

*“The Living Flame
Lights Religious Faith”*

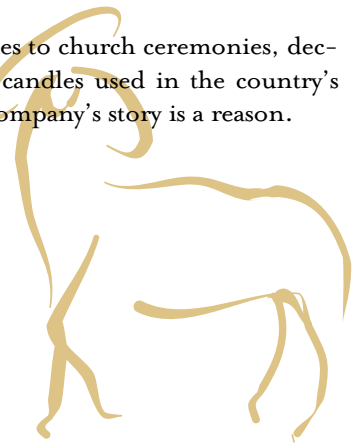
J A C O B S T E I G E R W A L D C A . 1 8 9 7





America's religious candlemaking industry began in Syracuse, New York, in 1855 when flame sources were the only artificial light. Even well-to-do Americans who may have burned sperm whale oil in living room lamps used candles for safety in upstairs rooms. In 1859, Edwin L. Drake's first successful well in Titusville, Penna., started the petroleum industry; subsequently, kerosene became introduced as a lamp fuel. In 1885 pipelines were laid in cities for streetlights lit by gas made from coal. In the homes of the affluent, gas mantles might be used to light flames. Two years after Thomas Edison introduced his incandescent lamp, the first electric power plant was built, and in 1881 a New York City factory became the first building to be lit by electricity.

These developments gradually confined the use of candles to church ceremonies, decorative domestic purposes and festive occasions. Most candles used in the country's churches still come from Syracuse. Cathedral Candle Company's story is a reason.



ENRI

CATHEDRAL
CANDLE
COMPANY

PERPETUATES
CHURCH
TRADITIONS





BOYANT WITH OPTIMISM,

Francis Baumer boarded a boat bound for Germany. This former school teacher was on his way to meet a person who could help with the church candle business he'd started.

It was 1880, an especially exciting time in the religious field. Christian mysticism was reawakening. After 300 years, the Puritan mania for barren interiors and lack of ritual and symbolism had waned and the inner meaning of the liturgy was being made known to all people. Church music was being revived in its ancient original beauty. Old Christmas carols had come out of hiding; American composers were creating new ones.

Christian churches were rising in America to meet the spiritual needs of immigrants building this country's transportation system—its canals and railways—mining its resources, making its factories run.

Part of religious ceremonies and customs throughout Christian history, candles were back on altars being used in traditional ways. Baumer was headed to where the best were made.

Beeswax, required for candles in churches for symbolic reasons, is more demanding to work with than other types of waxes. Techniques for making them were mastered in Germany. German candlemakers used plaited wick—introduced in Europe as was the “pickeling method”—treating strands of woven wicks. Ordinary wicks had to be trimmed every few minutes, or they would smoke.

The ritual of Advent wreaths and highly-valued decorated candles, rich with ancient symbolism, were being made here again. During the onslaught of religious reformists, German monasteries protected examples of religious symbolism that flourished in the Middle Ages. They were sharing the preserved records with non-Catholics as well as Catholics who came to study the meaning of ancient Christian worship. Baumer recruited Jacob Steigerwald, a young Bavarian candle designer who had come under this *Einfluss* (influence).

For 16 years Steigerwald supervised production at Francis Baumer Candle Company and learned American business practices. In 1896 Baumer merged his company with the Eckermann & Will Candle Company, expanding in the residential market. This was a great business opportunity. Candles were still the only means of artificial illumination available to people of average means. Located along the Erie Canal and in a growing railroad center, Syracuse-based candle companies were able to serve most of the American market.

Steigerwald faced a decision that tested his *Einfluss*. Should he join the bigger, diversified company and share in the increased responsibilities? Or should he continue to concentrate on religious traditions?

His answer was CATHEDRAL CANDLE COMPANY the manufacturing company he opened in 1897. Joining Steigerwald, who was president, were Edward J. Knapp, vice president, Joseph Schauer, treasurer, and Isidore J. Kuntz, secretary. One hundred years later, it is owned and operated by the fourth generation of Steigerwalds. Cathedral still makes *only church candles*.

