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A STOWE MEMORIAL  
By KENNETH WARD HOOKER

In the village of Mandarin on the St. Johns is the little "Church of Our Savior" with its memorial window to Calvin E. Stowe and Harriet Beecher Stowe. This fine example of American artisanship in stained glass represents the St. Johns River at sunset, seen through the moss-curtained branches of a big live oak—the "Stowe oak," at Mandarin.

Why should Mrs. Stowe's most exquisite memorial be found in a sleepy old village in Florida? For Mandarin is old and sleepy: most of its people were lured away long ago by the development of lower Florida, and "Mandarin has been poor ever since The Frost." \*

Although it may seem surprising that this tribute to Mrs. Stowe should be found south of the Mason and Dixon line, it is certainly fitting that it should be at Mandarin, for the village is full of Stowe associations. In 1867 Mrs. Stowe bought an orange grove at Mandarin, through a desire to help her son establish a business, and also by a vague idea of helping or educating the emancipated Negroes. Although neither of these plans succeeded to any great extent, the Stowes remained at Mandarin for many years, and Mrs. Stowe continued to spend her winters there almost until her death. Their cot-

\*This, as is most of the material for this article, is from the private papers of Mrs. Horace B. Hooker, who died at Mandarin in 1928, and who was the principal organizer of the Stowe memorial. Mrs. Hooker, a graceful and witty writer, was the author of a series of letters written during the Civil War, some of which have been collected in a small edition.

Others who contributed material for this article are Mrs. Richard Reed, director, WPA Library Project, and Mr. Lee E. Bigelow, of Jacksonville.

tage was built on a high bluff overlooking the St. Johns, in a picturesque grove of the huge live oak trees they loved so well. Incidentally, Miss Hooker's choice of the live oak as a symbol of the Stowes' attachment to Mandarin was extremely appropriate. For such was their love of these trees that they built their porch around one of them ; the tree grew and took possession to such an extent that the house finally had to be taken down.

From the early days of their residence in Mandarin the Stowes exercised strong religious influence on the community. The Professor's "Bible readings and song services," which drew most of the population, began in his own home. Later he carried his melodeon over to a schoolhouse, built on land given by Mrs. Stowe, every Sunday, and alternate services were conducted there for the white and the colored people. During the 1880's Mandarin became prosperous enough to afford a separate place of worship, and the Church of Our Savior, modelled after a church in the Adirondacks, was built. Mrs. Stowe participated actively in raising money for the new church, and she also instigated the change that was made from Union services to Episcopal services. A number of young Englishmen, gentlemen farmers, had settled in Mandarin and had become faithful followers of the Professor's Union services. Mrs. Stowe requested the change because of her admiration for their unflagging zeal, contending that "when so many young men come from home and are so faithful in their attendance as these young Englishmen; it is their due."

When Professor Stowe died in 1886, Mrs. Stowe requested that the large window at the end of the Church of Our Savior be reserved for a memorial to him. The congregation was eager to erect such

a memorial. But the ensuing years witnessed a profound reversal of Mandarin's fortunes : severe frosts drove business enterprise away from the village. The Church of Our Savior became a mission. Mrs. Stowe herself was prevented by poor health from coming to Mandarin in the winter for some years before her death in 1896. For thirty years a plain, uninspiring window, the more conspicuous as it was so large, filled the end of the church ; yet "so loyal were the members of the church to Mrs. Stowe's wishes," observed Mrs. Hooker, "that no one was willing to suggest any other plan."

About 1913 a Church committee, composed of Mrs. Horace B. Hooker and Mrs. Norman Merry, began active work to raise money for the Stowe window. Margaret Huntington Hooker, Mrs. Hooker's eldest daughter, had already made the design, the inspiration for which came to her during a vesper service at the Church, and the people of the Church had enthusiastically approved it. Therefore the committee's first action was to draw up a pamphlet describing the plan and the design; they had five hundred of these printed and circulated. Mr. Lyman Abbott, an old friend of Mrs. Stowe's, announced the project and made an appeal for it in the pages of the Outlook, and several New York newspapers carried notices of it.

