

# Tiffany Windows Welcome Visitors

By Thomas Vaughn

For more information on the writer, see page seven, the beginning of another of his articles, "Enjoy Hospitality of Historic Proportions at Olcott House." He can be reached at [thomvaughn@msn.com](mailto:thomvaughn@msn.com).

“A composition of various colored glasses worked together while hot,” was articulation enough for Louis Comfort Tiffany when probed about his audacious glass crafting techniques.

Historians now know more. From the workshops of Tiffany Glassworks, founded in 1878, emerged a mesmerizing new form of hand-crafted glass known internationally as *favrilite*. Tiffany took full advantage of nineteenth century aesthetic, chemical and mechanical innovations. Art Nouveau, a style emphasizing simple curves and natural forms gained preeminence in the 1890s. Tiffany integrated this movement's principles into his products. This can be seen in Tiffany's stylistic use of lead within windows. By experimenting with different thicknesses and shapes of lead, Tiffany became adept at integrating lead into the form of a window's subject matter rather than relying on lead strictly for structural support. Tiffany perfected certain plating techniques to give his windows a dimensional texture and depth uncommon in stained glass. He imbedded bronze alloys, reapportioned sand and lime, and intensified air pressure during glass blowing to shape,

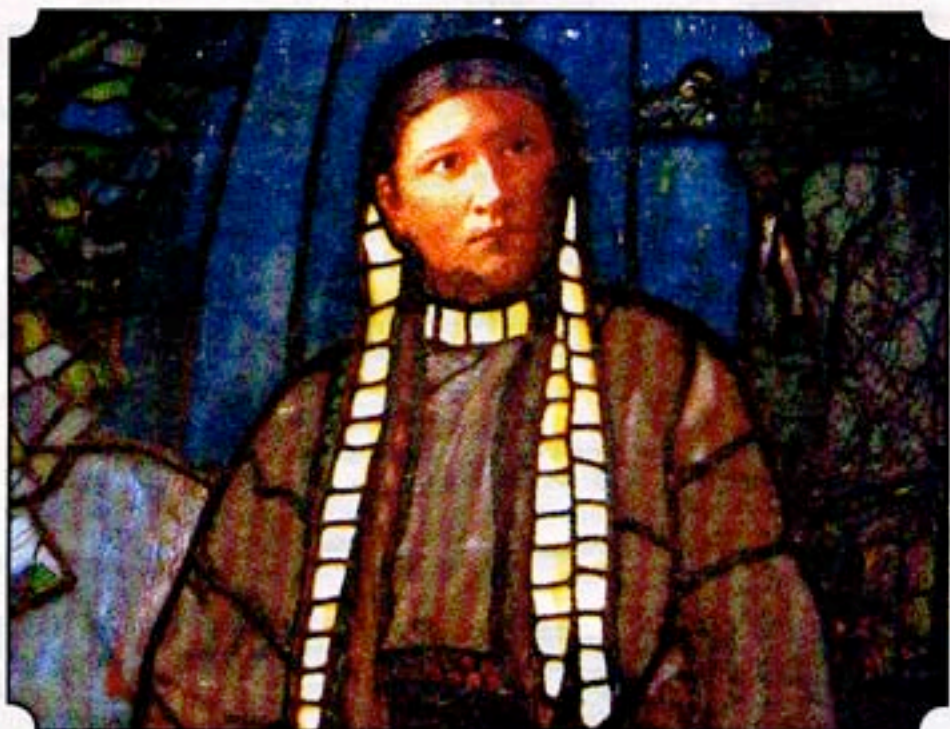
contain and direct light in new ways. All of this effort paid off when he won a grand prize at The Paris Exhibition of 1900.

Tiffany also lived during fortuitous economic times. Those with recent wealth in New York built extravagant Renaissance, Colonial, Romanesque and medieval mansions along “millionaires mile” between Fifth Avenue and Fiftieth Street. They wanted the suffused elegance of Tiffany works to permeate their homes, and Tiffany obliged. Over four thousand

churches of all denominations were rising around the United States. Not since the Middle Ages had so many houses of worship welled up from the land simultaneously. Urban planners sought a celebration of human craftsmanship within public spaces. White House interior decorators contracted with Tiffany to beautify America's first residence. Demand side economics benefited Tiffany.

Residents of Duluth, Minnesota received their abundance of this highly

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Top section of *Minnehaha*, Louis Comfort Tiffany's stained glass window, now in the entrance door of the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot)



Bottom section of Tiffany's *Daniel Greysolon Sieur duLhut* window, now in entrance door of St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot)

these windows also make use of the Tiffany lead approach. Leaves and stems, foliage and small flowers are shaped in lead which creates a gentle, yet somber undertone to the windows conducive to prayer.

