

The Story of a Church Window by Bill Harden

*(Below is Bill Harden's account of a series of events brought him to Sacred Heart Church in Camden, to discover a special ancestral connection there. Also read his profile interview on our website here).*

Jean and I had only attended Mass at Sacred Heart in Camden a couple of times, but each time someone invariably came up to us and welcomed us, asked where we were from, and just generally made us feel at home. One Sunday, a couple, Tim & Gail Gooney, who heads up a ministry called the Green Team who decorates the church each week, approached us. Gail asked me my last name and, when I told her, she replied "your name is on one of the stained glass windows here in the church." I sort of dismissed it, presuming that it was spelled differently or something, as there are no other Catholics in my family, to my knowledge.

The following week I found the window and sure enough it bore the inscription "Gift of M.E. Harden." Another week passed and I mentioned it to Father Michael, the pastor, wondering if he knew who M.E. Harden was. A passionate student of the history of the parish, naturally he did know, telling me that he was Mabury Harden, the Master Carpenter who helped to build Sacred Heart back in 1871.

The name "Mabury" struck a chord with me. When I got home I checked and confirmed that it was my grandfather's middle name. A few hours with Ancestry.com led me to the knowledge that Mabury Harden, the carpenter who built Sacred Heart, was my great-great grandfather.

No matter how many times I tell that story, it still amazes me when you consider the combination of factors and the sequence of events that brought us to Sacred Heart. Clearly the Holy Spirit was at work, leading us to what has become more than a church that my ancestor helped to build, but a spiritual home that has become such an enormous part of our lives. Every moment I spend at Sacred Heart is special beyond words, and the ancestral connection has only deepened that experience.