UU Church of Canton, NY

Our Stained Glass Legacy

Overview

It would be almost impossible to describe the history of the stained glass in the UU church without some background on the building and how the people memorialized by the windows form an integral part of the history of the village of Canton and St. Lawrence University. With that in mind here the briefest of summaries.

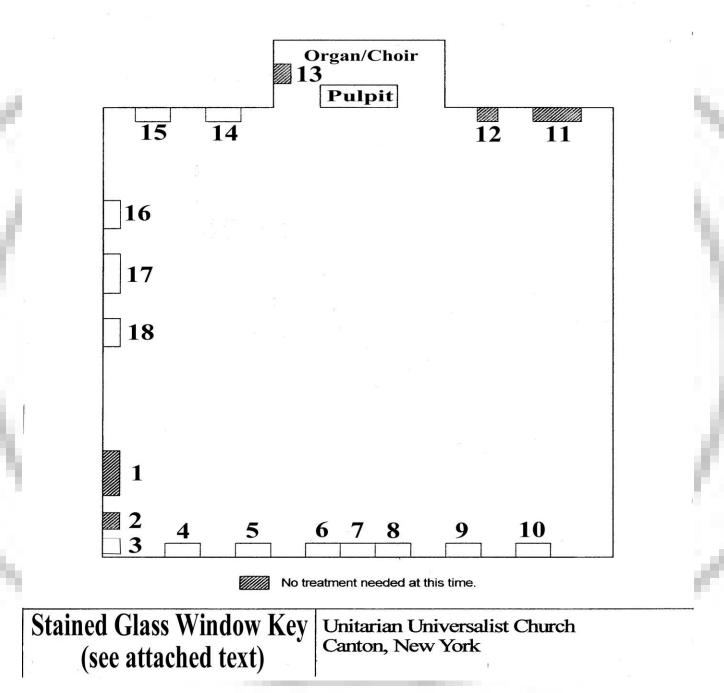
The current building housing the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton, New York was built in 1897. There has been a brick structure here since 1827. From 1825 to 1961, it was Canton's Universalist Church. In 1961 a merger brought the Universalist and Unitarian churches together. The original brick structure with wooden tower was begun in 1827 and dedicated in 1829. It was then known as the Union Church because it was shared by the Baptists. The Silas Wright house, adjacent to the church, was purchased in the mid 1890's, through the efforts of the "Ladies's Circle", for \$1800.00 as a parsonage.

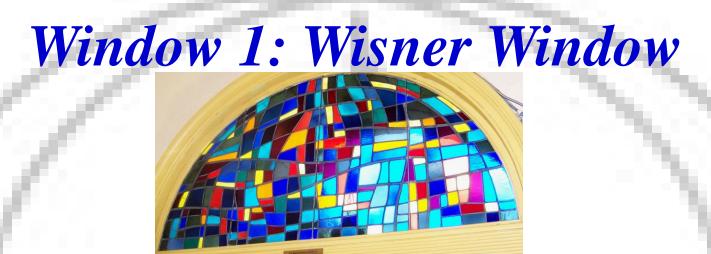
St. Lawrence Theological School (University) held their commencements in the church well into the 20th century and many students, both of the Theological School and the School of Arts and Letters, some of whom are memorialized in the windows, were involved in events at the church.

After a long and arduous fund-raising (\$20,000.00, a huge amount for those days), the cornerstone was laid in 1896 with the dedication occurring a year later on April 15, 1897 for the new church. This is the main structure seen today. A renovation was done in 1960. A closing of the Theological School at St. Lawrence signaled a change in character in the relationship between the church and the University, but it is notable that both St. Lawrence and SUNY Canton Tech have prominent buildings named for onetime members of the church, again some of whom are named in windows.

The following narrative will address the 18 windows, one by one and in detail, and will try and provide information on the date they were installed and the people memorialized and how they influenced and shaped the church and community in which they lived and worshipped.

