Tilton Hall, Tulane University

6823 St. Charles Avenue

*The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a high point in the stained glass industry. Masters such as Louis Comfort Tiffany and John La Farge developed novel techniques and materials to bring new vigor and popularity to a traditional medium. American opalescent glass made stained glass more affordableand visible even when light was not streaming through from outside (for example, when illuminated by electric lamps). Stained glass portraying secular as well as religious figures adorned civic buildings, the homes of the wealthy, and churches.*

Tilton Hall, the first library on the Uptown campus of Tulane University, is one of the oldest buildings on the campus. Built in 1901 by the prestigious New Orleans firm of Andry and Bendernagel, architects for several other buildings on the older part of the campus, it was funded by philanthropist Frederick W. Tilton, whose widow carried out the terms of his will. The building is a splendid example of the imposing Richardson Romanesque style, characterized by heavy rusticated stone and low arches that give a feeling of permanency. Now the building houses the Amistad Research Center as well as classrooms and academic offices.

In addition to honoring Mr. and Mrs. Tilton, the stained glass windows illustrate the purposes of an institution of higher learning. On the left, the figure and the panel above it symbolize the Arts, while the other window emphasizes Sciences and Literature.

The windows are located prominently on the landing of the main staircase and are memorials to Mr. Tilton and Caroline Stannard Tilton, his wife (the donor). It is probable that they were installed at the time of construction. The location gives a focal centerpiece to the lobby and serves as a source of light while obscuring the view of neighboring homes. Because the windows have not been moved, they are still in excellent condition.

These are fine examples of the work of the Tiffany studio, and their location makes them easily accessible for close examination. Tom Friel of the Newcomb Art Museum considers 1901 the high point of Tiffanys stained glass career. The flowers and flowing robes reflect the art nouveau style that was so important in Louis Comfort Tiffanys work. Friel points out the large variety of colors and the high-quality enamel work, which is fused into the glass background. He does note, however, that the Greek portrait in the Arts window has been painted on top of the glass, despite the companys claims that it did not use that technique.

The numerous flowers and the brocade on the robes have rich red hues with etched patterns revealing lighter, more golden tones beneath. This is an excellent example of flashed glass, which is created by fusing two or more thin sheets of glass of different colors and then carefully etching or sandblasting away part of the outer layer(s). This is prominent in the pattern of the elegant gowns. These windows also incorporate striated and opalescent glass; the former is used in the sky.

Additional Tiffany windows are visible at the Newcomb Chapel and in the Newcomb Art Building. These, along with the Tiffany chandeliers at Temple Sinai, are the only known examples of glass by that studio in New Orleans.

*Excellent information on these windows is available at the Newcomb Art Gallery website: http://newcombartmuseumcollection.tulane.edu/.*

*Visited April 19, 2009*

When citing information from this document, please acknowledge the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.