In 1889, church demand for decorative art was so great that Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) designated an entire department to create “all forms of church decoration and instrumenta ecclesiastica.” This department boldly advertised its “large and practical knowledge of religious art” and the claim that it was “well equipped to undertake both the design and execution of all forms of church work in glass, fresco, metal, stone or wood.”

The offerings included “metal work altars, candlesticks, crosses, desks, railings, etc.” and in wood or stone “altars, panels, symbols, figures of saints, mural decorations, medieval needlework, medieval tiles, liturgical books from the press of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, and all manner of ecclesiastical supplies.” Tiffany kept a photographic record of completed ecclesiastical commissions. These records—which include interior schemes, window designs, and such varied objects as memorial stones and baptismal fonts—constitute an important part of the Morse Museum’s Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection. The images from both surviving and lost churches provide a behind-the-scenes look at the creative efforts at Tiffany Studios during the height of religious construction in America. The Museum recently completed an extensive multi-year conservation effort to stabilize the glass-plate negatives in this study photograph collection and to produce exhibit-quality images from those negatives. A selection of these is presented here. Work is ongoing for the prints in the collection, which represents one of the Museum’s most significant archival resources.
Unless otherwise noted, the photographs in this exhibition are reproduced from the Museum's Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection. The commissions were carried out by Louis Comfort Tiffany's company, known as the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company (1892–1900) or Tiffany Studios (1902–32) during the Ecclesiastical Department's most active period.

I. WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1903
The 1893 Chicago world's fair, known as the World's Columbian Exposition, celebrated the four-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's expedition to America. Louis Comfort Tiffany used this exhibition to showcase the skills and creative range of his relatively new ecclesiastical department, and the fair successfully established the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company as a premier designer of religious decoration. Divided into three sections, Tiffany's display at the exposition included the celebrated chapel interior now on exhibit at the Morse, as well as numerous examples of memorial windows and individual objects used for church services.

Left to right:

Chapel electrolier, c. 1900
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (1999-026:015)
Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company's pavilion in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2007-002:083)

Cartoon for The Entombment window, c. 1893
Photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:057)

Ante-pendium (altar hanging), c. 1893
Photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:061)

Mitre (ecclesiastical hat), c. 1893
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (65-030:004:01:01)

Ante-pendium (altar hanging), c. 1893
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (65-030:029:02)

II. FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA
Established in the eighteenth century, the First Presbyterian Church counted President James Buchanan (1791–1868) and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens (1792–1868) among its influential parishioners in its congregation. Over the following decades, the historic church commissioned ten windows from Tiffany Studios. Two of these were recorded in Tiffany's study files.

Left to right:

Case: Tiffany Studios, Ecclesiastical Department
Illustrated brochure
New York: Tiffany Studios, c. 1921
(1999-073)

Left to right:

Tiffany Studios workshop with cartoon for The Sower window, c. 1921
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2001-042:001)

Cartoon for The Sower window, c. 1921
Photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:128)

Case: The Risen Christ window, c. 1929
Photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:044)

III. ST. AGNES CHAPEL, NEW YORK CITY
Built between 1890 and 1892, St. Agnes Chapel was an Episcopal church plant from Trinity Church in Lower Manhattan. Located on the Upper West Side at 121–147 West Ninety-first Street between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues, St. Agnes was considered a gem of ecclesiastical design. Tiffany designed the marble pulpit, which was inspired by the thirteenth-century marble work at San Lorenzo in Rome. The church, never having a large congregation, was demolished in 1943.

Pulpit with mosaic, c. 1907
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2007-002:007)

IV. MADISON SQUARE CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY
In the 1890s, the Madison Square Presbyterian Church in Lower Manhattan sought a new location for its church facilities after the Metropolitan Life Insurance company acquired its property. The move to the opposite corner of Madison Square provided an opportunity for the church to build a suitable modern building and to exploit the talents of its artistic congregation. Louis Comfort Tiffany, a member of the church and officer of the building committee, secured McKim, Mead, and White as architect and provided his firm for interior design. Ledger notes in the Morse archives provide a view of the construction throughout 1905. The church was finally dedicated in October 1906 but only survived thirteen years before development claimed it as well.

Left to right:

Three interiors, c. 1906
Duplicate images from mounted photographs (2007-002:094, 093, 099)

Case: Tiffany Studios ledger, 1905–32
Notated book
Entry No. 108: Madison Sq. Church, N.Y.C.
(1999-067)

V. ST. MICHAEL'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY
St. Michael's, founded in 1886, replaced its original frame church in 1890 with the present Romanesque- and Byzantine-style building at 225 West Ninety-ninth Street. As the city's population moved uptown in Manhattan, a new class of parishioner began to attend. In 1895, the church commissioned Louis Comfort Tiffany to create The Celestial Hierarchy window, which depicts “St. Michael’s Victory in Heaven.” The five interior lancets are leaded glass and the two outside panels are mosaic. Between 1891 and 1920, the Tiffany Ecclesiastical Department designed several more windows as well as interior elements in the apse—including the dome, altar, mosaic reredos, and pulpit.

