the children.” An elderly man is at Jesus’ back. He is portrayed in the convention for St. Peter — older with beard and bald-pate.

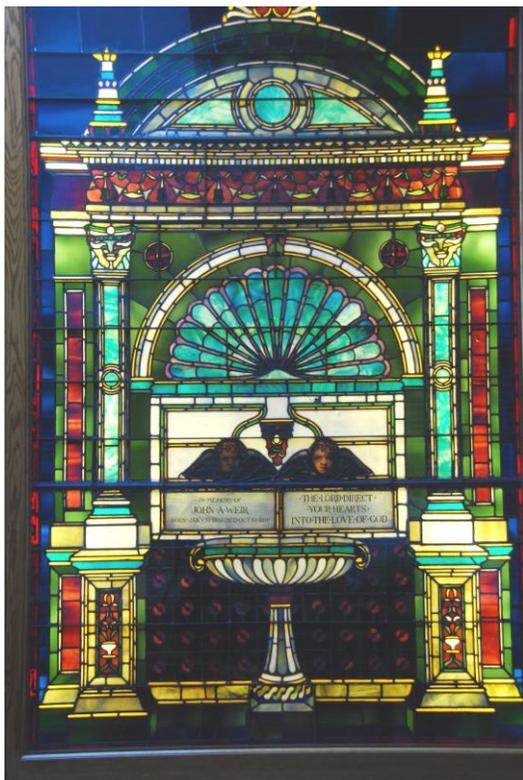
The child is a strong focus of the window, both compositionally and in its brilliance. It is possibly a portrait of a donor’s child or grandchild. Faces are painted on the reverse side, giving them a more luminous presence. The drapery is leaded behind the surface glass, as discussed earlier for LaFarge. (In fact, if you will look at this window from the outside, you will see how the drapery is formed.)

The window is a memorial to two generations of the Fleming family, as the tablet below the illustration states.



The woman and child as seen from the exterior.

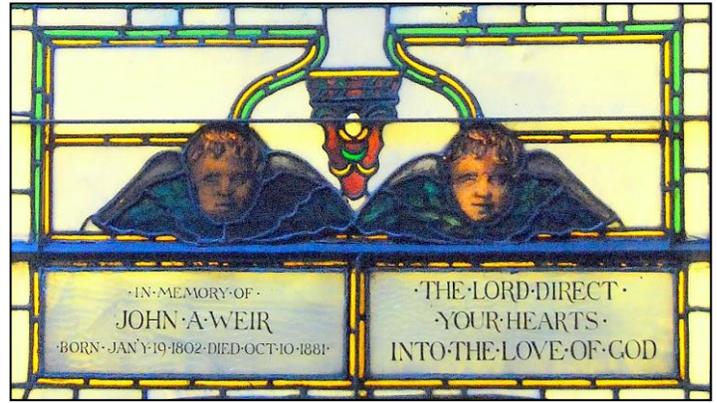
THE JOHN A. WEIR MEMORIAL WINDOW (Atrium)



Found in a light box in the atrium of the church, this is a beautifully executed opalescent window, designed as if an architectural monument, but in glass. It was removed from an exterior wall during one of several renovations and additions to the church building. After being safe-guarded for many years, it was installed in the new atrium created in the early 2000s.

The scallop shell inset was a popular feature of the day. The styling and ornament is classical. There is an urn in the foreground. The workmanship is fine and detailed, joining the many small pieces into a highly ornamental whole. In fact, with all the intricate leading involved, the piece can hold its own for its artistic metal work alone.

The dedication plate gives us two indicators about the fabricator. The lettering is well executed: letters are well and correctly formed; the spacing is generous and well-planned; divisions are phrased read smoothly. The lettering is a match with the high level of artistry employed throughout.



THE JAMES WALLACE WEIR WINDOW (Geneva Hall)



James Wallace Weir was Superintendent of the Sunday School for a very long time, 1834-1878, to be exact. The central quote in the window, “Leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps,” was one that Weir inscribed on the blackboard of the schoolroom, his guiding principle, we may infer.

This window is without paint, its effects created by the artful use of glass. The blue and brown glasses are handsome, dense and mouthblown. The leaves are created from opalescent glass, selected for characteristics that mimic foliage. The color of the grapes varies nicely. It is a window within a window, with architectural framing implied in brown glass and the canopy above.

Though grapevines have many references in the Christian tradition, our studio considers a window like this as reference to Jesus’ statement “I am the Vine and ye are the Branches.”

THE WILLET WINDOWS



The final two windows in our roughly chronological treatment are those done by The Willet Stained Glass Studios in 1967, antecedent firm to Willet Hauser Architectural Glass, Inc. of today. A letter of February 1, 1967, presents a vine-like floral pattern for windows which will also come with a light box behind them, located on the front walls of the Sanctuary. A note from Eugenie Roberts of December of that year says in part: "I confess, I'm rather late to tell you how extremely pleased I and the family are with the windows! We fairly gasped when we saw them. . ."

We have mentioned that Mary Tillinghast was the first of LaFarge's talented artists to leave and establish their own studios. Another was the founder of Willet Studios, William Willet, who worked for LaFarge from 1885-1887. Willet had trained in painting with William Merritt Chase at what would become Cooper Union in New York City—artist first, as with other stained glass designers of the day. After LaFarge, Willet came to Philadelphia where he worked for about three years for the seminal Godwin firm. He also met his wife Anne Lee, daughter of the Presbyterian minister of the Seaman's Chapel in Philadelphia, then moved on to Pittsburgh. He worked for Ludwig Grosse, who sold him his studio when he and his wife decided to return to Germany in 1898.

Though Willet was steeped in American glass of the age, he visited Europe in the early 1900s, especially the Medieval cathedrals, and became convinced that the neo-Gothic approach to glass was aesthetically of a higher order. He found a whole milieu of architects of the early 20th Century in agreement on the suitability of Gothic style glass for the neo-Gothic structures being built. He caught the attention of the most notable ideologue of the Gothic architectural movement, Ralph Adams Cram, who recommended him on a number of important commissions. Willet moved his studio to Philadelphia in 1913, the city in which it has remained since that time.



William was followed in the business by his son, Henry Lee Willet, who became a force in American stained glass from 1930 till his death in 1983. Henry's son Crosby continues with us today, as the firm moves into its third century.

In conclusion, I thank you for the opportunity to become better acquainted with your fine collection of works of art in glass, and to share in celebrating your long and influential presence in this Harrisburg sanctuary.

~~ Susan Bockius