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The Landmarks of Federal Hill: "Connie Mac" Captures the Story of Federal Hill, in Colorful Paintings

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The Landmarks
of Federal Hill

By Comm. Joseph R. Muratore (C) 1979

"Connie Mac" Captures the Story of Federal Hill, in Colorful Paintings

Connie MacDonald, "Connie Mac," as she has become to be known, a photographic artist from Federal Hill, has captured the Federal Hill story in her paintings.

She has painted many truly colorful and artistic scenes of people, events, occasions and landmarks so vividly that whenever they have been placed on display they have brought back memories for many old enough to remember and for many who were youngsters.

She has had one person exhibitions of her paintings at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish Hall, the Columbus National Bank and Providence City Hall. Over the years, she has sold half of these paintings to many persons and firms. They are on display and many of them she has given as gifts as momentoes.

Her first formal showing of these paintings was in 1975 in the Parish Hall of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. This presentation was of the majestic but humble history of Federal Hill. It took over two years of effort by Connie Mac.

This presentation was of the majestic but humble history of Federal Hill. It took over two years of effort by Connie Mac. She said the painting of this art memorial of Federal Hill "was one of her most challenging endeavors," but "it was a labor of love."

"This feeling has been captured and the warm and realistic portrayal of these landmarks with which I have been so familiar," she said. These paintings were inspired from newspaper stories and clippings.

Many of the photographs, or her guides as Connie calls them, are pictures which over the years appeared in numerous newspaper articles.

In addition to persons and landmarks of the past, she has painted pictures of Rep. Aldo Freda, Jerry Vale, Mag. Cavalaro, Aux. Bishop Angell, Cav. Basso and Frank Traficante (for many years director of the Federal Hill House).

She has captured some of old Federal Hill-its pushcarts, colorful old buildings, people, streets and their original settings and color.

"I want to capture everything I remember about the Hill, before it goes down the drain forever," Connie Mac said at the time of the first showing. She reiterates that the newspaper photographs and her memories have helped her to create the scenes and characters that marked the Italian cradle of yesteryear, Federal Hill.

Connie takes great pleasure in saying that she is delighted in standing behind visitors and listening to them identifying old sights. She further says, "I could place myself right in that era and I could visualize everything I was painting. I could put my whole heart and soul in it."

She certainly accomplished what she has set out to do-to capture the uniqueness of the past. However, to everyone's present delight, true Federal Hill did have a uniqueness of its own and we all thought it would never be reborn to its fullest.

Many are delighted to see that during our lifetime we have been able to see a renaissance occur. Federal Hill has had a rebirth and the beauty which now exists on Federal Hill is only the beginning of what it will be like within the next three to five years.

"The Cheese Man" - Cav. S. Francis Basso, proprietor of the Providence Cheese & Delicatessen on Atwell's Ave. This photo is today owned by Lindy's Omelet House in Newport, R.I. Cav. Basso was one of the pioneer businessmen, who in 1969 purchased a normal cheese store and has transformed it into a unique Italian Speciality Cheese, Macaroni and specialized delicacies. It is unique, not only to Rhode Island, but to the United States. Articles about him and his business have been written in numerous state and national culinary magazines.
Connie Mac shown explaining her paintings, during a showing of "The Federal Hill Story in Paint," during its exhibition at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Federal Hill. Viewing the exhibit of Msgr. Cavallahro, Pastor of Mt. Carmel Church.

"Pushcart row 1920". The marketplace on Belbo Ave., presently known as DePasquale Ave. This picture is presently owned by Abar Color Laboratories, 363 Eddy St., Providence, R.I.

John DiOrio shown with horse-drawn hearse, when his place of business was next to 216 Atwells Ave. This building still exists today. White hearses were in common use in 1910 and later until the miracle drugs were developed, as there were so many children that died, that children's funerals were very common. This picture later became part of a college of pictures for the painting that Connie Mac drew of the DiOrio family.

"The Monsignor" - Painting of Msgr. Galliano J. Cavallaro, Pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church of 12 Spruce St. This painting was donated to Msgr. Cavallahro.

"Pushcart row 1920" - The marketplace on Belbo Ave., presently known as DePasquale Ave. This picture is presently owned by Abar Color Laboratories, 363 Eddy St., Providence, R.I.

"The DiOrio Family" - This well known family of funeral directors, were located at the corner of Dean and Atwells Ave. In this picture, Connie Mac has captured the entire DiOrio undertaking family. The white, horse-drawn hearse, the later mechanized white hearse. A picture of their expanded location to which they moved later, at the corner of Dean and Atwells Ave. In the background can be seen the belfry of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, and in the lower right hand corner is the flower shop which was also owned by the DiOrio Family, adjacent to their funeral parlor on Atwells Ave.

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"Frank Trifacante," Director of Federal Hill House for many years shown with his reassuring arm on shoulder of Michael MacDonald. Also shown in this picture are an original Federal Hill photo and a photo of the interior of the Federal Hill House during its formative stages when it rendered innumerable services to the community, such as inoculations, childrens' clinics, a milk distribution center, pre-natal care for expectant mothers, a gymnasium, a Boy Scout Troop, and at a time stage for theatrical productions, sewing lessons, English conversational lessons and so many functions to a new community, it truly was a focal point.