



**THE HISTORIC STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, LAFAYETTE SQUARE**

**November 1, 2015
Richard F. Grimmett, Ph.D.**

On July 1, 1883, the pew holders of St. John's Church were formally notified that within a week a member of St. John's was departing for France to order Stained Glass Windows for the church. The members of St. John's were advised that the vestry and a Stained Glass Windows Committee created to shepherd this endeavor had agreed that the subjects to be incorporated into the windows were to be limited to scenes from the life of Jesus, and subjects from the Gospel of St. John and the Apocalypse. Church members were informed of the expected costs for each size of window, and were invited to donate windows, and indicate promptly what subject they would prefer be incorporated in their specific window. While donors would be consulted on topics for the windows they chose to donate, the vestry and the Stained Glass Windows Committee would have the ultimate authority to modify any style of a donated window to ensure uniformity of basic format of all the windows ultimately crafted for St. John's.

Soon after receiving a number of responses and commitments from St. John's members for window donations, the leading member of the Stained Glass Windows Committee, John Chandler Bancroft Davis (who preferred to be called Bancroft Davis), sailed for France to meet with the owner of the noted Lorin Stained Glass Windows firm in Chartres, France. Bancroft Davis met with Mrs. Marie-Francoise (Dian) Lorin, the recently widowed owner of the Lorin firm, established by her husband, Nicholas Lorin, in 1863. Nicholas Lorin had assembled a highly talented team of Stained Glass Windows artisans, and had previously created a number of windows for use by noted architect, James Renwick, Jr., for incorporation into the Renwick-designed St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Thus, when Renwick drew up the plans for the expansion of St. John's Church to the east in 1883, he highly recommended the Lorin firm in Chartres, France as the best one to use for creation of Stained Glass Windows for St. John's Church.

When Bancroft Davis met with Madam Lorin at the company's offices at 46 rue de la Tannerie in Chartres, France, he provided her with a set of window subjects to be produced by the Lorin firm in specific windows, as well as a basic outline of St. John's Church showing locations where windows were to be installed in it. Subsequently, details were provided through correspondence regarding the actual sizes of each window, and the specific dedication labels to be placed at the base of each window.

On the page opposite is a copy of the diagram prepared by Madam Lorin's firm that was used to identify the locations of given windows discussed by Bancroft Davis with her on July 19, 1883 (note this date in French in the upper right corner of this diagram). You will also note a number of strikeouts, and various annotations in French in various places on this page that were added in the coming two years from 1883-1885, as information regarding the various windows was provided. (See the bottom left corner of the diagram indicating the delivery dates of each numbered window or group of them). This Lorin diagram does not reflect where all of the windows noted here were finally installed in the church. But it is correct regarding the subjects for the windows diagrammed here. The specific subjects are written in French near the given windows shown on this diagram.

When you examine closely the Lorin windows of St. John's Church, they have a distinct quality, especially in the depictions of the faces and the clothing of the subjects. They are literally like close copies of oil paintings transferred onto the glass, compared to the more stylized representations of figures of persons and their surroundings found in more modern Stained Glass Windows or even in more traditional Medieval or Renaissance style windows. The rather unique character of St. John's Lorin Stained Glass Windows reflects a distinct 19th century period of the Stained Glass Window art. Lorin, as with other firms, also adopted new and different approaches to representations of religious subjects in its windows, especially in the early 20th century going forward. What St. John's Church has with its specific Lorin windows is a very large collection of window artwork historically distinct and not replicated in churches in Europe, and most certainly, not in the United States.

You will also notice a neo-classical characteristic in nearly all of St. John's Lorin windows, even in the secondary persons and furnishings surrounding the key individuals depicted in any given window. You will see classical columns or styling in the furniture, on the borders, or the background of given windows. This reflects the influence of the revival of neo-classical themes beginning during the Napoleonic era in France. You see such themes in the paintings of famous French artists such as David and Ingres, and of a lesser known French religious subject painter, Charles Crauk. This characteristic in Stained Glass Windows came into fashion by the mid-19th century. The Lorin firm in Chartres was quite noted for this style and for the quality of such work. Yet it also engaged in more traditional Medieval or Renaissance style Stained Glass work—whether in restorations of some windows at Chartres Cathedral, located near the Lorin workshop, or in new windows it designed for various churches—such as New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Nearly all of St. John's Lorin windows are original adaptations of their subject topics, with only a few drawing their inspiration from classic Renaissance painters, particularly, Raphael.

