

Connick Windows

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 February, 2004

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An Archival Adventure

Ron Klebick



Cartoon for part of *Pilgrim's Progress* window in Heinz Memorial Chapel's narthex

My involvement in "The Norwood Project," as I have named it, began in November, 2000 when I "unselfishly" volunteered to spend a weekend in sunny Boston to assist the Connick Foundation with some organizational tasks. As fate would have it, I traded a brief vacation from my duties as Assistant Director of Heinz Chapel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for a project in which I have invested over 250 hours to date.

The project actually began with the end of the Connick Studio in 1986 when the dedicated craftsmen faced their most difficult job: packing up 73 years of work for donation to the Boston Public Library (BPL). One facet of this seemingly insurmountable task was to place the surviving cartoons into archival tubes. Unfortunately, the tremendous volume of materials packed in the final months left little time for organization. Each tube was filled to capacity, and in no particular order. These tubes eventually found a home at the BPL storage facility in Norwood, Massachusetts.

The storage facility was nondescript in appearance, but from the moment I entered I was seized with childlike excitement. Gazing upon the shelves of over 400 tubes, I instantly recalled movies in which explorers discovered caves filled with forgotten pirate treasure. Were my Connick windows among these hidden works of art? As I scanned the handwritten content labels on each tube, I felt personally connected to the studio - to think, the hand that wrote these labels helped create some of history's most exquisite and enduring art. Although I was disappointed that "Heinz Chapel, Pittsburgh" was not on any label, I was thrilled and honored to be there.

Although an inventory existed, upon inspection it proved to be inaccurate. After three years work, the collection has been completely reorganized. Tubes with duplicate numbers were re-cataloged. The five-foot long tubes were, laboriously, re-shelved in numerical order and a new inventory was

compiled based on the affixed labels. A spreadsheet was now needed for convenient reference.

Yet, how could I create a simple inventory, when there was no comprehensive database of the 5,455 Connick Studio jobs executed throughout the world? Thus began the core of the project. My vision is that someday, through the internet, this database of window subjects, project dates, building donors, architects, etc. will reveal the scope of Connick's work and allow people to quickly find Connick windows in their own city, state or country.

One sad fact remains: there is no way to verify that any tube label accurately reflects the contents within. The fragile condition of the cartoons prohibits their removal without risk of damage. Until funding is obtained to preserve them from the ravages of time, we will never truly know what cartoons are housed at Norwood. Only proper conservation will reveal if *my* windows - and *yours* - may still be among them.

This ongoing project could not continue without the dedication of Marilyn Justice and the generous cooperation of Janice Chadbourne, Curator of Fine Arts at the BPL. Most importantly, I thank Pat Gibbons, Heinz Chapel Director, for relinquishing me from my job to work on this project. -- RK

While attending undergraduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh, Ron Klebick paid his rent by working part-time as a student assistant for weddings at Heinz Memorial Chapel. In 1991, less than two years after graduating, he was drawn back to the beauty and serenity of the chapel to accept the position of Events Coordinator. Three years and over 1000 events later, he moved into the position of Assistant Director.



Cartoon for part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, one of a series of Christian Epic Windows in choir, Princeton University Chapel

Photographs in this Newsletter are courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library.



Cartoon for the Music window in Heinz Memorial Chapel

Connick Windows

*"I want to make beautiful interiors for both churches and souls
I want...[all people] to hear my windows singing..."*

Charles J. Connick

■ The Stained Glass Association of America will hold its summer convention in Boston in late June. As part of this event the Boston Public Library and The Connick Foundation plan an exhibition of selected Connick materials to be shown in the Boston Room at the Boston Public Library, Copley Square for the month of June.

■ Charles J. Connick and his Associates gave friends and admirers gifts of 'light and color' including stained glass medallions and copies of *Adventures in Light and Color*, Charles Connick's tome modestly subtitled *An Introduction to the Stained Glass Craft*. Recently a few of these gifts have kindly been given to The Connick Foundation to enhance our collection:

From the children of John E. Wallace, a previous minister of the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church and former worker at the Connick Studio, The Connick Foundation has received two original Sandwich glass medallion designs by Charles Connick, a small panel of *Shepherd and Sheep* by Frances and Orin Skinner, a circular medallion of a castle by CJC, a copy of *Adventures in Light and Color* and a video of John Bishop's film of the Connick Studio, *The Last Window*.

The Sisters of Saint Anne, Bethany kindly gave us a copy of *Adventures in Light and Color* and a copy of Ralph Adams Cram's *The Substance of Gothic*.

Sarah McKeige, great-granddaughter of Boston stained glass artist Donald MacDonald (1841-1916) supported the video filming of Lance Kasparian's lecture November 2003 on Donald MacDonald.*

Perhaps the most unique gift received to date has been an old wooden box filled with glass fragments from the Connick Studio. As part of their wedding 'trousseau' gifts Mrs. Pat Wirtenberg bestowed this unusual gift upon her husband Leon whose visions of work in stained glass were inspired by the lively atmosphere at the Connick Studio. At the Connick Foundation when the dark box was opened in the sunlight, the glass fragments sparkled with a brilliant splendor that put us in mind of Charles Connick's words in *Adventures in Light and Color* describing his first adventure with stained glass in Horace Rudy's studio "...when a match flashed and he lighted the gas, I was transported into a fairyland so strange and lovely".

■ *This video as well as *The Last Window* and the documentary video of Orin E. Skinner's last major lecture *The History and Practice of Stained Glass* can be borrowed from the Foundation's video library.