

Connick Windows

Summer 2013

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75 Years on Campus

Joan Gaul

The Heinz Memorial Chapel at the University of Pittsburgh, a gem, will celebrate its 75th anniversary on November 25, 2013. The Chapel began as the fulfillment of H. J. Heinz's 1919 bequest to build a building on campus in honor of his mother. The building became a chapel through the Heinz children and the University's recognition of the elder Heinz's life long interests in education and religion. Ground was broken in 1933.

Charles Z. Klauder, the architect of Pitt's Cathedral of Learning was in charge. Artists would direct the stone work, wood carving, and ironwork. Connick Studios were to do the five stained glass windows in the chancel. In the 1930s, as in the 1880s, it was common to begin a religious building with some major stained glass windows. The other openings, awaiting donors, held temporary glass. At the time of the Chapel's conception and



building, a number of excellent glass studios were available to the client.

The story of how the window job grew from five to twenty-three is told in the Heinz Chapel archives. The major characters in the story were Howard Heinz and the University, the clients, and Charles Connick, the artist. John Weber, Secretary of the University, was the go-between in a voluminous correspondence, which begins in 1933 when Connick bid the job — with a vision. He wanted the whole job, all windows, large and small.

Connick sent original drawings to Weber and Klauder in early November 1933. In an 11 page double spaced letter, he outlined his thoughts based on what he thought he knew of the elder Heinz, and his interests, primarily his interest in the Sunday School movement. The transept would have a large figure of Christ and the nave would have many children. The theme of the Chapel would be Christian teaching. The windows would depict "a world in which saints and heroes still live." Connick, a prolific writer, also wrote about what he knew: light. He wrote of considerations normal to any job, and he became specific on Pittsburgh, a then heavily industrial city. He wrote, "Pittsburgh light has mysterious qualities that are almost unique. It sometimes has the harsh brilliance of California light, and at other times — days on end — its light is as mild as that of England." He advocated the Chancel windows as key, proposing that the other windows be done in temporary glass, for which the cost of making and installation "could be largely assumed by the master craftsman given the entire contract."

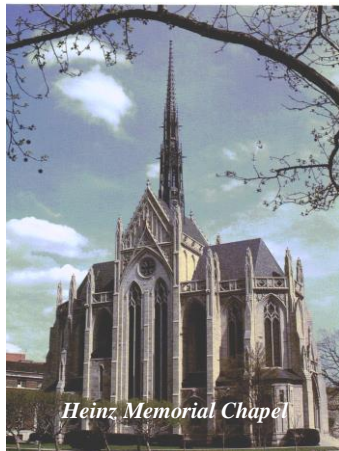
In May of 1934, still hoping for the whole project, Connick wrote Weber that he had been named a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was still pitching in November. Heinz and Weber were at a Princeton meeting, and he invited them to come to Boston to see the windows. Weber may have gone. Connick reiterated the advantage of temporary glass while completing the plan. The correspondence for the next two years ranged in subject from the specific and businesslike to the more general. It often concerned who would populate the windows and is replete with literary references and snatches of poetry.

By February 1937 Connick was working on the four 73-foot tall transept windows, which now, instead of single figures, were to have multiple characters symbolizing Temperance, Truth, Tolerance, and Courage. At the same time, Connick began to see that his vision for the Chapel's windows might be fulfilled. He spoke to his staff in three long pages. He wanted corrections, closer supervision, and finally, "What I want about this place — I want this place to be so sympathetic with me and to have such an understanding of my weaknesses that where I am weak you are strong, and where I let a thing drop, I want this whole gang to act as a back stop." Later in February, Connick received the signed contract for the transept. The following month Weber wrote to Connick asking for changes in the iconography. Telegrams went back and forth on this subject as late as July.

Good news came earlier. In April, Connick heard from James Mullaney, his man on site, that Howard Heinz was beginning to worry about the rest of the windows, beginning to appreciate that possibly he would have to "let" the whole thing. "Chance of a life time," wrote Connick. In mid-April Weber wrote that Connick should be ready for a discussion on the balance of the windows in June. Howard Heinz named a number in September.

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Continued

Work on the windows accelerated. Between the beginning of November when the first transept window, Temperance, arrived through the beginning of 1938 the other three transept windows were shipped and set. The last two, Truth and Tolerance, were not well received. Howard Heinz requested a comparative count of the glass in the four windows. More glass was shipped and, as of January 25, 1938, Connick was still seeking final approval on the aisle and clerestory. On February 7, after a visit to Pittsburgh, Connick wrote a three-page critique and sent sections of the Tolerance and Truth transept windows back to Boston. On February 9 Connick wrote that the other aisle windows were ready for Heinz and Weber to see. Later that month Howard Heinz wrote to Connick, "please reassure me that you are not cutting costs on the latest work." Connick sent a conciliatory reply and wrote, "We're working on it." He noted that it was too bad Heinz couldn't have seen the work in progress.

When the project was finished, Connick's studio had made 23 windows, which totaled approximately 4,000 square feet, and contained nearly 250,000 pieces of glass. Pictured in the windows were 3911 identifiable people plus a large supporting cast of anonymous individuals and an extensive variety of flora and fauna. Many of Connick's early ideas were there. New and Old Testament figures were present in numbers. Saints and Heroes abounded. Isabella of Spain appeared, but so did Victor Herbert, first conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Today, well maintained, the Chapel has seen few changes. In 1996 a small addition was built to make the facility accessible. The organ has been replaced, and the sound and lighting upgraded. The non-denominational chapel is still, as envisioned, a place for quiet contemplation, but it is also a lively place. People with a University connection soon realized that there was no more beautiful place for a wedding or one more sacred for a memorial. Traditional University events take place annually. Religious services are held. There are concerts and musical events by young artists. Each year approximately 1,500 events take place, and an estimated more than 100,000 people participate in religious services, weddings, concerts, class, memorial services, and guided tours.

Pittsburgh writer, Joan Gaul has written on stained glass artists for *Stained Glass Quarterly*, British Society of Master Glass Painters' *Journal of Stained Glass*, and *Connick Windows* (February and June 2000). Ms. Gaul has written text for the attractive publication *Heinz Memorial Chapel*.

Attention

The Connick Foundation Fall Tour 2013 – October 5-6. A two day examination of Connick in context, looking at works in the immediate Boston suburbs, led by British scholar Peter Cormack MBE, FSA. More details about this and other activities will be available on our website!

Historic Newton is hosting an exhibition at the Jackson Homestead in early Fall on Charles J Connick and his work. www.historicnewton.org

Heinz Memorial Chapel will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Saturday, November 23, 2013, 2:30 through 8 PM The program includes a renewal of vows, reception, dinner and an Anniversary concert. All are welcome. For more information: www.heinzchapel.pitt.edu or call 412-624-4157.

Heinz Memorial Chapel and Clara Barton window photo credit: Herb Ferguson