

Stained glass has been a Watkins family tradition since the 1760's we have been told
It all began in Liverpool, England where the Watkins stained glass legacy took hold
The middle 1800's was the time when several family members came to the US by boat
Preparing for departure, they packed their belongings, with tools of the trade in tote
They were all trained in the building trades, and heard that US opportunities were vast
Clarence was drawn to the tradition of stained glass "joiners" as relatives from the past



He worked in studios in Boston, NY and St. Louis but decided on a less crowded state
We're told he loaded his glass & tools in a covered wagon & arrived in Denver in 1868
Denver was not the big town he expected to see, thus he used his tools for carpentry
In 1881 his studio, Denver Stained Glass Works was listed in the Denver directory
Clarence became a respected businessman and honored for the windows he had made
He was also very cantankerous and would bring his pistol to make sure he'd get paid

Frank was the next Watkins to enter the trade; he began his formal apprenticeship in 1902
Working separately they did many churches, all the priests and archbishops they knew
During the 1920's, he & coworkers would make hundreds of windows stacked in rows
The builders picked them up each Saturday and installed them even in the bungalows
The depression was a time when Frank would work on many churches windows at no cost
These years were hard times for everyone; with no work, his and others fortunes were lost

Phillip Sr. was born in 1922 and also apprenticed as a master craftsman of stained glass
He learned the skill and "family secrets" from his father, just as in generations past
The onset of World War II put Denver's stained glass production once again on hold
Due to the demand for metal and the need to make bullets, lead could no longer be sold
Phillip Sr. became an AF pilot, spending time in London & Liverpool before he next flew
He researched centuries old Watkins records & documents and confirmed the stories true

Doing stained glass in the 1950's, he was later joined by son Phil who was born in 1947
Phil served his full 6000 hour apprenticeship and began his first church alone at age 11
The father-son duo worked in Englewood for 30 yrs creating stained glass side by side
They made windows for about 380 churches & 4000 homes, each one made with pride
They were constantly busy as Denver was growing so fast with much new construction
Colorado's oldest and most respected stained glass studio had the finest reputation

Since 1985 Phil Jr. has been sole owner, personally doing each job from start to finish
There is no plan to hire more help or expand, tho his backlog never seems to diminish
Making over 1500 windows since '85, he does each aspect of the craft like a specialist
As a fine master painter, he became a member of the British Glass Painters Society list
He painstakingly cuts the glass and fabricates each piece to form a beautiful work of art
He will not compromise or take short cuts, each window becomes a work from his heart

During the past century, there have been differences in personalities and artistic vision
Each man responds to the trends of time, creating his own style with an artistic mission
Work is still done with the same old tools, but now using electricity to solder the lead came
The method and skills of fabrication of the Watkins masters used in the 1700's will remain
The family secrets from England, as well as handed down knowledge & techniques will stay
Phil's three girls are learning the art, helping out & making creations that are for sale today
Utilizing the skills that are being taught to them by Dad and the knowledge they have gained
Perhaps they will continue to pursue the stained glass art in which they are being trained