

The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

Volume 21 | Number 3

Article 4

9-22-1995

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Recommended Citation

Lumpkin, Wayne (1995) "The History of Stained Glass in Huntsville," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*: Vol. 21: No. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol21/iss3/4>

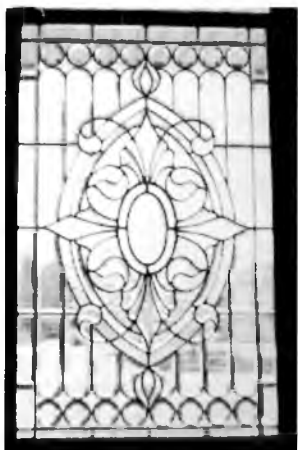
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The History of Stained Glass in Huntsville

Wayne Lumpkin

Stained glass windows have been used for centuries in religious buildings, but have a much more limited history in residential and commercial applications.

For a period of about thirty years around the turn of the century, stained glass found its way into homes as a very popular decorative medium. Being relatively expensive, most was found in the finer Victorian homes built during that time.

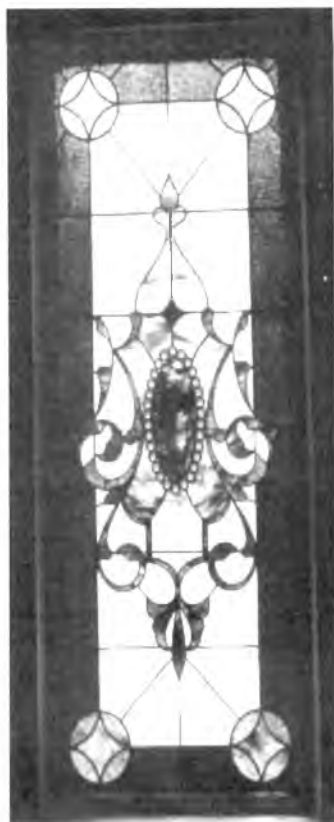


Leaded beveled glass for the front door of the Hundley House at 401 Madison.

Leaded beveled glass was considered more subtle and elegant than stained glass and was used mostly in or near the entrance, with stained glass in other areas of the home. Stained glass was used in parlor windows, dining room windows, transoms, and the grandest of all locations: the stairway landing.

South landing of the Hundley House, 401 Madison.

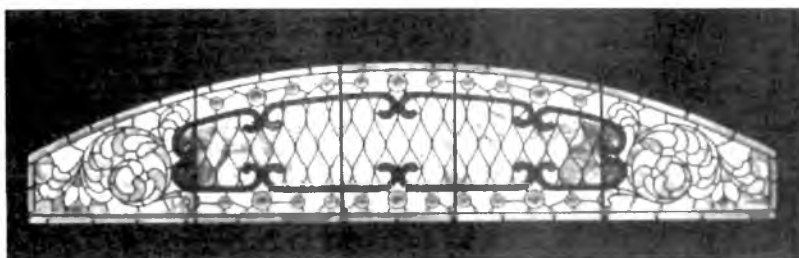




*ALL: From 403 Madison Street.
ABOVE: Lower landing window on
north side (approximately 32 X 96).*

RIGHT: Upper landing window on north side (approximately 30 X 84).

BELOW: Transom over front window set on west side (approximately 89 x 19).



Beginning in the 1920's, residential stained glass fell out of favor and was used very little until a resurgence of interest began to take hold in the 1970's. Its popularity and usage remain strong today.

Huntsville was not by-passed by the popularity of stained glass at the turn of the century. We are fortunate to have many residential and religious buildings surviving from that period that contain magnificent stained glass.

Unfortunately, many fine examples of stained glass were lost forever during urban renewal in the 1960's, and when some of the Victorian homes fell into disrepair and were torn down after years of neglect.

It would be interesting to know who made these windows, but it is rare to find a signature or records indicating where they were made. By the late 1800's there were many stained glass studios in the United States, mostly in the northeast or mid west. However, there is certainly the possibility that some windows were made in Europe and sent over for installation here. This was a common practice for religious windows in the years prior to the mid 1800's.

American studios were making extensive use of opalescent glass, a newly developed type of glass that Louis C. Tiffany claimed to have invented. This opaque glass is quite different from the transparent colored glass used for centuries prior to this time. Windows utilizing any of this glass would most certainly be American-made.

Tiffany Studios in New York was producing stained glass windows in great numbers for various residential,

religious and commercial application during this time. Although there are some Tiffany windows in Alabama, there are no known installations in Huntsville.