The next task was to find a manufacturer. Mrs. Hooker and her daughter went North and visited a number of stained glass establishments, at first with discouraging results. The manufacturers were unwilling to consider the work for less than a thousand dollars, and "when we saw their work," remarked Mrs. Hooker, "we would not have it, at any price."

They went last to the Tiffany studios, and when Mr. Louis Tiffany saw the design he was greatly

interested. "He liked the design, and its being South," wrote Mrs. Hooker, "and the moss, and its being for Mrs. Stowe." They told him they could not hope to raise more than five hundred dollars, but he replied that "if he undertook the work he would make it satisfactory, as he would not be willing to send it there otherwise." The Tiffany studios later estimated the shop cost of the window to be \$850. ; and though Mrs. Hooker's account does not indicate how much money was actually raised, it seems probable that Mr. Tiffany never made a profit on the transaction, but completed it as a public-spirited impresario.

A good deal of money was raised within the village and the vicinity of Mandarin by means of ten-cent subscription cards and boxes sent to the stores and to the excursion boat *Satilla*. It is interesting to note that the local colored people were very eager to help. "The colored people who had known Mrs. Stowe, like Caddie, whom she had taught to read, Mrs. Isaiah, and many others took cards," Mrs. Hooker wrote. "The colored people sent their contributions from each church, and a very characteristic letter came from the teachers, Mr. Calhoun and Nellie Kelly, of the colored school, with the money the children had raised. It said 'May this in some measure express our appreciation and heart felt gratitude to that excellent woman for the mighty stroke she struck for the freedom of our race in her book entitled Uncle Tom's Cabin.' "

But the committee did not count heavily on the public announcements or the local contributions for the bulk of the money. Their greatest efforts went into writing directly to individuals who could make very substantial contributions, and into finding out who were Mrs. Stowe's old friends.

Answers to these direct appeals were few, and for the most part discouraging. Several of the answers implied, what was candidly expressed by one of them, that "a cheap window in an obscure church" would be no honor to Mrs. Stowe. But the committee's greatest difficulty was the World War. "All sympathies and interests were naturally absorbed in this," observed Mrs. Hooker; "and when war came to our own country, how could we go on asking for money for a window in our church?" Some of Mrs. Stowe's old friends, and the publishers of her books, who had given receptions for her and honored her in all ways, did not hesitate to tell the committee that the appeal was most inappropriate, and that it was "the last thing that Mrs. Stowe would want," under the circumstances. Indeed, the War might have put an end to the whole project of a Stowe memorial, except that by 1916 half the money had been raised and a contract with the Tiffany studios signed.

A number of interesting letters were sent in with contributions to the memorial. A Michigan farmer sent a dollar, and related that his mother had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to him from the *National Era* when he was five, although he had not been able to read it for himself until fifty years later. A good friend of Mrs. Stowe's sent a liberal contribution with reminiscences of climbing an apple tree to find peace and seclusion, and then reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from cover to cover, at the age of eight. Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, who had lived across the street from Mrs. Stowe in Hartford, wrote: "I *must* have a small part in a memorial to so great and sweet and quiet a human being."

The Tiffany studios began work on the window late in 1915, after securing samples of the gray moss from the live oaks at Mandarin. The com-

mittee, together with Mrs. Day and Mr. Lyman Beecher Stowe, decided on the inscription, which was two lines from a poem by Mrs. Stowe which had been made into a hymn. Completed in August 1916, the window was sent to Mandarin, carefully placed and protected in the little church, and finally dedicated on September 3rd, by Bishop Edwin G. Weed of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Florida.

Thus it came about that in Florida and in the old village of Mandarin there is the most beautiful memorial that has been raised to the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin.