

Thoughts, news and comments concerning the art and craft of Connick stained glass, published periodically by...
The Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation, Ltd., Orin E. Skinner, Founder Marilyn B. Justice, President
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Visiting Carl Paulson—Master Medallion Maker*

Albert M. Tannler

On an October Sunday afternoon, four days before his 98th birthday, Carl Paulson, wearing his red tassel hat, black and white wool checkered shirt with his trimmed full white beard, created a picturesque scene, sitting in front of the small paned bay window displaying family-created medallions of religious subjects. His family—children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, with their animals that had just received their annual blessing at church—moved in and out of the kitchen, while Paulson reminisced about his early days as a stained glass artist at Connick’s Studio.



Carl Paulson

*Two roads diverged in a wood and I,
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all of the difference*
Robert Frost

Paulson built his own home on what began as Catholic Farm Worker Land. An organic garden fed his large family and the orphaned children that he and his wife took in. Now some children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are living under the same roof (some have moved away). Paulson was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. He served in a state hospital in Maine after convincing the authorities when he was in jail that he was in fact against killing people.

When he was about 20, Paulson entered a contest and won a scholarship to go to Vesper George School of Art, founded around 1928 by noted Boston painter Vesper Lincoln George (1865-1934) on St. Botolph Street just around the corner from the Connick Studio.

Paulson quit art school after a short time and joined the Connick Studio to replace Stephen Bridges (1909-77), who made glass medallions but was leaving for Scotland. (Bridges worked for the Connick Studio 1930-34; spent part of 1934 through 1938 at Fort Augustus Abbey in Scotland, returned to the Studio in 1938 and remained through 1939.) Paulson learned how to make medallions under the tutelage of Bridges for two weeks before Bridges left. Paulson and Edgar Martin worked together making medallions for Connick.



Peacock

Orin Skinner recalled: “A friend told Connick about the old (Sandwich glass) factory (closed 1875). There were ditches around the factory where they dumped the broken pieces and pot cullet—what was left in the pot after they used what they could. We used clamming hoes to dig up the fragments.” (Connick Windows, June, 1993). Connick wrote about Sandwich glass in *Stained Glass* in 1932, and in *Adventures in Light and Color* in 1937, where he stated:

The Sandwich glass works seem to have turned out most remarkable pure colors between the years 1825 and 1875—dates that are often scornfully mentioned by writers on American art. Where did those formulas come from? And what happened to them when opalescent glass became the rage not long after 1875? My own impression is that those prismatic colors, worthy of the twelfth-century label, were carried with their formulas, into the mixtures of opalescent glass that was made by La Farge and his followers. Hints of those true, healthy colors can still be found hidden in hectic and muddy opalescent windows. [page 79]

Paulson said that the Sandwich shards were stored in boxes and barrels in Connick’s garage at 70 Hull Street, Newton. The boxes were sorted by type of glass—opaque or clear—but Connick used only the clear glass for the medallions.

Paulson made most of the medallions in Connick’s cellar. (He got quite a bit of personal attention because he was in the basement!) Connick would look at the newly made medallion and criticize it. Paulson sometimes had to change the color of glass. The medallion workers chose the glass for the medallions from Connick’s design which was often rather ‘sketchy.’ Every medallion varied from the others even when the subject was the same.



Star

Continued on the overleaf

- The Felicia Fund, Inc. has granted \$2,000.00 to the Connick Foundation for conservation of Princeton University designs that are under the care of the Boston Public Library Fine Arts Department.
- In early 2012, the Maihaugen Gallery and MIT Libraries will present *Glass at MIT*, an exhibit on the light, color and craft of glassmaking, featuring works from the Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation Collection, the MIT Glass Lab, and the Gaffield Collection. The exhibit will provide a close look at preeminent Boston artist Charles J. Connick’s windows, sketches and designs. Artists from MIT’s Glass Lab will display their own unique blown glasswork, and the exhibit will detail the combination of artistry and engineering that goes into the process of creating works of art in glass.
- Orin E. Skinner Lecture on stained glass by Brother Curtis Almquist: November 13, 2011; 2pm Monastery Chapel of Saint John the Evangelist, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA.
- Princeton Tour of stained glass: Led by British Arts& Crafts scholar, Peter Cormack, November 17th 9 am – 4 pm.
- Please see the Connick Foundation web site (www.cjconnick.org) for further information regarding these events.

Paulson described how a medallion is made. The worker selects the glass color and cuts the glass to match the design shapes, wraps each piece with copper foil, brushes flux on the copper, and melts solder on the copper (both sides) to stabilize the piece. Paulson made hundreds of Sandwich glass medallions. Indeed, eleven of the sixteen medallions illustrated in our 2012 calendar—Pegasus; Hypocrene; Windmill; the signs of the Zodiac: Capricorn, Gemini, and Leo; Blue Jay; Gardener (not Sandwich glass but antique glass); Swan; Peacock; and Star— were made by Paulson.

Each medallion made had a symbol and number scratched in the solder representing who put the medallion together and how many medallions had been made by that person previously. Carl Paulson’s symbol was “O.” “CJC” was engraved on the glass of each medallion.

The discarded Sandwich glass shards began a new life under the genius of Charles J. Connick and his dedicated artists.

*On October 2, 2011 Marilyn Justice met with Carl Paulson in his home. This article is based on Justice notes taken while Paulson shared his experiences working at the Connick Studio in the 1930’s.

Albert M. Tannler is Historical Collections Director, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and Director of the Connick Foundation.

All images shown in this Newsletter are by Ian Justice, Photographer.

■ Medallion calendars can be purchased from the Connick Foundation.



Swan