In the backgrounds of many of the Lorin windows, you will see representations of buildings, landscapes or persons that are subtly blended in with the window's principal subject matter. The borders have elaborate stylized floral motifs and representations of angels in various forms. And, throughout all of the Lorin windows you will notice the brilliant color combinations, especially on the clothing of the subjects: vibrant blues and reds, which truly shine even on overcast days in the church; but which really stand out when the sun is shining brightly.

The next pages have selected photos of some of these Lorin windows and also maps of the location of every Stained Glass Window in the church, whether made by Lorin or by others. There are a small number of additional, and beautiful, memorial Stained Glass Windows in the church not produced by the Lorin firm. Nearly all of these were added in the 20th century from 1933 through 1987. They are not discussed here, since the focus is on the most numerous and historic Lorin windows. You are encouraged to take a "walking tour" of St. John's windows in order to see--close-up-- their beauty and craftsmanship, in a way not generally feasible when engaged in a church service. When possible, also try to examine not just the windows on the main floor of the church, and also those on the upper level of the church. You will find that it will allow you to appreciate fully the "art gallery" of St. John's Church.

The most unique of all St. John's windows is the Lorin version of the Last Supper, centered over the altar, and shown in the photo opposite this page. There is not a documented Stained Glass Window anywhere in Europe or the United States that presents this specific representation of the subject. It is distinctly different from Leonardo da Vinci's classic left to right long table mural painting portrayal—with Jesus in the center, and the disciples on either side of him. In St. John's version you are looking down one end of a long table, with the disciples on either side of it, and with St. John resting his head on the shoulder of Jesus at the far end of the table. While elements of or the entirety of da Vinci's Last Supper has been copied, repeatedly, as the standard way to present the subject in a Stained Glass Window. St. John's version, designed and produced by the Lorin firm, is truly one of a kind.