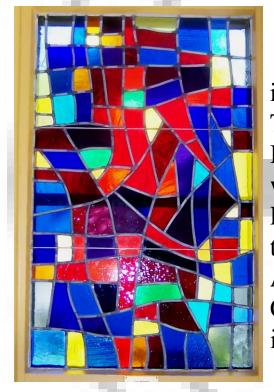
Grateful acknowledgements to the Rev. Max Coots, the late Edward Blankman and Atwood Manley, and the Rev.s Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock for their invaluable assistance in compiling materials, past and present, regarding the history of the church. Without their work and assistance this narrative would not have been possible.





This is the most recent window installed about 1972 to honor Miss Kimberly Wisner, who died after an accident. The window was given by Mr. And Mrs. Warren Wisner, her parents. Kimberly was active in the church's LRY group and her parents were members. Warren Wisner was a Guidance Counselor at Canton High School. This window replaced the original and is a more modern style in that it is abstract in treatment and design. It has been speculated that the design is deliberate to fulfill the specific purpose of memorializing the bright life of Kimberly. This window is not thought to need any work at this time.

Window 2: Chrystie Window



Similar in concept to the Wisner window (1), this was installed in 1963 to memorialize Mr. Norman Chrystie by his wife Amorette. They were members of the church since the Pastorate of Edna Bruner, and served as moderators, with Amorette being the only woman to serve in that capacity. Amorette was also chairman of the Religious Education Committee and President of the AUW. Their two daughters Amorette and Yvonne were active in the LRY and Amorette was married in this church. The original window that the Chrystie window replaced was a commemorative incorporating the initials YPCU or Young People's Christian Union.

Window 3: Stearns Gaines

A beautiful lily adorns this window with the legend "In Memory of Chloe Stearns Gaines, Chief Choir Director 1908-1944". Her family, the Stearns, were stalwarts of the Universalist Church which then stood in the Village of Winthrop. She came to Canton to attend St. Lawrence, as had her older sister Jessie, before her. Jessie married a SLU professor, Dr. George R. Hardy. Chloe was a musician. She gave piano lessons in Canton for many years, attended the Boston Conservatory and was a very talented violinist. She knew and loved music and inspired many others in that field. She was married late in life to Prof. Clarence Herd Gaines, a grandson of President Absolom Graves Gaines of the University and son of Dr. Charles Kelsey Gaines and Cammie Pendleton Wood Gaines, both of whom were on the St. Lawrence faculty. This window then has a connection to both the Stearns family and the Gaines family.

Window 4: Gunnison Window



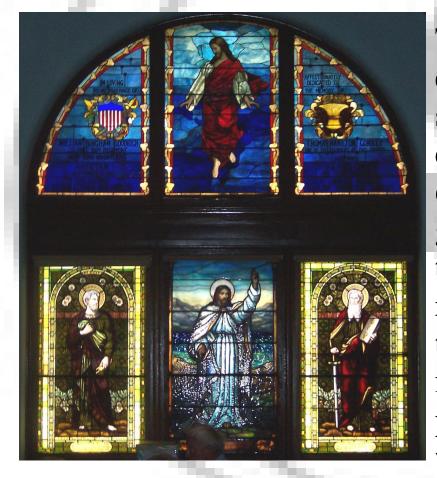
Next and to the left of the Stearns Gaines window on the back (east) wall of the sanctuary, this window has a cross and a crown at the top and has predominant colors of gray, brown, and orange. The legend reads "In Memory of Rev. Nathaniel Gunnison and his wife Ann L. Gunnison". The Gunnison legacy in Canton and at St. Lawrence University is immense. Mr. Manley attempted to list all the different people in the Gunnison family circle who could be connected with the University and ran the list up to over 40. Highlights include Nathaniel's eldest son, the Rev. Almon Gates Gunnison who graduated from SLU Theological School and later became University President. Dr. Walter Balfour Gunnison, the next eldest son, who also graduated from SLU and was a faculty member. Another son, Herbert Foster Gunnison graduated from SLU in1882 and became publisher of the "Brooklyn Eagle". All had children who attended St. Lawrence and one of that generation, Adelaide Gunnison, taught Sunday School here while at St. Lawrence. Ann Gunnison moved to Canton after the sudden death of Nathaniel, who was a Universalist Minister in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Maine.