The Van Valkenburgh house at 501 Franklin Street (circa 1902) contains probably the most elaborate residential windows in Huntsville. The large parlor window on the north side portrays a scene from Greek mythology. The portico setting of the scene depicts a couple surrounded by foliage, a grape arbor, and a peacock; all executed in great detail with hundreds of individual pieces of glass. This window is most likely a copy of a Tiffany window done circa 1897 for the home of Pittsburgh's well known coal baron, William H. Brown.



Parlor window at Van Valkenburgh house, 501 Franklin.



A smaller, but maybe even more beautiful companion window graces the stairway landing on the east side of the house. A small stained glass window in an upper bedroom on the south side was recently uncovered after having been sheet rocked over many years ago. The main entrance and other areas in the home contain elegant examples of leaded beveled glass.

The stained glass in the Hundley house (circa 1900 at 401 Madison Street has an interesting history. At one time it was used as a funeral parlor. While the city owned the house from 1959 to 1982, a large window on the north side, a 3 piece landing window, a smaller pair of matching windows, and several beveled glass interior transoms were removed and put into storage. About 1982 the house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Jim St. Clair who requested that the windows be returned to their original location. Unfortunately, the city would agree to return only the south bay landing window.

The north window, approximately 7 feet wide x 3 feet high, is currently on display in the foyer of the Huntsville Museum of Art. Also displayed there are the 2 matching windows, approxi-

mately 2 feet wide x 3 feet high, which have a wreath design. The city did agree to allow the St. Clair's credit against the purchase price of the house an amount equal to the cost of having the north window duplicated. Lumpkin Stained Glass was commissioned to make the copy and was allowed to make a pencil rubbing of the original to accurately reproduce the design containing some 1100 pieces of glass.



The south bay window consisting of 3 panels was returned to its original location in the home. This pictorial window depicts a semi-nude female sitting on a cluster of rocks by the seashore.

The front door originally contained a leaded bevel panel. For some reason it was removed and stored in the attic where it eventually became encrusted with dirt and pigeon droppings. During the time the city had offices in the house, it was given away. Fortunately there was a good photograph of the door panel and an accurate duplicate was made. Also during the city ownership the interior transoms disappeared.

In the mid 1960's. the First Baptist Church building at the NW corner of Clinton and Gallatin (now Spragins) was torn down after the church occupied its new building on Governors Drive. The old building was completed in 1895 and contained some 60 or so beautiful Victorian style windows of various designs, sizes, and shapes. Reportedly all of the windows were removed from the building, stacked in the front yard, and offered for sale for \$5.00

each. A few were sold and the remaining 50 or so windows found their way to a grain storage bin in Madison.

In 1971 Lumpkin Stained Glass purchased the windows for resale. Many of the windows were purchased by members of the First Baptist Church. Four of the windows were kept by the church at the time of demolition and used in the prayer room of the new facility. Another of the windows is in the prayer room at Huntsville Hospital.

Built in 1899, the Central Presbyterian Church at the corner of Randolph and Lincoln has three main windows which are magnificent examples of a combination of a scene surrounded by elaborate Victorian geometric designs.



If any record existed of the source of these windows, they were lost when all the church records were accidentally destroyed in 1957. The story goes that these windows were made by an itinerant maker of stained glass windows who wanted to do them to show his work in this area. This seems unlikely however, as the quality, complexity, and scale of these windows would have required the resources of a full fledged studio employing many skilled artists and craftsmen.

The Temple B'nai Sholom, also completed in 1899, has "swirling curvilinear patterns reflecting the influence of the Baroque (16th and 17th century) period of architecture, typically of glass of the late-Victorian period." (See *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*, Winter 1994). Synagogue records show that windows were purchased as memorials for \$25.00 to \$125.00 each.

The Church of the Nativity at 208 Eustis was dedicated in 1859. The windows were purchased by the architect who was in New York and happened to be British. The style and other features of the windows indicate that it is very possible that some or all of them could have been made in England.

The First Methodist Church, the First Presbyterian Church, and the Church of the Visitation all contain Victorian geometric style windows typical of the late 1800's.



Meet Wayne Lumpkin

A Gadsden native, Wayne came here to work for Brown Engineering. Stained glass began as a hobby, became a passion, and then a profession in 1975. You have probably already met his work around town and beyond. See the enclosed list of his area works. It is good that Huntsville can afford one of life's majestic arts—that of stained and leaded glass. Both in public places and private ones, Wayne's art has found appreciative audiences.