The Last Supper window over the altar
Annie E. Steele memorial window



**The Garden of Gethsemane window over the Organ Bay
King sisters memorial window**



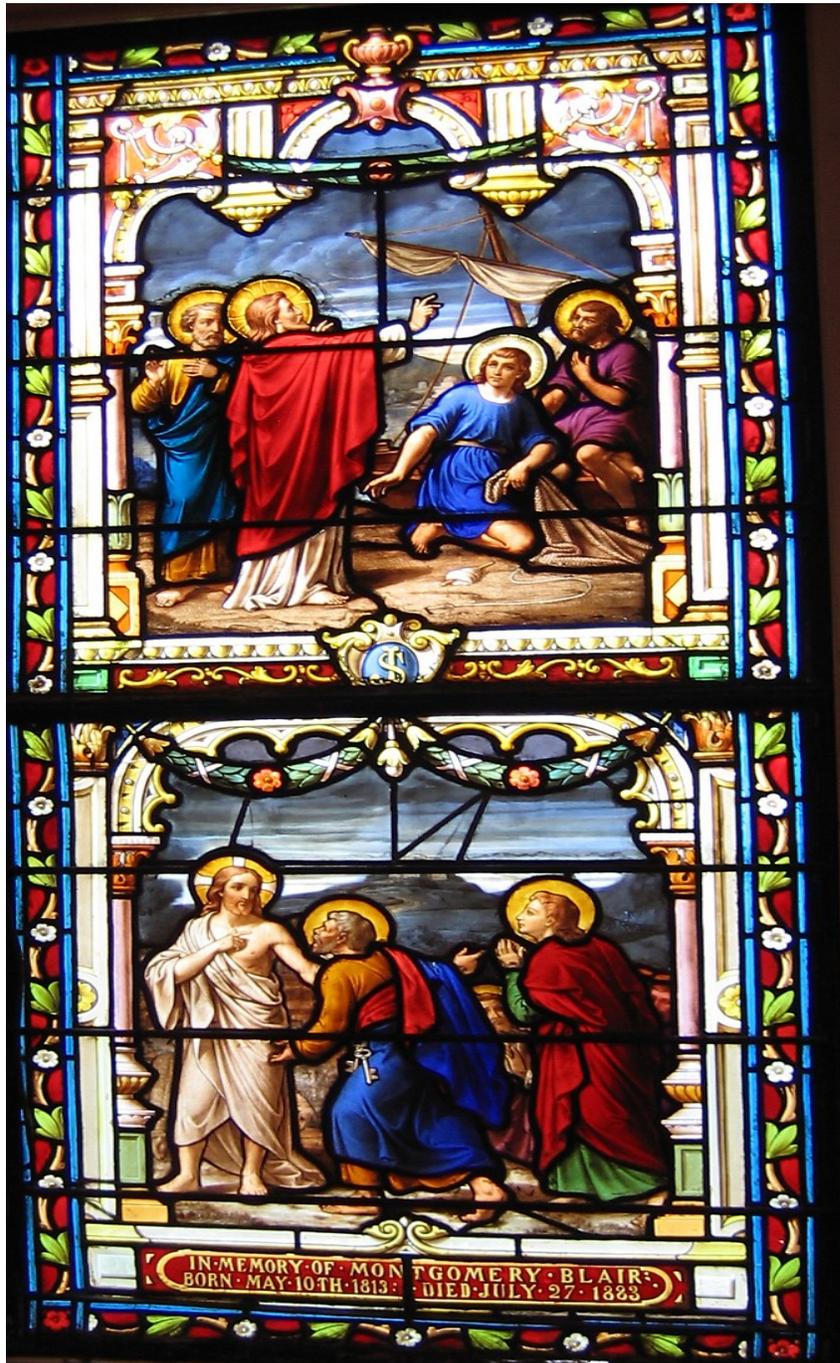
**The Transfiguration window over the H Street entrance
Eaton memorial window**



Two scenes from the Resurrection
on the H Street side of the church right side aisle
Ellen Lewis Herndon Arthur window (the President's Window)



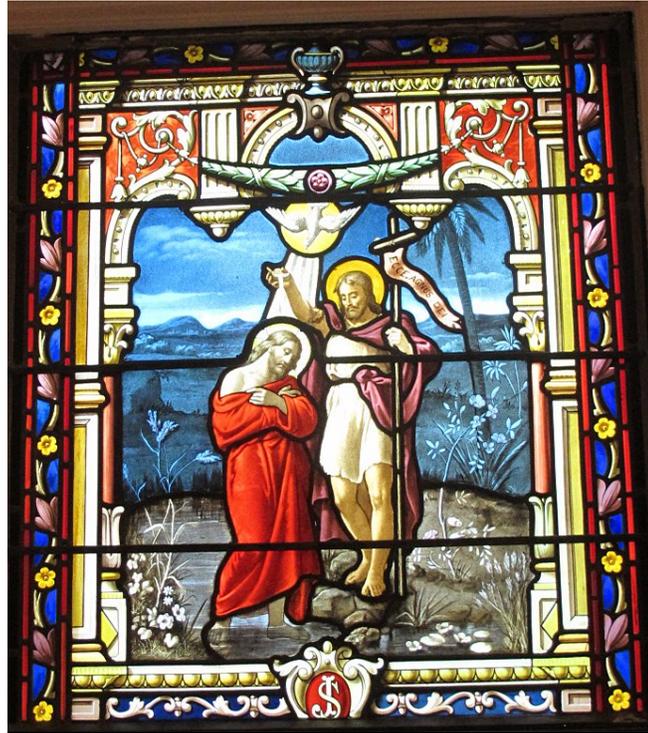
The Calling of St. John and St. James Upper medallion
St. Peter asking Jesus about St. John's mission Lower medallion
on AFL side of church opposite the President's Window on H Street
Montgomery Blair memorial window



**St. John's vision on Patmos from Book of Revelation
Upper Medallion on AFL side of church at left aisle entrance to church
John Alsop King memorial window**



