



Measurements and art language description

Photographed by Cathedral Warden Daniel Hall with a 5D SLSR camera on July 27, 2017

Essay "The Wakefield Family Window" by Jean Libby for the Dean and Rector, Officers, Wardens, and Members of the Vestry of Trinity Cathedral in San Jose

April 2019

The Wakefield Family Window

Hark, Hark My soul
Angelic songs are swelling

O'er Earth's green fields
And Ocean's wave beat shore

Angels of Jesus Angels of light
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night
(Hymn 472)
Perfect love casteth out fear (I John 4:18)

In Memory of
George Fiske Wakefield
June 9 1925



The central figure of the Wakefield family memorial window illuminating the north transept of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral is Mary Magdalene, who witnessed the Crucifixion of Jesus. (I John 20:1-20) She is recognizable with a red robe and long reddish-brown hair. Other colors significant to Mary Magdalene are green representing earth (her sash) and gold lining her robe, which signifies the financial support she gave to Jesus Christ during his human lifetime. The clasp holding her robe is a gold coin.¹

Stories circulate for centuries about the controversial “apostle to apostles”—she was the first to see the Resurrected Jesus and told the disciples, returning to the empty tomb with them. The Wakefield Family window has other elements signifying Mary Magdalene, who was kept alive by angels during her long period of penitential fasting. The red orbs within the top element of a canopy over heaven are likely representing red eggs, a miracle that is said to have occurred when Mary Magdalene visited Caesar, inspiring Roman Christianity.

The window's artist and manufacturing origin was unknown to the Vestry Committee who published The Trinity Windows; Trinity Episcopal Church, San Jose, in 1977.² Installation occurred about the same time as the Ascension Window at the front entrance, which was a gift from the Free Church of the Holy Savior in Santa Clara. The Santa Clara parish was established in 1867, the Civil War intervening between its origin and that of Trinity in 1861. According to the late John Francis Hogan, designer of the modern Centennial Window, the material used to make the Ascension window installed ca. 1867 by the Free Church of the Holy Savior was enameled glass used for a short time in 18th century Germany. The gift was made to Trinity during the Great Depression of the 1930s when the Santa Clara congregation closed. (See “The Ascension Window” in *The Carillon*, Sept. 2017)

The development of Trinity Episcopal Church was guided by The Rev. Dr. John B. Wakefield, Rector during the last quarter of the 19th century (1884-1899). Membership quadrupled to over 400, which was greatly contributed by his wife Isabella Wakefield in charge of the popular Sunday School. It was more than facts and figures. Janice Paull, Trinity historian, wrote of the ecclesiastical issues from a diary and letters of Rev. Edward Lambe Parsons in Menlo Park that beginning his career--later the Episcopal Bishop of California—conversations with San Jose Trinity's rector Rev. Wakefield took place in a carriage where he was escorted to Los Gatos and many outlying areas: "...he was the only clergyman in the diocese who seemed to have kept up with modern Biblical scholarship. He was liberal in his attitude and a modernist (in the good sense) in his theology." ³

The memorial is to George Fiske Wakefield, son of Rev. Dr. John B. Wakefield. The Wakefield family came to San Jose from Richmond, Indiana, in 1884. George Wakefield actually preceded his parents to Trinity, a member and bell ringer in 1880-1881. He returned to Indiana and likely encouraged his parents to emigrate. In the 1880s George Wakefield was Sunday School Secretary, assisting his mother Isabella.

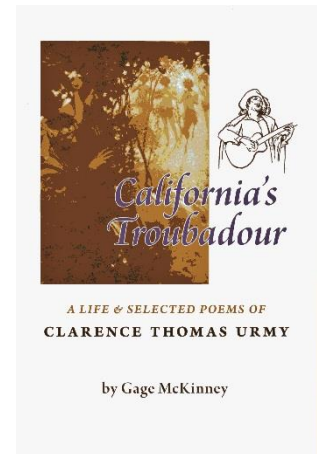
Jerry Estruth writes in *The Trinity Windows* (1977): *George Wakefield was an engineer and surveyor, and is remembered as the planner of the Hanchett Park District. For many years his office was in the Porter Building at the corner of 2nd and Santa Clara Streets...Mrs. Anne Whitney Wakefield, the donor of the window in memorial to her husband, was devoutly religious, a poet, and a patron of music. She and her husband both participated in the founding of the Humane Society: he was president in 1919 and she was on the Board of Directors. At Trinity she was on the Altar Guild, served as custodian of Mite Boxes, and was co-chairman of the Music Endowment Committee. George Wakefield died on June 9, 1925, Anne Wakefield on October 3, 1952, aged eighty-eight.* ⁴