Window 5: Farmer Window



This window, with a predominance of browns and blues with some pink, has a cross with the statement "Glory, Praise in the Highest" and a bottom inscription "In Memory of Mrs. Albert Farmer". Frances Farmer was born in Canton in 1816, only 16 years after Canton's first settlement began. The Farmers were Universalists and members of the old brick church. Albert Farmer became a resident of the village and lived on Elm Street later in life and his wife died a good many years prior to his passing. Albert was a good friend of James Milford Payson, the Pastor and moving spirit behind the building of this church and one of the noble characters of the Canton community, educationally as well as spiritually.

East Wall: Center Array



The great six-panel array in the center of the east wall of the church will be treated as six separate windows in this narrative. Past chroniclers of this church and its history have expressed the belief that this is the "special glory" of the church. Numbering in regards to the visual key will be 6a for the upper right window, 6b for the lower right, 7a for the upper center, 7b for the lower center, 8a for the upper left, and 8b for the lower left panel. Please note this as you examine the windows and read the narrative.

Window 6a: Conkey Window



This window depicts a sheaf of wheat and is dedicated to the memory of Thomas Hamilton Conkey, one of the founders of this church, and his wife Sylvia Ames Conkey, and their children Lucia Lavilla Russell and Harlow Hamilton Conkey. The Conkeys were one of the original family groups that were members of the old church according to a historical essay by Pastor Payson. There were several other Conkey families that were members of the church over the years including druggist George S. Conkey who eventually became treasurer of SLU and then president of the First National Bank of Canton.

Window 6b: Seymour Window



This window depicts St. Paul and has the inscription "I have fought the good fight" and is dedicated to the memory of George W. Seymour and Awilda E. Seymour, his wife. The Seymours were residents of Canton for many years George was a druggist in competition with the Conkeys. They built a home on Judson street occupied for many years by Dr. and Mrs. Harry Howe. They were contemporaries of John and Anna Clark and the Caldwells. They were good, common Cantonians of their day who were generous in their support of the church.

Window 7a: Russell Window



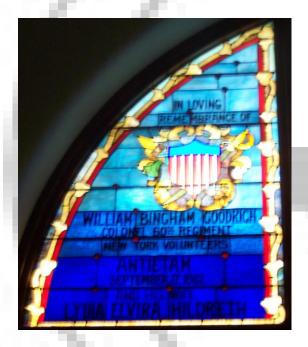
This window, depicting Christ in a scarlet robe and with colors in shades of blue, was manufactured by George W. Wise of Boston and was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Russell. He was an assemblyman and lawyer. This information comes from the April 28, 1897 edition of the Plaindealer.

Window 7b: Remington Window



According to Mr.'s Blankman and Manley this is a Tiffany window and depicts Christ with, presumably, the Sea of Galillee behind him. The beautiful blend of colors is apparently a Tiffany tradition and the legend reads "In Memory of William R. Remington, his wife Lavilla J. Everest and their son George H. Remington". The Remingtons have a long and storied history within both the church and the community. Rev. S.W. Remington came as Pastor in 1854, served for 2 years until traveling out into the field to raise money for the establishment of the Universalist Theological School. His son William Reese became postmaster of Canton, then county treasurer, and later collector of the Port of Ogdensburg. He later returned to Canton and bought the Willson and Ellsworth clothing store which he renamed Remington's. This store became famous throughout Northern New York and later opened a branch in Watertown which was managed by George who was trained by the Brooks Brothers in NYC. Lavilla's sister married Rev. A.G. Gaines.