The original factory, on Kirkpatrick Street in the city of Syracuse, remains the core of today's expanded manufacturing facility. Tradition and modernity thrive there. Assembly lines of molds, presses, and inventive automation devices built to Jacob Steigerwald's specifications still operate. His grandson, Lou Steigerwald Jr., president, explains, "These machines were built in Cincinnati, Ohio, to never wear out."

Advancements perfected by Lou III, his brother Mark—who is in charge of marketing—and John P. Hogan, Jacob's great grandchild—who is in charge of personnel—are in place as well. Sophisticated extrusion equipment is programmed to produce candles of varied dimension, wick and all, from pulverized wax. "This method gives us higher production and a better, more-consistent product," Lou explains. Beeswax from around the world is blended by the company's employees into granules. This is compressed, bonded using pressure—not heat—and finished candles are expelled. "The final product looks and performs as would a top-quality *hand-dipped* candle," Lou says.

Employees produce specialty candles by a traditional hand-dipping process. The Steigerwalds describe their candle making as *art* **MANUFACTURING** and *science*.

To assure consistency in producing the “living flame”—symbolizing The Son of God—each manufacturing run is tested by a company chemist for flame size, burning time, and general burning properties. Each package of candles is coded to identify manufacturing dates and quality control information. “If there is ever a question about a candle’s performance, we’ll know when it was made, who helped make it, and how the batch tested before it was shipped,” explains John Hogan.

Jacob decided from the beginning that Cathedral Candle Company’s products would be sold exclusively through firms coast-to-coast that serve their local churches.

“Our family has never deviated from this tradition,” Mark states. “Local dealers know the churches in their areas. We help dealers meet churches’ needs in every way we are able.”

Some of Cathedral’s dealers have represented the company for a hundred years. “Older churches, especially, have many differing sizes of candlestick sockets,” one comments. “Lengths vary—some are 60-inches tall, three inches in diameter. Candles need to be proportionate to the size of the holder. With Cathedral’s help we fill all requirements.”

This dealer points out, “Other manufacturers’ sales representatives call directly on churches, competing with us. Cathedral has never done this. They’re the only company in this business not part of a conglomerate. It’s a family business—they make their own decisions. They view us as authorities on our market and ask how best to help us.

..... “My father told me of his experiences over the years with the Steigerwalds, and I’ve experienced it myself. That company has the tradition of treating their dealers with old-fashioned courtesy while offering up-to-the-minute responsiveness.”

One dealer recalls when candles were impossible to find during World War II. “It was a dark time for the spirits of those having family serving overseas. Area churches pleaded with us to do something. I wrote ‘Help!’ on a postcard and mailed it to Louis Steigerwald, Sr. A few days later, a truck loaded with candles pulled up in front of my warehouse after travelling halfway across the country.”

Another of Cathedral’s 100-year dealers has never forgotten how Cathedral helped them continue to serve churches during the 1930s when it was hard to pay the bills. So they wouldn’t have to lay off workers, Jacob’s sons Lou and Carl Steigerwald never operated their factory less than a three-day-a-week schedule during the Depression’s depths.

..... “Churches used to order a year’s worth of candles at one time for blessing at a Candlemas Service on February 2,” another dealer explains. “Now they order and pay for candles when they need them.” Cathedral Candle Company developed a “just-in-time” delivery system using **COMPUTERIZED inventory and manufacturing management methods.**

In 1965, The Vatican Council II made **changes** in Christian liturgy affecting the sizes and types of religious candles. Tall, thin candles arranged in a candelabra on back altars were replaced by large-diameter candles of varying lengths at altars facing the congregation. The composition of candles used for services changed along with their placement at the altar. Instead of 100% beeswax, candles could be of 51% beeswax— but not less.