The Baptism of Jesus
Upper Medallion
on AFL side of church on left aisle second window
Randall memorial window



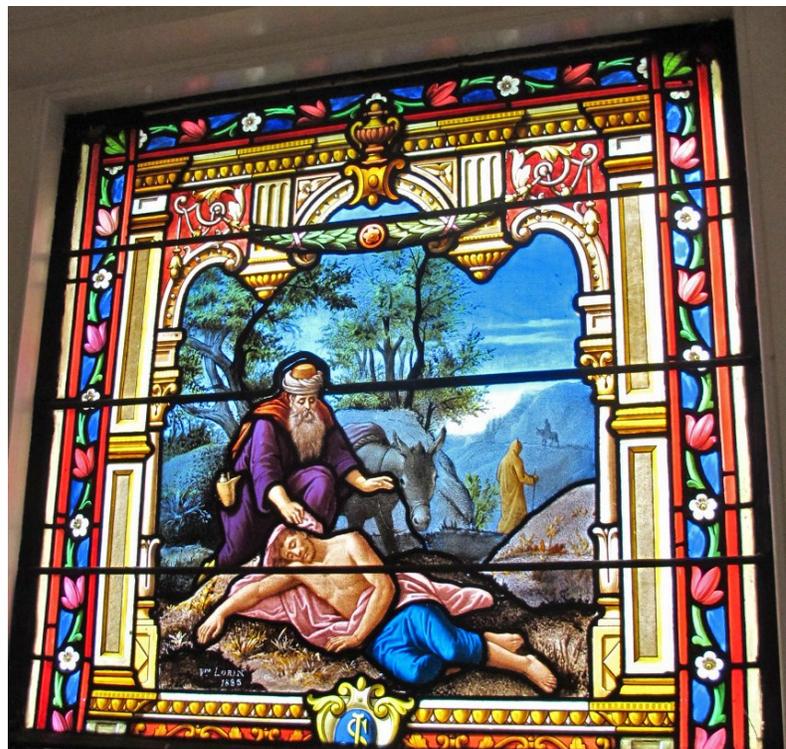
Jesus with Mary and Martha
Lower Medallion
Randall memorial window



The Sower
Upper Medallion
on AFL side Gallery, first window off left aisle
William Seward memorial window



The Good Samaritan (Crane Memorial window)
Upper Medallion in center window inside Organ Bay

