

THE MAURER FAMILY



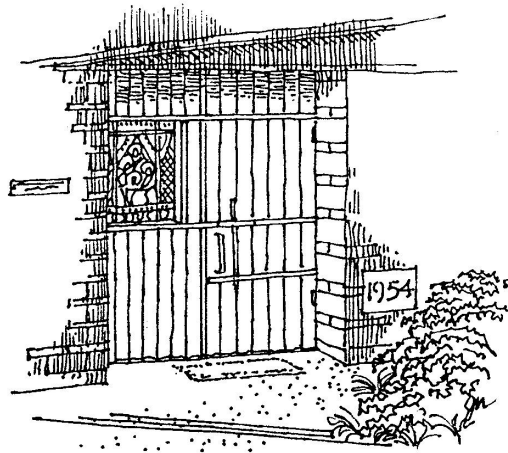
If anyone in Mill Valley would have had a valuable Swiss stained glass window to donate to the Church, it would have been the Maurer family.

In 1874, at age 19, Louis Maurer emigrated from Switzerland to Lima Peru, where he resided for 28 years. There he met and married Louisa Gremminger, who was also of Swiss origin. A co-founder of Peru's largest furniture making, lumber and construction business, Mr. Maurer became a very wealthy man. Supposedly retiring to Mill Valley in 1919, he again became a successful and prominent businessman through real estate and construction businesses. When he died in 1935 the flags in downtown Mill Valley were lowered to half-mast in his honor.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW

In autumn of 1945 Mrs. Maurer, now a widow, traveled to Lima to visit family. While there she made arrangements to transport the window to Mill Valley and in January of 1946 she gifted it to the Community Church. It was sent to the Church Art Glass Studio in San Francisco for repairs plus an added "Gift of the Maurer Family" pane, all paid for by Mrs Maurer. Then it was kept in protective storage for 8 years and brought out only for Christmas Eve services.

Plans for a new building included a chapel, deemed the perfect place to display the window; thus the window was installed on the new chapel door on Olive Street in 1954, here drawn by John Norall.



By 2007 the chapel was no longer being used, and the window was moved to a lightbox in the main church building where it can now be seen by everyone.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WINDOW

A clear inscription indicates that the window was created in 1883 in Aussersihl-Zurich by K. Wehrli, a famous Swiss stained glass artist. However, in 1946 it was also said to have been created in 1910 in Louis Maurer's art glass shop in Zurich.



Closer examination reveals the window has had a tumultuous past. Cut through ornaments at the top reveal it to be the lower part of a larger window. A crossing iron bar indicates it had previously been installed within a window frame, most likely in a Catholic church. We don't know why it was removed, but there are signs of serious damage occurring either while it was still installed or during later transport. Entire areas, including the figures, were later replaced in the style of 1910 instead of the original style of 1883. This most likely took place in the Maurer Glass Art Shop in Zurich, and would explain the conflicting information given to the Church in 1946.

Unfortunately, the artist who replaced and painted the damaged areas was not as skilled as Wehrli, a talented and renowned artist. Wehrli's faces are far more expressive and delicately painted, and in

1883 Joseph would have been depicted as an old man.

Commentary from the Swiss experts:
"The style is very simple; the difference in quality to Wehrli's known windows from similar times is significant."

When compared to known pieces by Wehrli, the CCMV window resembles folk art.

See other pieces by Wehrli at:

<https://vitrosearch.ch/en/artists/2680263>

However, the signature appears authentic for its time, and the window has a pattern in common with all known Wehrli pieces with a biblical theme: **the main scene is framed with pillars and gates with very ornate roofing**, a framing not used by other Swiss stained glass artists contemporary with Wehrli. Here shown in red, compare with the framing in an original Wehrli from Dussnang CH.

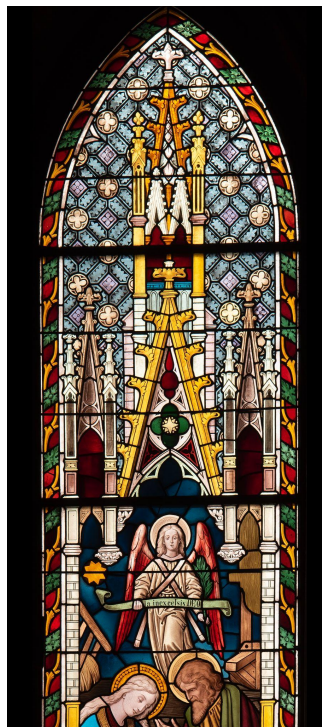


Photo © Vitrocentre Romont / Hans Fischer

Ultimately we will never fully know the early history of this stained glass window, what happened to the top part of the window, nor how it came into the possession of Louis Maurer. He seems to have believed it was a Wehrli, and after closing his shop in Zurich in 1912, had the window shipped to his home in Lima, Peru. There it was safely stored for 33 years until Mrs. Maurer, visiting Peru in 1945, arranged to have the window brought to Mill Valley, where it continues to delight, intrigue and at times puzzle viewers at CCMV.

Thank you for the assistance provided by the Swiss Research Center for Stained Glass and Glass Art: Vitrocentre Romont.



A Brief History of “The Swiss Stained Glass Window”

Donated by the Maurer family
in 1946

Community Church of Mill Valley
8 Olive Street
Mill Valley, CA 94941
www.ccmvucc.org

Read the full story here:
<https://tinyurl.com/4u3bvrkm>