The employment of Clarence T. Urmy as organist and musical director was a significant factor in the membership increase and community presence of Trinity Episcopal Church in the Wakefield era. Clarence Thomas Urmy (1858-1923) was celebrated as California's first native published poet, appearing in the *Overland Monthly* and other periodicals. His first book of poetry, *A Rosary of Rhyme*, was just published in 1884 from San Francisco publishers Joseph Winterburn and Company. The son and grandson of Methodist ministers, Clarence Urmy was offered the position by Trinity Episcopal while he was the organist at the Methodist Church.⁵ He was confirmed into the Episcopal Church by Rev. John B. Wakefield. The instrument that he played was the original Stevens organ shipped from Boston around the Horn of South America in 1863—the same time as the stained glass windows by Owen Doremus of New Jersey.⁶

In 1890 Clarence Thomas Urmy organized a vested Men's Choir, becoming known for his musical diligence. At the same time he was resident in the new Hotel Vendome in an upstairs bachelor's penthouse. Active in local theater productions with music and singing—Gilbert and Sullivan his forte—Mr. Urmy contributed reviews to the *San Jose Mercury* for many years. When the earthquake of 1906 dislodged his famous residence to the Montgomery Hotel his primary attention returned to poetry and the organization of a Boys' Choir at Trinity which also functioned as serious religious instruction. Clarence Urmy's relationship with successive rectors following Rev. Wakefield's departure in 1899 is reflected in the records as sometimes stormy. He insisted upon extensive absence, traveling to further his writing and religious maturation, becoming an adherent of the Oxford Movement with close Anglican-Catholic liturgies. He was ordained a lay minister by Bishop of California the Right Rev. William J. Nichols in 1910.

California's Troubadour; A Life & Selected Poems of Clarence Thomas Urmy by historian Gage McKinney (Comstock Bonanza Press, 2011) is an excellent resource of biography, literature, and analysis of Trinity's music director from 1885 to 1918.

In 1911, with Trinity's rector The Rev. Halsey Werlein, a new Episcopal mission in rural Sunnyvale was established with Clarence Urmy as lay minister. St. Thomas continued as a mission from Trinity Episcopal Church for 54 years achieving parish status in 1965. Their website is an immediate reference of the fascinating story: <http://www.stthomas-svale.org/about-us/our-history/>



References

¹ Lisa Small, Senior Curator of European Art at the Brooklyn Museum has several articles about Mary Magdalene on the blog <http://artelisaart.blogspot.com/search/label/Mary%20Magdalene> . The most understandable religious biography is the online New World Encyclopedia http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Mary_Magdalene

² *The Trinity Windows; Trinity Episcopal Church, San Jose, California and Trinity Church San Jose California; Advent, 1860 to Easter 1903* published by Trinity Parish Guild (1903) are online in pdf at <http://www.alliesforfreedom.org/stained-glass-windows-Trinity-Episcopal-Cathedral-San-Jose.html>

³ Janice Paull, *Trinity's History* (1994). 1896 entry. The work cited is Stanley Pearce, *Lift Up Your Hearts, a history of Trinity Parish in Menlo Park* (1974)

⁴ *The Trinity Windows; Trinity Episcopal Church, San Jose, California*. Jerry Estruth, editor, The Committee. 1977:21.

⁵ In April 1873 his maternal grandfather Rev. Eleazor Thomas, a member of a peace commission appointed by President Grant negotiating with the Modoc nation who had left a reservation in an attempt to regain their own land, was assassinated. The Modoc chief Captain Jack was hanged, and the entire nation were removed to Oklahoma as prisoners of war. According to his biographer Gage McKinney, the poet Clarence Thomas Urmy, age fifteen at the time, never wrote about the incident. His father Rev. William Smith Urmy was an itinerant Methodist minister serving in many areas of California including the New Almaden Mines and Gilroy. After the death of his mother Emma Brainard Thomas Urmy the future poet attended the Methodist seminary in Napa. Many of his poems are written in his mother's honor; his ashes were interred with her grave in Colma at his passing in 1923.

⁶ "In Pursuit of an 1863 Church Organ." *The Trailblazer, Quarterly Bulletin of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County*. Vol. 21, Number 2, May 1981:3-6. The Stevens organ was given to St. James Episcopal Church in Paso Robles in 1924, when it was replaced by the present 1893 organ.