

Who made the St. Denis Stained Glass Windows?
Part 1 - Some History 1900 – 2017

As a parishioner of seven years, the beauty of the stained glass windows of St. Denis church has intrigued me. The stories behind them too, both their religious significance and history of how the windows came to be has nagged at my imagination.

There seems to be no written history at the rectory for the stained glass windows with the exception of pictures unlabeled at the back of the St. Denis centennial book. Deacon George was asked about them after mass one Sunday and he mentioned the name Hiemer. A website was found for Hiemer & Company Stained Glass Studio in Clifton N.J. A most interesting contact turned out to be Judith Hiemer Van Wie the great granddaughter, and artist in her own right, who had facts about our windows. One of her comments included the following:

“We assume the original windows were made by the Von Gerichten studio of Munich where my Great Grandfather, Georg Hiemer, (no final “E” on Georg) was art director. Later in his career in Germany he worked exclusively for this firm. Earlier in his career he was a freelance artist for other studios. In 1929 the studio collapsed due to the stock market crash (they also had a studio in Columbus Ohio). My Great Grandfather was let go and came to the US sometime in 1930 to join my Grandfather, Edward, who was forming a studio to pick up unfinished contracts by the now collapsed Van Gerichten Studio.”

With a back and forth e-mail conversation it was speculated that there have been three sets of windows created for the church. The first was for the original building in 1909 “circa 1900” (See our church cornerstone). Mass was celebrated in the completed church on October 15, 1911. A second set was added with the renovation of 1956, “circa 1950”. Last but not least are the additions and changes made during the 2008 renovation.

Plans are in the works to present the windows on our website and to gradually add other details of their history. Some thought is being given to acquiring small plaques with the names of the windows for those whose title may not come to mind easily.

Hopefully, if there are any senior members of our parish who have tidbits to add to these notes they will step forward and add to what is written here. All members of the parish who have information to share are invited to contact me through the parish office so that I can add to “Part II” of the history. You are invited to check back from time to time to enjoy the photographs of the stained glass windows and also look for updates with stories of the stained glass windows and their place in our parish history.

Most importantly, these pictures would not exist without the splendid work of Bob Wehner, a friend from the Four Seasons community, who so graciously volunteered to come to the church and take the pictures. He edited on his computer and then provided me with all the pictures to print. He, too, was very impressed with these works of art.

With kindest regards,
Jean DeSantis