

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 June, 2007
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Connick Family Friends

Albert M. Tannler

On March 9, 2007, Marilyn Justice and I drove to Sycamore Creek Nursing Center in Coraopolis, Pa., some 15 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, to meet Miss Christine Stolzenbach, born June 29, 1903. The invitation had come through her friend and former neighbor, Martha Murdock, who had written that Miss Stolzenbach's mother "was a stenographer for Mr. Connick Sr., and that she herself knew 'Charlie' as she referred to him. It seems he stayed at the Stolzenbach house in Sewickley on some of his visits to Pittsburgh, being a long time family friend."

To say that Christine Stolzenbach is a remarkable person would be an understatement. It was a fascinating afternoon. Afterward, Marilyn returned to Boston and I to Pittsburgh to ponder and verify. Joan Gaul had documented the Connick family's early years in Pittsburgh in *Connick Windows* (February/June 2000). Marilyn and I had serendipitously met an individual who first appeared in that world in 1903 and whose parents connected her to events and persons before her birth.

Christine's story takes us back to the 1880s. In 1883 George Herbert Connick (1851-1902) moved his family to Pittsburgh from Springboro, PA. He initially sold advertising for Axtell, Rush & Co., publishers of *The National Stockman and Farmer*, but in 1888 became manager of the Mercantile Protective Bureau, Room 504, 708 Penn Avenue, established according to *Pittsburgh and Allegheny Illustrated Review* (1889) "for the purpose of providing mutual protection against dishonest creditors and . . . a means for the prompt and efficient collections of debts." During 1887 and 1888 George Connick would call upon the services of a stenographer who worked three floors below in Room 204: Miss Hatte Evans of Beaver Falls, PA.

Hattie (Harriet) met a young Pittsburgher of German descent, Conrad Stotzenbach, who worked for a drug company. (He later worked for a tobacconist and a confectioner.) They married circa 1895 and moved to Sewickley, PA, on the Ohio River northwest of Pittsburgh. Eventually they purchased a house at 253 Thorn Street and had three daughters: Helen, Anne and Christine.

Christine remembers Charlie when she was a child, although how early is not clear. He returned to Pittsburgh from Boston the year Christine was born and she would have been 4-years-old when he left Pittsburgh for New York in late 1907 on a journey that led back to Boston. But he still had family in Pittsburgh and his first major job—all the windows for Bertram Goodhue's First Baptist Church—would have brought him back in 1911-12. Her earliest memory is that he brought her beautifully illustrated books. Mostly she was enchanted, but remembers once being frightened by depictions of caves. She also recalls a visit when Charlie told her family about his brother Ernest's adventures working on a farm—the Connick Foundation has letters from Ernest written between November 1913 and December 1914 from a farm in Stockbridge, MA.



The author with Christine Stolzenbach
Photo by Martha Murdock



'Fountain of Inspiration'
by C. J. Connick
Photo by Martha Murdock

Charles Connick and his sister Grace would visit the Stotzenbach house for a meal or as houseguests; once they had to turn Grace away when Conrad was ill. Charlie, Christine recalls, was very good company. He had a wonderful sense of humor and wasn't finicky about food. Christine remembers gladly giving up her bedroom when Charlie stayed, moving temporarily to a room in the attic. She also recalls that Charlie loved classical music.

In the 1920s, Christine received her degree in French and began a teaching career outside the Pittsburgh area. Christine's later memories of Charlie in Pittsburgh are of the 1930s, when Connick windows were being created for East Liberty Church and the University of Pittsburgh's Heinz Chapel. One summer the family invited Charlie to stay with them in Sewickley rather than in a club near the University. Anne worked as secretary to Homer Saint Gaudens, son of the famous sculptor and director from 1921-50 of the Art Department of the Carnegie Institute, across the street from Heinz Chapel. That summer Christine was taking a course at the University so Anne drove her sister and Charlie to and from the University each day.

After they retired, Christine and Anne (Helen had died in the 1920s) shared the Sewickley house. They inherited the medallion (shown above) given to their mother by Charles Connick, created from glass he salvaged from the Sandwich Glass Company. Christine has given the medallion to Martha Murdock. Christine Stotzenbach's memories, like Charles Connick's medallion, remind one of a phrase from Connick's "Ancient Colors in Sandwich Glass" (1932)—"articulations of glowing nuggets from . . . a century ago."

Albert M. Tannler is Historical Collections Director of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. He is a frequent contributor to *Connick Windows* and gave the OES Annual Lecture in 2005. On April 21, 2007, Mr. Tannler gave an illustrated talk, "Charles J. Connick: The Education of a Stained Glass Master" to a Pittsburgh meeting of the Decorative Arts Trust. Afterward, he led a tour of stained glass windows at Calvary Episcopal Church.



Photo by
Ian Justice

The Luongo Charitable Trust recently gifted the Connick Foundation this Blue Jay medallion designed by Charles J. Connick and made by Helen Wiedermann. Helene Luongo nee Wiedermann worked at the Connick Studio during its middle years as a designer and as one of the artists who created Connick's famous Sandwich Glass medallions. Miss Wiedermann who went on to develop her own stained glass career was also known for her vocal concerts. In addition to the Blue Jay medallion, the Connick Foundation received several handsome small medallions designed by Mrs. Luongo and works on paper related to the Connick Studio. St. Benedict Abbey in Still River, MA, adjacent to the Luongo's home, has been the recipient of many other treasures from the Luongos.

The Connick Foundation is extremely grateful to all those who connect us in various ways with the Connick Studio heritage. The Connick Studio kept scrupulous records now all carefully preserved. Oral history and materials existing outside the Studio's records are valuable and contribute to the history of this famous American studio. The Connick Foundation welcomes all gifts pertaining to the Connick Studio.

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