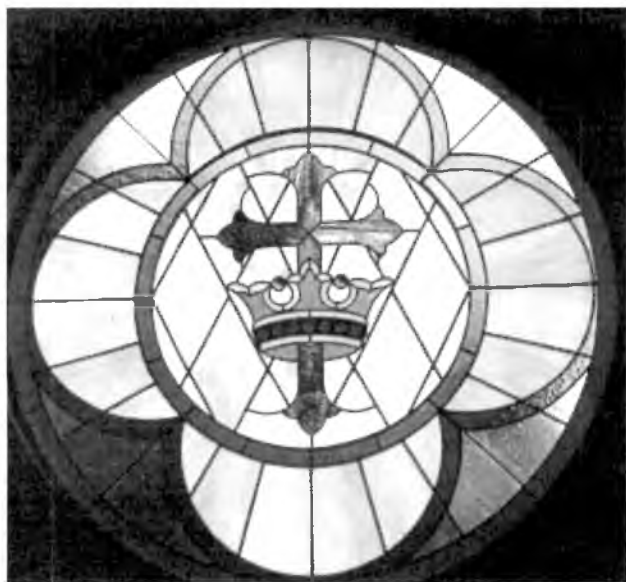
A modest man, Wayne quickly acknowledges his co-workers, especially Mrs. Frances Rahn Campbell. They make a formidably talented team. Mrs. Campbell was trained at the Hooseck Institute of Massachusetts. In 1985 they teamed to execute what might well be the “largest stained glass window in Alabama.” Called “Eternity” for the Chapel of Love Mausoleum at Valhalla Memory Gardens, the center panel is 26 feet high and eight feet across. The two side panels are each three feet wide and 13 feet high. The three windows contain 2,725 pieces of stained glass and cover a total of 270 square feet. Frances Campbell hand-painted and fired fifty-two tiles according to an Eleventh Century technique. Wayne executed the design and assured its structural integrity. The window’s richness and complexity called for numerous types of glass, including Flemish, opalescent, cathedral, graffiti glass, cats-paw opal, waterglass, and jewels made of glass.

A more recent collaboration with artist and designer Frances Campbell resulted in the stained-glass mural at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church on Bailey Cove Road.



Instead of being a window with its natural light, this stained-glass piece is backed by specially made neon tubes which provide the light. Jeff Komara of Neon Zeon designed the lighting which consists of over 200 feet of glass tubing “bent into odd shapes.” Robert Perrella, the art glazier at Lumpkin Stained Glass, played an integral role too. The design called for a 9–1/2 feet by 13–1/2 feet design.

Wayne Lumpkin has another passion, glassblowing. He collected art glass and then got the bug seven years ago. Each year he looks forward to taking a trek back in The Blue Ridge Mountains north of Asheville, North Carolina, to the Penland Arts & Crafts School. There his spirit is renewed and he can blow to his heart’s content. Fellow Huntsvillian Ursula Vann pots in that same soul-stretching mountain air. It must be close to heaven, as the products of their labors are deeply gratifying.



List of Works

ALABAMA

Anniston Area

First Baptist Church of Saks
First Baptist Church of Weaver

Athens

7 Mile Post Church of Christ
Emmanuel Baptist
First Church of God

Decatur

Central Park Baptist
First Methodist
Wesley Methodist

Gadsden

Whites Chapel Baptist

Huntsville Area

Aldersgate Methodist
Asbury Methodist, Madison
Bevill's Chapel Baptist, Hazel Green
First Christian
Harvest Baptist
Hazel Green Methodist
Huntsville Holiness
Keel Mountain Holiness, Gurley
Locust Grove Baptist
Midway Baptist
Riverton Holiness
St. Charles Anglican Church
Trinity Baptist, Madison
Valhalla Chapel
Willowbrook Baptist

Shoals Area

First Methodist—Sheffield
(Branscomb Memorial Window)
High Street Church of Christ—Tuscumbia
Spry Funeral Home