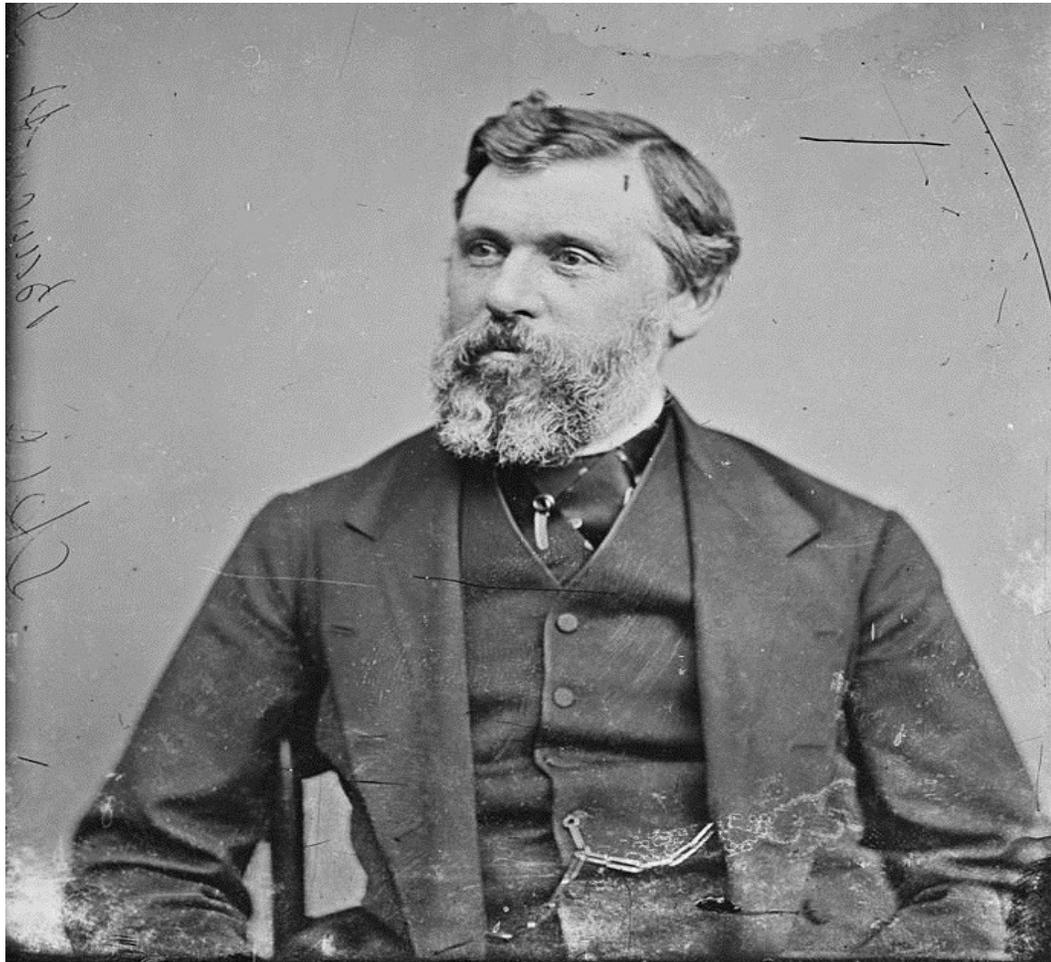


Bishop Pinckney memorial window AFL side left center of Gallery



Davis memorial window H Street side right center of Gallery





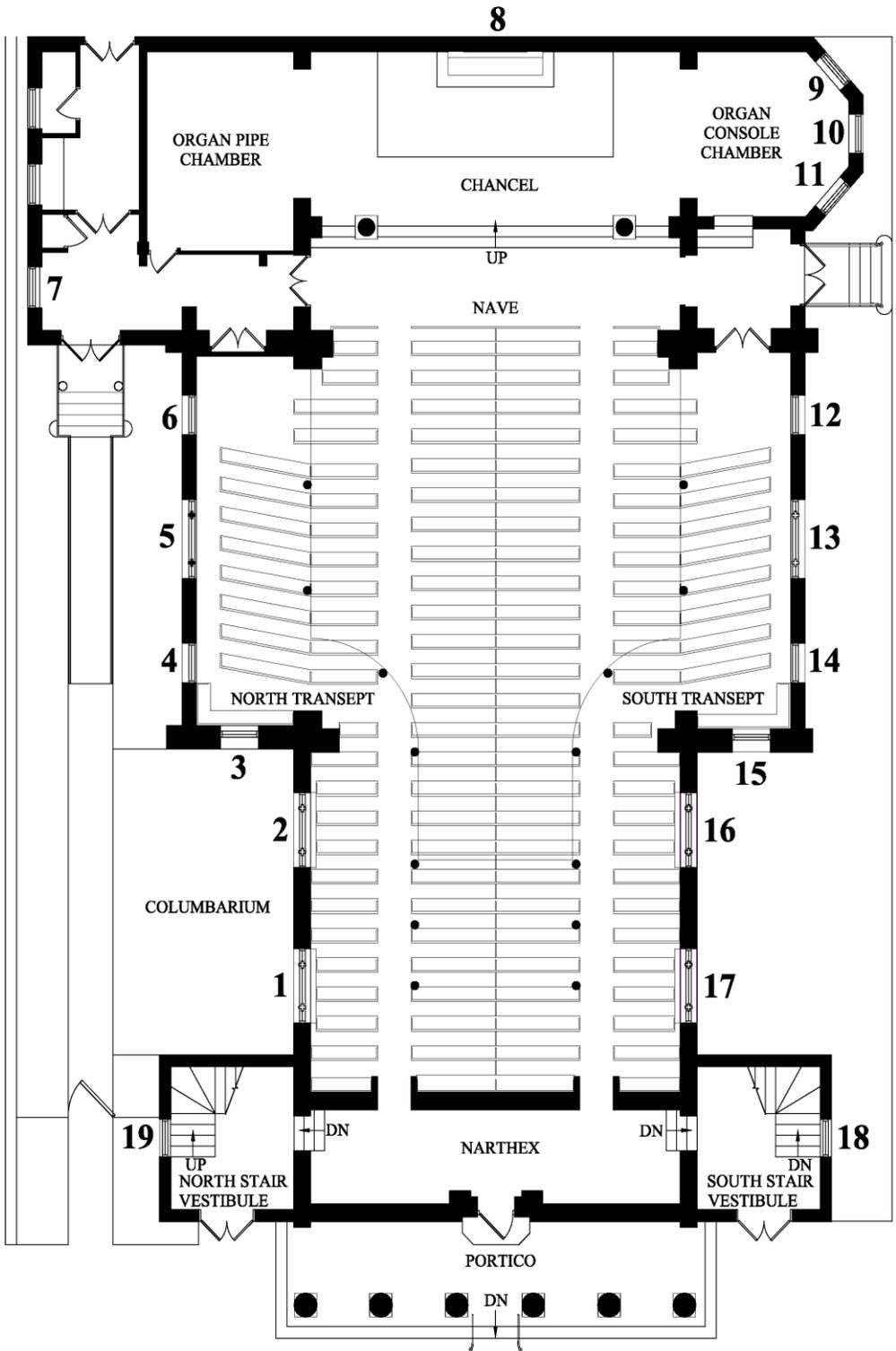
**The Honorable John Chandler Bancroft Davis
Senior member of the Stained Glass Window Committee
of St. John's Church who met with Madam Marie-Francoise (Dian) Lorin
then owner of the Lorin Stained Glass Windows firm
on July 19, 1883 in Chartres, France
to order Stained Glass Windows for
St. John's Church.**

