

Connick Windows

Thoughts, news and comments concerning the art and craft of Connick stained glass, published periodically by....

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Directors: Jessie B. Danielsen Jonathan L. Fairbanks Elizabeth B. Johnson Orin E. Skinner, President

Caring For Your Stained Glass Windows

As the caretakers of stained glass windows, how can we make informed decisions as to when and what kind of restoration is needed? Dan Maher, who spent some of his early stained glass career at the Connick Studio, writes the following on caring for your stained glass windows.

DOCUMENTATION: Photographic records along with a condition analysis and replacement value are essential documents especially in the event of fire or loss. Monitoring the condition of windows over a long period of time will reveal why and how fast a window is deteriorating which is more valuable than a spot inspection. Church and town historians can be particularly useful in passing on documentation across the limited spans of generations, building commitments and our memories.

GET HELP: Stained glass studios are usually very generous with offering information and advice in the form of proposals. However, the drawback of proposals is in trying to differentiate among the amount, quality, and cost of the work being offered. Usually a lower price reflects a lesser scope of work. The proposal method has resulted in a downward spiral in the quality of most restoration. In order to obtain truly competitive bids contractors must be bidding on the same specification. It will be money well spent to hire a conservation consultant or architect with experience in stained glass projects to develop and monitor a specification for your windows.

HIRE QUALIFIED RESTORERS: A studio that is entrusted with the restoration of a window should have previous experience or extensive knowledge of the artist's work. The Connick Studio used a wide array of glasses such as Norman and pressed slabs and, in order to accommodate the varying thickness of the glass, leads were custom crafted to achieve the artist's vision. The restorers duty is to correct the structural deficiencies, but above all to preserve the artist's intent.

AVOID TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS: Even in poor condition a stained glass window is one of the most striking visual elements in architecture. During the energy crisis of the 1970's the idea of "Protective Glazing" for windows swept into our conscience to preserve heat and make the windows last longer. The vast majority of the so-called "Protective Glazing" is not ventilated enough, causing heat build-up and trapped moisture which results in accelerated damage to the windows and the frames. "Protective Glazing" is no substitute for real and substantial restoration.

MAKE A LONG TERM PLAN: Anticipate that all windows will someday need restoration. As part of a condition analysis ask for a prioritization chart and a projected budget to restore each window. Commit to have each window restored by as highly a skilled artisan as the artist who created this precious work of art. Demand the quality needed to preserve the hand of the artist for the generations to come. On a recent tour of local churches here in Boston I had the opportunity to see a number of Connick windows dating from 1916 through 1941. As a restorer it was quite educational to see a variety of conditions in windows produced by one studio spread over a period of time. Almost without exception at each church the Pastor or a member of the congregation would ask me "How do our windows look?" , "Are they in good shape?", "What do we need to do?" and "How do we begin?".

The typical life of a stained glass window is anywhere from 75 to 150 years before some sort of maintenance or restoration is needed. The first obvious sign of aging is buckling (when windows no longer appear flat), which, in and of itself, is not necessarily an indication that the window should be immediately restored. As the leads stretch in buckling they actually become stiffer. The buckling may then reach a point of stasis and remain unchanged for decades. Time and gravity, however, win this battle and reveal any structural deficiencies in the leaded design. The buckling eventually becomes severe causing lead joints to crack, support wires to break, and separations between the lead and the glass to occur. These are the signs of active deterioration or "progressive disrepair" and indicate that the window should be restored.

Recommended Reading:

Conservation of Stained Glass in America, A Manual for Studios and Caretakers, by Julie Sloan; Art in Architecture Press, Tonetta Lake Road, Brewster, NY 10509 (914) 278-2187.

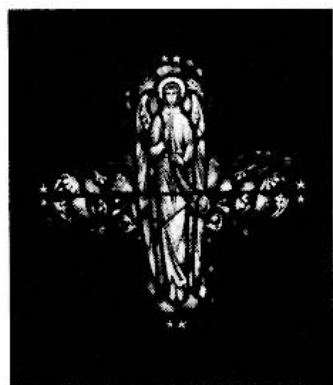
Conservation and Restoration of Stained Glass: An Owners Guide, prepared by the Census of Stained Glass in America, Stained Glass Associates, P.O. Box 1531, Raleigh, NC 27602.

(A more complete list of books, articles and information as well as organizations to contact is available upon request of the Daniel Maher Stained Glass Studio, 266 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.. For a Restoration Resource Guide call (617) 661-5771).

One definition of Window is "a means of obtaining information". Our newsletter will keep you informed of the Foundation's activities, the Connick Collection in the Fine Arts Department of Boston Public Library, and Connick news around the country.



"Light of the World", the center lancet of an east nave clerestory window at the Wilshire Methodist Church, Los Angeles, designed by Charles J. Connick Associates. Courtesy of the trustees of the Boston Public Library of the City of Boston. Note also the quatrefoil on overleaf, from the Wilshire Methodist Church.



Connick News

University of Pittsburgh has published a splendid "guide book" of Heinz Memorial Chapel with Herb Ferguson's fine photographs of the Connick windows. This publication tells us just enough to inspire our wonder, interest and wish to visit Pittsburgh and experience the beauty and spirituality of this neo-gothic chapel. Our June newsletter will be devoted to the Connick windows at the University of Pittsburgh in Heinz Chapel, Stephen Foster Memorial, and Cathedral of Learning.

William R. Jones, Professor of History, University of New Hampshire lectured on "The Middle Ages in New England, The Connick Studio and Gothic Stained Glass" Wednesday, February 8th in Manchester, NH.

A fire at the **Wilshire Methodist Church**, Los Angeles destroyed three Connick windows, three lancets each. Another three lancet window was badly damaged.

Marie Tatina, the church's choice of artist to create new windows in the Connick tradition, came to Boston to study Wilshire Methodist Church materials in the Connick Archives, Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library. Fortunately, because the Wilshire Methodist Church windows were installed between 1943 and 1962, the cartoons and designs are in stable condition and were used by Ms. Tatina. *Many of the earlier Connick records are in fragile condition and cannot be used until they are conserved.* We wish Wilshire Methodist Church and Ms. Tatina the very best in undertaking this difficult project.

"The Glory of Great English Cathedrals: From Canterbury to York", a stained glass tour May 9 - 19, 1995 by Travel Seminars, plans to visit some of the places Charles Connick discusses in *Adventures in Light and Color*. For more information contact Travel Seminars, 116 Burlington Street, Lexington, MA 02173, telephone (617) 862-3986.