One dealer states, “I have a letter in my safe the bishop wrote to priests in our area shortly after this change. He told them never to use any candle that was less than 51%

beeswax. Reading between the lines, I realized that supplying a product of lesser quality would put me out of business.

No fears; I can rely on Cathedral.”

Candles made of beeswax have great significance in traditional churches.

In every box of its beeswax altar candles, Cathedral encloses a card with this information: “True to the tenets of early Christian ages, the light these beeswax candles bring to a church signifies the presence of Christ. The human nature of Christ is symbolized by the purest form of beeswax produced from the bodies of virgin bees used to nourish each candle’s flame, making the flame proper in size and consistent, long-burning, of unchanging color. The candles expend themselves during burning as Christ expended Himself in His love for humankind. The lighting of them expresses the spiritual meaning: *Your light comes, and the splendor of the Lord goes over you.*”

Cathedral makes beeswax sanctuary lights to continue the tradition, dating to the Middle Ages, of a perpetually burning light serving as a tribute to the presence of Christ.

Cathedral’s candles of beeswax and stearine meet the requirements and preferences of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches. These include advent candles; candlelight service sets; Candlemas candles; vigil candles; all-occasion candles for use in the church and home (the practice of bringing a candle into your home is a sign that Christ is with you in your everyday life). Special-purpose decorated candles include those for baptism, confirmation, communion, weddings; and spectacular Paschal and Easter candles—some several feet high.

CATHEDRAL is famous for its decorated candles.

It continues to do hand work, applying ornamentation techniques Jacob Steigerwald brought to the United States—applying 24-karat gold, symbols made from wax, using other decorative materials. Not long ago, his great-grandsons introduced a new decoration method that dealers describe as **INNOVATIONAL**.

This started during a trip to Europe when a company candle designer—who had been doing this work for 35 years—studied how Easter candles were being decorated. He saw that the large candle was cast in one piece. Then an artist painted symbols over it, covering the medium’s translucent beauty. Back in Syracuse, he exclaimed to Lou and Mark Steigerwald: “Wax is like marble. It was as if they put paint over a marble statue.” As an alternative, the three discussed casting separate pieces of colored wax and placing them on the candle—Cathedral had perfected high-relief layered wax ornamentation techniques for wedding and other special-purpose candles. Continuing the designer’s metaphor of “marble”, they described their approach as “sculpture wax”. Cathedral’s trade name is now **SCULPTWAX®**.

The molded wax ornamentation introduces depth and relief; overlays of translucent colors blend, creating beautiful tonal effects. Cathedral’s first **SCULPTWAX®** Easter candle was called *Christ Victorious*. Reaching from its center are five wax nails into which frankincense is molded. “This sculpture wax approach to candle design created excitement among dealers and churches and is being replicated by other candle makers in the U.S. and overseas. We’re proud to have introduced it,” says Mark.

Cathedral's designs are based on ancient studies of liturgy. Their execution, however, uses contemporary graphic sophistication. Colors are fresh. The symbols may look exciting, but traditional components are there. "We want our products to help put everyone in the frame of mind for which symbolism is intended," explains Mark Steigerwald. "Young people are very symbol-conscious—just look at the logos, brand and team names emblazoned on their clothes and caps."

As well as being product innovators, Cathedral helps dealers extend awareness of the oldest and most important symbols of all: those of the Christian faith. "The ideas we apply to candles brings **CATHEDRAL CANDLE COMPANY** back to its beginnings," add the Steigerwald brothers. "Our great-grandfather Jacob had knowledge to share and was encouraged to bring it to America during a time of religious revival. By being creative, we continue his tradition of helping churches *to light religious faith with the living flame.*"

CANDLES & SYMBOLS

The religious symbol is a beautiful and poetic expression of a thought, an eye-word that appeals to mind and heart by its wealth of meaning. Symbols are used to express abstract ideas. For instance, a ring is love that has no end; the Trinity is shown by the triangle or interwoven circles.