Lorin Stained Glass Windows firm entrance door in Chartres France



**The Lorin workroom where St. John's Stained Glass Windows were produced
This same room has been in use from the 1860s to the present**



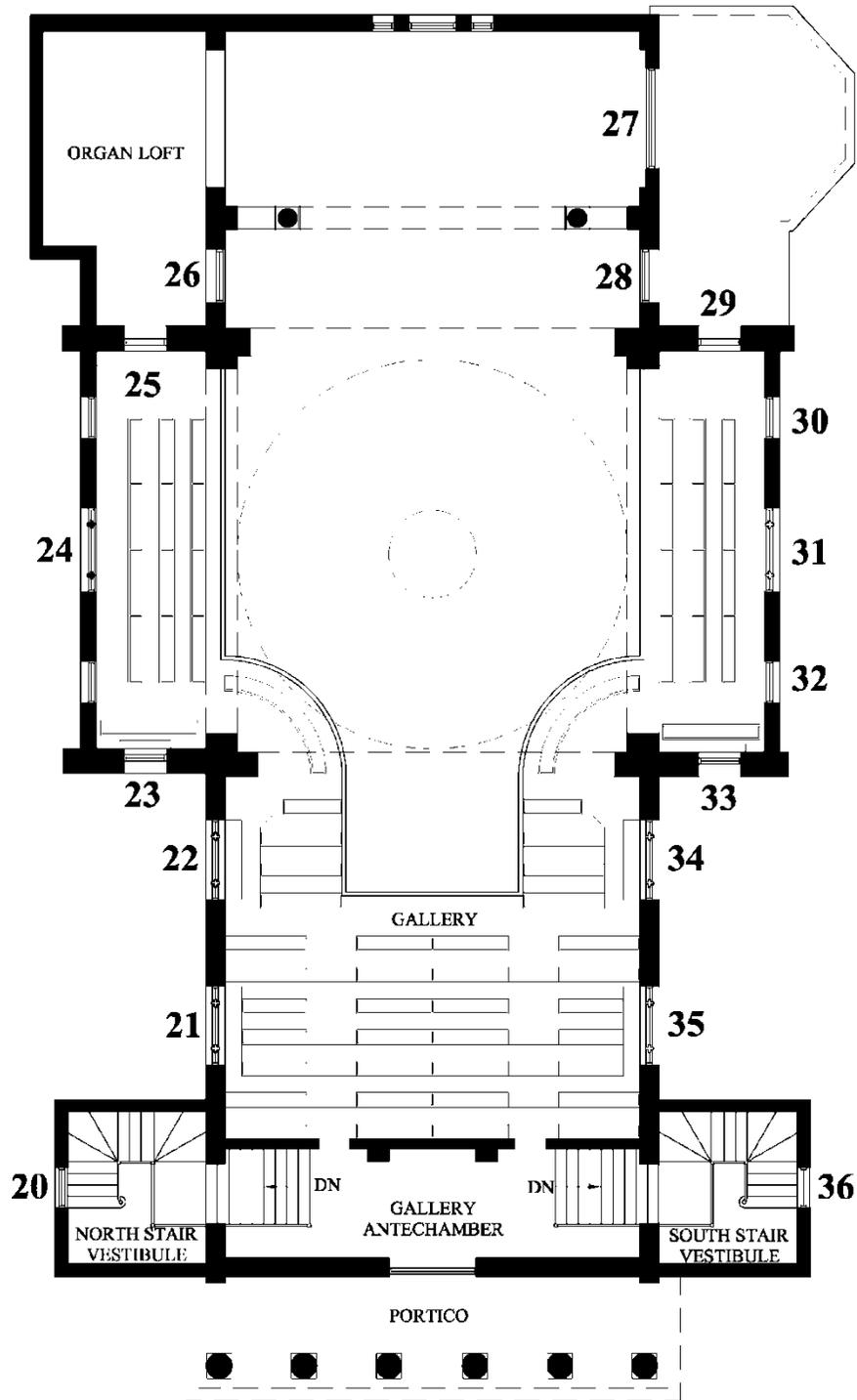


STAINED GLASS WINDOWS
 LOCATIONS
 MAIN FLOOR

***KEY TO STAINED GLASS WINDOWS LOCATIONS,
MAIN FLOOR****

1. John Alsop King*
2. Henry K. Randall*
3. Col. Joseph Audenried*
4. Lida R. and Charles H. Tompkins
5. Montgomery Blair*
6. Lida R. and Charles H. Tompkins
7. St. John
8. Great Altar window (left side-light panel, Julia McLane Lockwood) (central window, The Last Supper, Annie E. Steele) (right side-light panel, Rear Adm. Charles Wilkes)*
9. Col. John J. Abert*
10. Surgeon General Charles H. Crane*
11. Rear Adm. Joseph Smith*
12. Tallulah Mounceaux McCants
13. Ellen Lewis Herndon Arthur (President Chester A. Arthur's wife)*
14. Payne Family (Red Cross window)
15. William T. Carroll*
16. Peter Hagner*
17. Dr. and Mrs. William A. Leonard*
18. Shield, Swords, and Psalm 100
19. Shield, Swords, and Ephesians 6:16-17

***Windows with an asterisk are Lorin windows**



STAINED GLASS WINDOWS
 LOCATIONS
 GALLERY LEVEL

***KEY TO STAINED GLASS WINDOWS LOCATIONS,
GALLERY LEVEL***

20. Crown window
21. William Henry Seward*
22. Presidents James Madison, James Monroe, and Martin Van Buren*
23. Col. William Turnbull*
24. Bishop William Pinkney*
25. Presidents William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, and Zachary Taylor*
26. Maj. Gen. George Douglas Ramsay*
27. Alice and Ellen King*
28. Brig. Gen. Amos Beebee Eaton*
29. Madonna of the Chair* (upper medallion)/James Spear Taylor (lower medallion)
30. St. George (George Angus Garrett)
31. Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Bancroft Davis*
32. St. Patrick (George Angus Garrett)
33. Maj. Gen. Robert Buchanan*
34. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Markoe*
35. Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott*
36. Cross window

***Windows with an asterisk are Lorin windows**