

# Connick Windows

Winter 2014

---

*The Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation, Ltd.*, Orin E. Skinner, Founder Marilyn B. Justice, President  
Directors and Officers: Theresa D. Cederholm Judith G. Edington Jeremy J.H. Grubman Charles S. Hayes  
Elizabeth Ann Justice David A. Martland Albert M. Tannler Ann Baird Whiteside  
Peter D. Cormack Jonathan L. Fairbanks Elizabeth B. Johnson (honorary)  
Lorrie A. McAllister Kimberly M. Tenney (ex officio)

---

## THE PASSIONIST: CHARLES CONNICK IN NEW JERSEY

*A special series by architectural historian John Gomez, M.S., Historic Preservation, Columbia University*

In 2011, the Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation, guided by the eminent stained glass scholar Peter Cormack, M.B.E., F.S.A., toured two major American Gothic landmarks at Princeton University: the Graduate College (Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson; 1911-1913) and Princeton Chapel (Cram & Ferguson; 1919-1928). There, glowing perpetually within soaring, silent spaces, are perhaps Charles J. Connick's greatest glass monuments - the World War I Memorial ("The Holy Grail Window"), half-hidden in a tall bay window area in the Graduate College's hammerbeam-ceilinged Proctor Hall, and the Christian epics-themed choir and chancel windows cordoned off, though visible from the foot of the altar, inside Princeton Chapel.

On that drizzly, damp November day, dozens of registered tourists were unexpectedly enthralled by Connick's consummate control of color, light, movement and leading in the tightly-spaced lancets; the Chapel's cinematic depictions of the age's great literary masterpieces caused all to stare up in draw-dropping awe. Both University works, though separated by acres - and years - across the Cram-designed campus, displayed the same Connick majesty and mysticism: animated at once, with the first glance-trigger; arisen and alive, with slow-motion movement; emitting haunting sounds, muffled music; visceral and poetic to the prismatic core.

The Princeton event, enlivened by Mr. Cormack's passion for stained glass as a "world art," was a watershed moment for me as an architectural historian with a sustained interest in stained glass guilds and their close associations with architects. The tour, besides introducing me to the Foundation, prompted me to ponder Connick further: what other commissions in New Jersey did his Boston studio carry out? Were they also "monuments," as Connick referred to his Princeton windows, equal in artistic supremacy despite being rendered on a far more diminutive glass canvas?

It is my interest in the stained glass master's smaller strokes these last three years that has taken me to outlying New Jersey municipalities, suburbs and hamlets - Newark, Union City, Englewood, West Orange, Montclair - to houses of worship small in structure and congregation yet substantial in scope and artistry. These are special sites where discoveries have been, and are still being, made; where, window by window, Connick's passion and canon have, for me, fallen into deep focus.

### PART I: THE NEWARK CODEX

Grace Church stands imposingly at 950 Broad Street, in New Jersey's largest city, Newark, at the southern end of a long, largely commercial thoroughfare demarcated by multi-denominational stone churches designed by star 19th-century church architects like Richard Upjohn, William Halsey Wood, William H. Kirk and John Welch. Grace Church, perhaps the most significant ecclesiastical landmark in the once-industrial city, was planned and erected by Upjohn (1802-1878) between 1847 and 1848 - he had just completed his masterwork, Trinity Church, at Broadway and Wall Street - in an Early English Gothic mode at a cost of \$35,000, and remains among the firm's "most fully realized" commissions, according to architectural historian Donald W. Geyer. The classic cruciform exterior is super-structured with locally quarried dark brownstone blocks - a defining Upjohn material - and is fronted by an imposing broached tower. The interior is, unexpectedly, a visual tour de force, unfolding in five eye-led tiers: original gilded hammerbeam ceiling with revealed rafters and purlins; 45-foot-high reredos of Caen stone designed in 1872 by Newark architect Alfred Neumann; Stations of the Cross crafted in 1930 by famed Dutch architect and sculptor Joseph Cuypers (1861-1949); Blessed Sacrament altar designed in 1940 by Frank Cleveland of Cram & Ferguson; figural glass of sheer ethereality.