Vernon

First Baptist

GEORGIA

Cobbtown

Cobbtown Baptist

Dalton

Grove Level Baptist

Elberton

Church of Christ

Meansville

First Nazarene

Ringgold
Boynton Church of God
Sumner
Pine Forest Baptist

KENTUCKY

Hopkinsville
Kelly Baptist
Perryville
Doctor's Fork Baptist

MISSISSIPPI

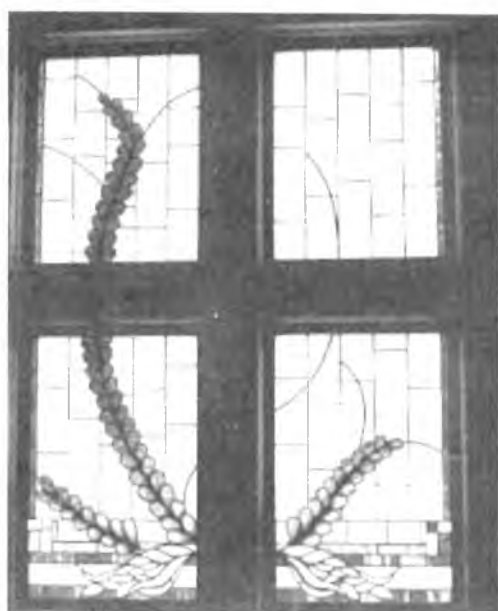
Blue Mountain
Lowery Memorial Baptist

TENNESSEE

Chattanooga Area
Brainerd Baptist
Central Park Baptist, Hixson
Hixson Methodist
Middle Cross Baptist, Hixson
Woodland Park Baptist
Clarksville
First Baptist
Crossville
New Hope Baptist
Daisy
Daisy Methodist
Etheridge
First Baptist
Park Grove Baptist
Gallatin
Lambuth Memorial Methodist
Lawrenceburg
Coleman Memorial Methodist
Deerfield Baptist
First Baptist
New Prospect Methodist
Lewisburg
Parkview Baptist
Parks City
Parks City Baptist
Tullahoma
First Methodist
Waynesboro
Green River Baptist
Winchester Area
Gum Creek Presbyterian
Harmony Presbyterian

Windows in Wayne Lumpkin's Sample Book













Charles A. Seifried, Photographer

Church of the Nativity

Although the heaven-bound, 151 foot spire is the hallmark Huntsvillian's first note about the Church of the Nativity, it's stained glass windows number among the City's finest. Since the publication of Frances C. Roberts' comprehensive *Sesquicentennial History of Church of the Nativity, Episcopal 1843–1993 Huntsville, Alabama*, researchers have a ready, readable and reliable source of the church's history. This is not a review of the whole book as much as it is recognition of its utility as a reference. The Huntsville Public Library has a bound box of plans, negatives, and necessary data, prepared by Harvie P. Jones, to guide the building's restoration. But, this box is best left alone. Dr. Roberts' book is available to us all. It may be purchased in the church office. What follows about Nativity's stained glass windows comes from that handy source.

Citing Vestry Minutes, the Henry C. Lay letters to his wife, and *Williams Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror*, Dr. Roberts provides the human dimension to a divine

undertaking. Young minister Lay's Episcopal congregation had outgrown its small church by 1856. That same year, when he was in Mobile at the new Trinity Church, Lay saw what he wanted in a church. Designed by transplanted British architects Frank Wills and Henry Dudley, Trinity represented the main thrust of the Ecclesiological movement, creation of a "medieval ceremonial space" replete with "Christian symbolism." Dr. Roberts explains:

Wills and Dudley used the Gothic style, with its pointed arches, vaulting patterns, buttresses, tracery, crockets, and finials, as a functional architectural form to build churches that could inspire those who worshiped therein to deepen their spiritual values which were most meaningful to them in living daily lives of Christian hope and love.

"As is the case with other churches planned by Wills," Roberts observes, "there were to be three tall arched memorial windows over the altar and a large window over the front door." Through arched stained glass windows encased in wood shone God's holy light on both outside aisles. Elizabeth Lay wrote Henry in December, 1858 that, "the church is progressing. The aisle windows are in and delight everybody." The City Directory (1859–60) bragged that "the Episcopal Church is a splendid specimen of Gothic architecture." It noted that "the chancel is lighted by three lancet windows of beautifully stained glass, with figures descriptive of Biblical incident. The aisles and nave are lighted by windows of tracery of varied description."

In an insert of colored photographs tucked between pages 148–149, the sanctuary, aisle, and back windows are given in vivid color and with a description of each. Since freight was paid on stained glass, the architects probably ordered it from New York. The cost of the windows was listed as \$1,573.30. What was undoubtedly a substantial amount of money in 1859 has, we can all agree, been heaven-spent.

Dr. Robert's history is so rich in detail and documentation that its usefulness exceeds the expectations of one simply seeking a church's history. See for yourself.



Charles A. Seifried, Photographer

ABOVE: Windows above the altar.
LEFT WINDOW: St. Peter, with the Keys.
MIDDLE WINDOW: Christ, the Dove and the Nativity.
RIGHT WINDOW: St. Paul, with the Sword.



*LEFT:
The Door
Windows.*

*RIGHT:
The Lamb of
God.*



*BELOW LEFT: The Church
Interior, 1990.*



*BELOW RIGHT: The Four
Evangelists at the Back of
the Church.*