Anne Weston also participated in a duet of civic projects for commissions in the Duluth area. Located at the Heritage and Arts Center at the Depot in Duluth, two 3.5 X 10 feet windows lend a dramatic, stunning presence to the Depot entrance. Placed in the Depot 1980 after the new library on Superior Street opened and the old Carnegie library on Second Street was sold, these large windows are probably Anne Weston's best work.

The window on the left is called the *Daniel Greysolon Sieur duLhut* window. Commissioned by the Daniel Greysolon Sieur duLhut Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1904, the window hung in the Carnegie reading room

from 1904 until 1980 and recalls the discovery of the Twin Ports by the French explorer DGSD. The leading in this window, unlike many Tiffany windows, is repetitiously geometric and angular, most likely designed as such to augment the masculine theme of this window. Validating the turn-of-the-century embrace of progressivism with historical authority, the entire window is suffused in a verdant green and at the top the quote "Quo Sursum Volo Videre," meaning "I Wish to See What is Beyond," offers an inscriptive entablature over the visual scene. This Latin phrase had been the Territorial Motto for Minnesota. The interleaving movement between the tree leaves over water ways renders almost palpable the sharp, windy wilderness of Duluth as it would have been seen and felt from Minnesota Point toward the southwest when Daniel Greysolon Sieur duLhut arrived. This wooded scene is bordered by

two Doric columns on each side of the window intimating to the viewer that civilization would soon tame and organize the uncharted shores of Lake Superior.

On the right, the *Minnehaha* window draws the viewer into an indigenous cultural scene. An indigenous woman stands looking toward an unknown location beyond the window. She is bordered by an autumnal colored border inlaid with feathers, agates and a peace pipe. Behind her, a waterfall pours water into Lake Superior. Twilight tones suffuse the entire scene with a deep sense of mystery and reverence.

Created between 1892-1893 as a piece commissioned for the St. Louis County Women's Auxiliary to the Minnesota World's Fair Commission, the *Minnehaha* window traveled extensively before coming to rest in the Masonic Temple Building in 1896. After its showing at the Columbian Exposition of 1893, movers transported it to Atlanta for the Cotton State and International Exhibition where it won an award. Upon return to Duluth, curators realized that it would need refitting in order to hang at the Masonic Temple Building, so it was sent to Tiffany Glassworks in New York where designers inserted the encased phrase commemorating the Columbian Exhibition at the bottom. Making its way back to Duluth, the window hung in the Masonic Temple Building until 1902, when the Carnegie Library opened on Second Street, where the window hung until 1980, when it moved to its current location.

Both windows arrived at the Fine Arts wing of the Depot in 1980 when they could no longer hang in the old Carnegie Library, due to its sale after the Superior Street library opened.

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A coordinated effort of many brought the windows to the Depot, where they hung in the Tiffany Window Gallery until 1999.

In 1999, the Depot began a painting and refurbishing project and the windows needed to be moved. When curators began disassembling the casings to move the windows they discovered that sun and heat from the east end exposure had rotted out much of the lead and the glass was loose and bending.

Ken Buehler, Executive Director of Historic Union Depot Corporation, which manages the St. Louis County Heritage & Arts Center (the Depot), thought about two things: funding and restoration. After sharing information with a number of groups and people, Buehler obtained funding from the Duluth Public Arts Commission, the City of

Duluth, the Julia Marshal Trust, and the Historic Union Depot Group to restore, reinstall and protect these gorgeous civic heirlooms.

Studio Potente of Kenosha, Wisconsin performed the restorative work in the city of Kenosha by pressurizing the windows under a combination of bricks, felt and wool for a period of one calendar year. Studio Potente is internationally recognized as the premier restoration site in the world for Tiffany windows. Ken Buehler, in a letter, half jokingly worried that these windows would, "languish forever in a Wisconsin warehouse." But, Studio Potente brought them back to Duluth and installed them both in their current location.

The current cases which hold the windows redistribute the weight of the windows evenly so that there is

no need for concern about future disfigurement due to gravitational pull. Buehler says that this installation project was, "the biggest and best" improvement aside from the addition of the Fine Arts wing to the Depot.

In 1933, Louis Comfort Tiffany died. He had become eccentric and reclusive having fallen out of favor with art peers for a number of reasons. When Tiffany made windows he and his associates created the glass from scratch, cut it, put it in place, leaded it and destroyed any leftover pieces when finished thereby increasing its value. Today, in Duluth, a large collection of these valuable pieces of art exist in homes, public buildings and churches due to the presence of Anne Weston, the wealth of Gilded Age Duluthians and the recent, successful efforts of conservators to preserve this worthy heritage.