To arrive at Connick amidst this splendor, a text-book space of memorial stained glass windows by other firms must first be crossed. The north nave, nearly 150-feet deep, is illumined with haunting Valentine d'Ogries (1889-1959) windows; to the south, across the entire aisle, rare 1872 Nathaniel Westlake windows - his London firm, Lavers, Barraud and Westlake, which lasted from 1853-1921, worked primarily in Britain - glow with the sensual figural style and subdued setting and atmosphere of the English Arts & Crafts Movement. The transepts are equally evocative: the south transept with a

stunning 3-lancet Clayton & Bell memorial and, on the west wall, a blue-tinted Charles Eamer Kempe (1837-1907) window; the north transept with a window designed by Heaton, Butler and Bayne of London.

Finally, against the south wall in the chancel, Connick's presence comes into view with three radiant memorials designed and installed between 1937 and 1938. The east window, nearest the altar, was commissioned in 1937 to honor the clergy of the parish's first 100 years; it depicts in two lancets the effigies of St. James Minor and St. Aidan. The middle window, also installed in 1937, is dedicated to the memory of the church's ninth rector, the Rev. George Martin Christian, with the figures of St.



Athanasius and St. Thomas Aquinas. The third window, from 1938, is in honor of the Rev. Dr. Charles Lewis Gomph, the rector responsible for bringing in Connick and Cram & Ferguson to complete Grace Church's decoration scheme during the Depression and WWII; it depicts the Venerable Bede and St. Dunstan. Stylistically, all three windows represent Connick's next-to-last stage - the late-1930s - and echo the windows he designed during the same period for St. Vincent Ferrer in Manhattan and East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh: tall central figures levitating in unobstructed stained glass space; brilliant kaleidoscopic hues of ruby, red, green, blue; emanating yellow halo fill.

But it is another, almost-invisible, Connick window, set in a slender opening in the east wall of the south transept, above the Cram & Ferguson reredos, that closes the brief yet pivotal Connick chapter here - and which unequivocally equates him with Grace Church's London-strong masters. A Holy Eucharist-themed window designed in early 1941 - though not installed until 1944, at the parish's insistence, due to fears of aerial bombardment brought on by the attack on Pearl Harbor - glows in a dense cerulean blue typical of Connick's final stylistic period, as dramatically defined by his work at Heinz Chapel in Pittsburgh. Connick's Holy Eucharist window at Grace - with its small mirroring images of the consecrations of the bread and the wine - could have been pulled from the climbing choirs of Heinz, with its mandorlas swelling and squeezed in with long, bending figurines and cascading creeds and inscriptions. It is a shadowy window, purposely darkened at the request of the parish because of strong eastern light.

Connick's four glazings here are a triumphant conclusion to the stained glass codex that has remained, since Grace Church's beginnings, wide open.

*Note: The author is indebted to the Rev. Dr. J. Brent Bates, Grace Church, Newark, New Jersey; Grace Church historian Bruce Ford; architectural photographer Brian Kutner; the librarians and staff of the Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library, Charles J. Connick & Associates Archives; and the curators of the Charles J. Connick Stained Glass Foundation Collection, MIT Libraries Special Collections.*

Next: *Part II: The Rite of George Sotter*

Our gratitude goes to all who have contributed in answer to our annual appeal. Your generosity furthers the efforts of the Foundation.

We thank Milda B. Richardson for her informative lecture on Maginnis and Walsh, given on November 5, 2013.

The 2014 Tour is scheduled for May 24 and 25 in Pittsburgh, PA. We will be visiting Heinz Memorial Chapel, and several other interesting locations. Online registration will begin as soon as the itinerary is confirmed. Stay tuned!