Left to right:

Two cartoons for The Celestial Hierarchy window, c. 1908
Photographic prints from glass-plate negatives (2001-042:031, 082)

Case: Memorials in Glass & Stone
Illustrated book
New York: Mundes-Thomson Company, 1913
(71-009:03)

VI. SAINT LOUIS CATHEDRAL, MISSOURI
The building of the Byzantine- and Romanesque-style Cathedral of Saint Louis began in 1907 and continued for eighty years. Tiffany Studios built two mosaic-and-marble chapels on the west side of the cathedral, the Virgin’s Chapel and All Saints Chapel. Both were designed by Aristide Leonori (1856–1926), an Italian architect from Rome. The building held its first mass in 1914 but remained under construction until 1988. In 1997 Pope John Paul II designated it as a Cathedral Basilica.

Baptismal font displayed at Tiffany Studios, 1890–1930
Photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:108)

Left to right:

Three sketches for interiors, Virgin’s Chapel, c. 1913
Photographic prints from glass-plate negatives
Architect: Aristide Leonori, Italian, 1856–1928
(2003-042:103, 168, 205)

Case: Tiffany Studios ledger, 1905–32
Notated book
Orders 20328 and 1360: St. Louis Cath.
(1999-065)

VII. MISCELLANEOUS PRODUCTION
The Ecclesiastical Department achieved great commercial success within the Tiffany decorative-arts empire and was active for almost fifty years. The variety of production was astounding. No complete written record exists of the department's work; making the Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection at the Morse one of the best accounts of the versatility of its designers.

Left to right:

Memorial with mosaic, c. 1890–1930
Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2003-033:064)

Illustrated book
Memorials in Glass & Stone
New York: Mundes-Thomson Company, 1913
(71-009:03)
Cartoon for window displayed at Tiffany Studios, c. 1890–1900 photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:121)

Baptismal font displayed at Tiffany Studios, c. 1890–1900 photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:132)

Casket monument, c. 1890–1900 photographic print from a mounted photograph (1998-028:005)

Duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2003-033:032)

Cartoon for the Good Shepherd window, c. 1890–1900 photographic print from a mounted photograph (1998-062)

Memorial tablet, c. 1903–30 photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:121)

Model for memorial tablet, c. 1890–1900 duplicate image from a mounted photograph (2003-033:032)

Casket monument, c. 1890–1900 photographic print from a glass-plate negative (2001-042:132)

Case:
Examples of Recent Work from the Workshops of Louis C. Tiffany illustrated booklet
Author: Ethel Synder, American, dates unknown

VIII ECCLESIASTICAL DEPARTMENT ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Surviving trade catalogs, correspondence, and other artifacts from the Ecclesiastical Department supplement the visual record of its design work and help complete our understanding of the vast creative output and activity of the department over many decades. All of the following are from the Morse Museum’s archives.

Case 1:
1) Activities of Tiffany Studios, c. 1926 illustrated booklet
New York: Tiffany Studios (2005-027:02)
2) Tributes to Honor: Suggested Types of Memorial by the Ecclesiastical Department of the Tiffany Studios, 46 West Twenty-third Street, New York illustrated booklet
New York: Tiffany Studios, 1925 (77-018)
3) Ecclesiastical Department workshop, c. 1890–1900 Photographic print (2009-007:002)

4) Memorial Windows / AD 1896 illustrated booklet

5) Memorial Tablets: Ancient and Modern, Honorary and Mortuary, in Bronze, Brass, Mosaic and Marble illustrated booklet

6) Fragment of correspondence to churches from Edwin Stanton George, second vice president and manager, on Ecclesiastical Department, Tiffany Studios letterhead, June 6th, 1929 (1999-03-001)

7) Correspondence to buyers regarding the Tiffany Studios bankruptcy sale from Percy A. Joseph, auctioneer, on Ecclesiastical Department, Tiffany Studios letterhead, June 4th, 1917 (2009-001:002)

8) Study for a figure, c. 1890–1900 Mounted photograph (65-001:0182)

9) Silver medal from the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art, Philadelphia, 1889 Awarded to the Tiffany Glass Co. for ecclesiastical windows Cast silver Obverse inscription: VIRTUE / LIBERTY / INDEPENDENCE / PHILADELPHIA THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM AND SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL ART / FOUNDED A.D. 1876 Reverse inscription: AWARDED TO / The Tiffany Glass Co. / FOR EXHIBIT OF / FIGURE OR ORNAMENTAL WINDOWS / FOR ECCLESIASTICAL PURPOSES / 1889 / EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN ART INDUSTRY Gift of Louis T. Lusk (64-025)


11) Business card, c. 1890 Ecclesiastical Department, Tiffany Studios (1999-077)


13) Character and Individuality in Decoration and Furnishings illustrated book New York: Tiffany Studios, 1913 (71-004:01)
The offerings included “metal work—altars, candlesticks, crosses, desk, railings, etc.—and in wood or stone—altars, panels, symbols, figures of saints, mural decorations, medieval needlework, medieval tiles, liturgical books from the press of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, and all manner of ecclesiastical supplies.” Tiffany kept a photographic record of completed ecclesiastical commissions. These records—which include interior schemes, window designs, and such varied objects as memorial stones and baptismal fonts—constitute an important part of the Morse Museum’s Tiffany Studios Study Photograph Collection. The images from both surviving and lost churches provide a behind-the-scenes look at the creative efforts at Tiffany Studios during the height of religious construction in America. The Museum recently completed an extensive multi-year conservation effort to stabilize the glass-plate negatives in this study photograph collection and to produce exhibit-quality images from those negatives. A selection of these is presented here. Work is ongoing for the prints in the collection, which represents one of the Museum’s most significant archival resources.