Window 8a: Col. Goodrich



Depicted is a Union shield, a United States shield, and a sword with the wording "In Loving Remembrance of William Bingham Goodrich, Colonel 60th Regiment, New York Volunteers, Antietam September 17, 1862, and his Wife Lydia Elvira Hildreth". W. B. Goodrich was a lawyer who moved to Canton from Madrid shortly after his cousin John Temple Goodrich moved here as Pastor of the church. J.T. Goodrich along with Martin Thatcher are considered to be the founders of St. Lawrence University and it's Theological School due to their initial fundraising establishing these institutions. J.T. Goodrich's successor as Pastor was Seth Williston Remington, the grandfather of the great artist, Frederic. W.B. Goodrich along with S.W. Remington's son, Seth Pierpont, founded the St. Lawrence Plaindealer, which is still being published today. He was shot off of his horse, Cub, in the battle of Antietam and after a grand welcome home with bands and a parade both were interred behind the family home on Judson Street, with a monument, for many years until the reinterrment by his daughter in Brooklyn where she lived.

Window 8b: Clark Window



The large depiction of St. Peter, with the keys to heaven, has both the inscription "Thou hast the words of eternal life" and the family legend "In Memory of John H. Clark, for 31 years a trustee of the church, and Anna B. Clark, his wife". John Clark sold wagons, horses, and harnesses on Main Street and lived in a large home on Elm Street. His wife was a Barber, also staunch supporters of this church. They were among the pillars of this church during their lifetimes. It has been written that the six windows in this center array are a kind of timeline in the movement of Universalism from a Fundamentalist tradition to the Liberal Religious tradition we see today.

Window 9: Gaines Window



A window with a predominance of browns, blues, and reds and a legend which reads "In Memory of Emma Clara Gaines", it depicts an open Bible near the top. Emma was the wife of Dr. Absolom Graves Gaines. In 1867 Almon Gage Gunnison graduated from the Theological School and in 1869 wrote a letter to Rev. Gaines saying how wonderful it would be if he would accept the call to become Pastor of the Canton Universalist Church. This was echoed by the clerk of the parish, Washington Wheelock. He came and accepted the Pastorate and two years later was elected President of SLU's College of Arts and Letters. He held that position from 1872-1889 during some of the most difficult years of the College when there was a question whether the College would remain open or not. All of the Gaines families were members of this church, were devoted to it, were in regular attendance, and were the heart of the church during this period.

Window 10: Willson Window



Memorializing another of the wonderful families of Canton's past, this window depicts a cross, crown and Bible with the colors of yellowish-green predominating and the legend "In Memory of Ezekial and Marcia Willson". Ezekial was in the clothing business with Richard Ellsworth and built a residence on Judson Street. Ezekial and Marcia's son Joseph Clarence Willson is notable for having spent practically the entire last 30 years of his life beautifying the Evergreen Cemetery and making it one of the grand spots of Northern New York, Many great people of the community and the University rest there.

Windows 11 and 12: Interior







These windows and the arch above the interior double doors, are among the original interior windows of the church. They are an abstract design and as interior windows are not subject to the stress of the windows that have outside exposures. These windows are not thought to need any work at this time.



Window 13: Storrs Window

Entering the choir loft to the left of the organ (when facing the chancel) is a window dedicated "In appreciation of Carrie L. Storrs" and beneath that the inscription "For 48 years faithful organist of this church". The figure of St. Cecilia in brilliant colors is holding a small organ with pipes. This window was dedicated in December of 1924. She was a musician all her life, what was then called "a maiden lady" the daughter of Levi Bidwell Storrs, an inventor, merchant, and tailor. Carrie taught piano and played for dances and was beloved by everybody. She served the church faithfully.

Window 14: Fethers Window



Flowers and cherubs adorn this window with the inscription "They that seek me early shall find me" and the dedication to Ella Clark Fethers 1869-1871 and Laura May Fethers 1872-1877. Ogden Hoffman Fethers came to Canton from Janesville, Wisconsin to become a professor at SLU He fell in love and married the daughter of Dr. Jonas Conkey. They moved back to Wisconsin where he became a prominent lawyer. When Ogden died, his widow moved back to Canton and resided on Court Street in the old Page house which was part of the Conkey family complex and became the home of George Conkey. The window memorializes their two small daughters.

Window 15: Caldwell Window



The depiction of Christ holding a lamb is commemorating a child who died young, Harry Simmons Caldwell (1887-1893). Theodore Caldwell Sr. and Jr. operated a grocery establishment in Canton for many years. Theodore Jr. married Sarah Simmons and it is their six year old son that this window memorializes. Sarah ran a boarding house for co-ed students of SLU and later the Aggie School and was the heart and soul of the Ladies Circle of the Universalist Church when they were building the present church. Sarah, along with others are a powerful reminder of the role of women in the building and maintenance of this church.

Window 16: Sykes Window



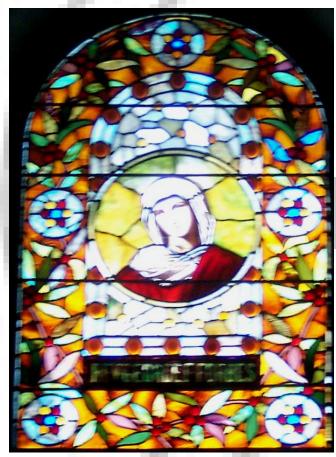
This window depicts Christ with a shepherd's crook at a door with the inscription "Behold, I stand at the door" and the names Bingham and Lydia Sykes. Speculation is that this window was also made in Ogdensburg by Horwood. The Sykes' were one of the early settlers of the community just north of the village in what has been called the "olden neighborhood" or the "Sykes neighborhood". They came from New England probably over the Chateuguay Trail by ox-cart. Andy Peters, a long-time librarian at SLU owned the old Sykes house. Bingham's grandson Richard Eddy Sykes, became one of the great Presidents of SLU after a long and distinguished career as the University's clergyman.

Window 17: Fisher Window



This window is a departure from the other older windows in that it is an abstract pattern of curlicues in almost a "Celtic" design. The legend reads "Ebenezer Fisher, D.D., Amy W.L. Fisher and Amy Fisher Bigelow". Ebenezer Fisher came in 1856 while SLU was taking shape in stone and mortar to open the Theological School. Originally intended as only a Seminary it blossomed into a University. Ebenezer was a giant intellectually and a great leader. He turned down the Presidency of Tufts in order to make sure of the future of SLU. He lived on Judson Street in the house that former Vice-President of SLU Dittman owned. He died of a heart attack on the steps of Richardson Hall in 1879.

Window 18: Forbes Window



This window, depicting a young Christ, was made in Ogdensburg by H.J. Horwood who learned the craft of stained glass making in NYC. He was an eminent enough craftsman to have done work for the Vanderbilts. This window was donated by the Young People's Christian Union (YPCU) and is inscribed at the bottom "Rev. George S. Forbes". Rev. Forbes came to SLU due to his older brother graduating from the theological School, later becoming a professor and then Dean. George stayed here and was Pastor of the church in the 1870's. He married Hattie Woods who graduated from the same class of 1873. Her class of 1873 planted the first of the trees which form the present Grand Grove on the oldest section of campus. Undergraduates carried on the tradition of planting trees for many years afterward. The Forbes family came from Maine, as did the Gaines', James Payson, and Almon Gunnison.

Conclusion

"Among the great treasures of our 107 year old building are our stained glass windows. They add an unmatchable beauty to our sanctuary and stand as valued testaments to the Universalist faith of our forebears. The visual images of these multi-hued glass creations may not be what UUs today would choose to adorn their worship space, but we can recognize that it was from this generous, open-hearted form of Christianity that contemporary liberal-minded Unitarian Universalism developed. And these windows preserve memorials to important and beloved members of this religious community from generations past.

So there are many reasons for us today to want to insure that our sanctuary windows are well cared for."

Rev. Wade Wheelock June 2005