For early persecuted Christians there was another motive: symbols were the means to safely communicate with other Christians when an oral message was not possible. Example: to the pagan, a fish drawn on the wall of a house indicated that within was being held the customary funeral banquet for the dead. If shown on a Christian home, the faithful would know that the Holy Sacrifice would be offered there during that night. Stylized drawings of a fish became common symbols of Christ; *ICHTYS*, the word for fish in Greek, uses the same first initials as the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior".

The symbol of the candle or shining light is based upon the Apocalypse. The church is said to be a candlestick, holding aloft a burning candle because Jesus is the light of the world.

Churches use colors representing penance and preparation during Advent, the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas. An additional candle is lit each Sunday in a church's advent wreath; the wreath grows in brightness as the days come closer to the approaching birth of Jesus, light of the world.

The Paschal candle symbolizes the rich new light Christ brings into a darkened world. The Paschal lamb, slaughtered on the first day of Passover, is one of the representations of Christ—Agnus Dei, lamb of God.

The Easter candle is a tall candle symbolizing that Christ is in our midst; it is kept burning during the Easter season

A votive candle represents an ongoing prayer for a special intention.

Colors

Gold is used at any time of the church year to represent victory, joy, eternal life.

White is a joyous liturgical color representing eternal life and light.

Green stands for growth, life, hope, victory.

Red is symbolic of fire, love, and sacrifice.

Blue is a blend or form of violet representing faith or trust.

Violet (the combination of red and blue) is the color of remorse, repentance, and preparation.





Decorative Symbols

The five-pointed star signifies our Lord's Epiphany... Then shall a star come out of Jacob (Numbers 24, 17; Revelations 22, 16).

The circle is emblematic of the idea of eternity.

The Fleur-de-Lys is widely used as a symbol of the Holy Trinity (and often signifies the Blessed Virgin).

For the Agnus Dei and use of the Lamb of God, see Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; and Revelations 5:12.

A bee is the symbol of the Resurrection and of the immortality of the soul.

The Easter Lily blooms at Eastertide and is a common symbol of our Lord's Resurrection.

The rose as a symbol dates back to the 13th century, and is a prophecy of Isaiah: "The desert shall blossom as the rose at the coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness".

The Chi Rho is a monogram formed of the Greek letters XP, an abbreviation of the Greek word for Christ (spelled ΧΡΥΣΤΟΣ—some scholars use the Greek word ΙΗΣΟΥΣ). They resemble the Roman letters X and P and are usually imposed on one another.

IHS is the abbreviation of the Greek word for Jesus; IHC is an abbreviation of the Latin words for "Jesus, Savior of Men." INRI is the Latin inscription for "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

The use of Alpha and Omega is based upon several Scripture verses such as Revelations 1:8. It means that Jesus is the beginning and the end of all things.

Of the 400 forms of the cross, about 50 are used in Christian symbolism. The Latin cross is made of 12 perfect squares arranged five from the bottom, five across, and two on top (eight squares high and five squares wide). The Eastern cross, composed of a vertical, two horizontal arms and a third arm placed in a slanting position, is used by the Eastern Orthodox Church. The upper arm represents the inscription placed over the head of our Lord; the lower slanting arm represents the foot rest, since the Eastern Church believes that He was crucified with feet side-by-side and not placed on top of one another.

The anchor meant the cross, a symbol of safety for the navigator on the stormy sea of life.

The lamb was the Lamb of God and the Paschal Victim. Symbols of the Holy Ghost are the descending dove and the flame of fire—a single flame or seven flames.

The story of Cathedral Candle Company is based on interviews, anecdotes, records, and published historical material. Historical data are from source books; information on symbolism comes from mid-nineteenth and twentieth century reference books and interviews with scholars.

This booklet was prepared by J. Arthur Rath, author of *A Hundred-Year Head Start on Tomorrow* (history of Eastman Kodak Company), *The History of Professional Photography*, *Soldiers Remember: World War II in the Pacific*, *Death Valley Days* (*True Stories*) and other books and articles.