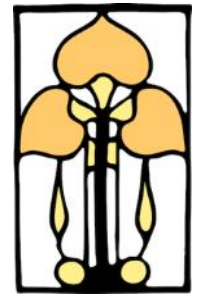


FRIENDS of HISTORIC SECOND CHURCH

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FREDERIC CLAY BARTLETT AT 150: CELEBRATING THE ARTIST AND COLLECTOR *by William Tyre*

June 1st marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Frederic Clay Bartlett. Although many know his name today as the donor of an incredibly important collection of post-Impressionist paintings to the Art Institute (including Seurat's iconic "A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte - 1884"), his surviving artistic creations earn him recognition as one of the most significant and prolific Chicago artists in the first quarter of the 20th century. A previous article in the Fall 2016 issue of *The Herald* explored the thirteen murals he painted for Second Presbyterian Church, including the massive *Tree of Life* mural restored in late 2022. This article will examine other aspects of his career in the broader context of the city.

Bartlett left Chicago in 1894 when he was selected as one of the first Americans to study at the Royal Academy in Munich. Although he graduated in 1896, he spent four more years in Europe studying with the leading artists of the day, including American James McNeill Whistler (in Paris), and the leading French muralist Paul Puvis de Chavannes. By the time Bartlett settled back in Chicago in 1900, his extensive training had prepared him for a successful career.

His first studio was in the Fine Arts Building, located at 410 S.

Michigan Avenue. The building had been converted two years earlier from the offices and showrooms of Studebaker into the center of artistic life in the city. Working in a 10th floor studio designed for him by his friend Howard Van Doren Shaw, he soon received his first commission – a portrait for which he was paid \$75. But more importantly, he became immersed in Chicago's art community, meeting such luminaries as sculptor Lorado Taft, author L. Frank Baum, commercial artist Joseph C. Leyendecker, and architect Frank Lloyd Wright. In 1910, Bartlett was one of several artists in the building to paint murals in the halls and stairwells on the 10th floor, all of which survive today. His mural, "Woman and Angels," might be seen as a self-portrait as it depicts an artist painting a beautifully dressed woman seated before a gold cloth, with angels singing and playing instruments.



Tenth floor of the Fine Arts Building in Chicago

The year 1902 saw the completion of Dorfred, Bartlett's artistic home at 2901 S. Prairie Avenue (the name being a combination of the names of

Frederic and his wife Dora). Several articles were written about the interiors, one noting, "Mr. Bartlett's residence might not suit everyone. Its attraction lies precisely in that fact . . . it is unique, personal (and) enjoyable . . . this is as a home should be." Articles also noted Bartlett's collections, and in one, Bartlett confessed that collecting was a habit – "a disease" – with him. It foreshadowed his importance as a collector two decades later. The largest room in the house was Bartlett's studio which measured 20 by 45 feet with 20 foot ceilings. It was here he would paint many of his later mural commissions and countless canvas paintings.

Bartlett's series of murals at Second Presbyterian was his first large commission in the city, and the prominence of the congregation helped to establish him as an artist. In 1902, he was hired by First Presbyterian Church, located two blocks away at Indiana Avenue and 21st Street, to paint murals in their sanctuary. A dim photo shows angels above the arched windows, but little is known of the works, as the building was demolished in the 1920s. A better documented undertaking was his beautifully designed reredos for the Western Theological Seminary, the Episcopal seminary in Chicago. The three large

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panels behind the altar show a similarity to the murals at Second Presbyterian, being executed in the pre-Raphaelite style. The reredos was lost when the building was demolished. Around the same time, he painted the "Vision of Angels" altarpiece for Trinity Episcopal Church in Highland Park. The work is documented in an article in the February 1906 issue of *The Sketch Book* which noted especially

Dora in Munich. In 1904, their father commissioned Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge to design the Bartlett Gymnasium on the campus of the University of Chicago in Frank's memory. Frederic consulted with the architects to create an interior that blended Gothic and English Arts and Crafts design. The lobby is dominated by a huge mural, "Athletic Games in the Middle Ages," painted on canvas in rich colors with many of the ornaments raised in parget and gilded in



Bartlett Gymnasium
Photo credit: William Tyre

is simple, almost archaic, and profoundly quiet, the soft greens and blues and browns harmonizing well with the warm gray of the walls." The building survives as Chicago Bulls College Prep, but the room is now painted a uniform white; whether the murals were removed or whether they survive beneath the whitewashing is unknown.

Two major commissions were undertaken in conjunction with the architects Holabird and Roche. The first was the University Club completed in 1908 at the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Monroe Street. This is the largest extant collection of Bartlett's work and survives in wonderful condition. In addition to designing the club seal, Bartlett undertook the decoration of the second floor Michigan Room and the design of massive windows for the 10th floor Cathedral Hall. The beamed ceiling of the Michigan Room covers 2,600 square feet and comprises 56 ceiling panels by Bartlett depicting the phases of a Gothic chase and feast. The design of the windows, which depict the seals of universities across North America and Europe, was said to have so impressed Louis Comfort

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Interior of Fourth Presbyterian Church
Photo credit: William Tyre

rich colors. The church survives but the altarpiece was removed long ago. An important church commission which does survive is the interior of Fourth Presbyterian Church, completed in 1914 on North Michigan Avenue. Bartlett's elaborately decorated ceiling includes numerous depictions of angels, and the hand painting of a series of hand-carved angels playing instruments.

Bartlett did not confine himself to church work. Frederic's brother Frank had died in 1900 at the age of 20 while visiting Frederic and

antique gold leaf. Bartlett also designed the massive leaded glass window which was made by the Church Glass and Decorating Company. The mural remains intact, but the window was removed years ago and is currently stored awaiting restoration. (Bartlett also painted a stage curtain for the University's Reynolds Club; it no longer survives).

In 1906, he completed six large lunette murals at McKinley High School on the west side depicting disciplines ranging from architecture to painting. The figures are more classical in appearance, reflecting the classical design of the auditorium. A review said, "the treatment



University Club Ceiling Panel
Photo credit: William Tyrn

Eleven panels, each nine feet high were meant to “typify the active, energetic, democratic spirit of Chicago” and symbolized themes ranging from labor and justice to commerce and education. “Havoc of the Great Chicago Fire and the Aid of the Sister Cities” was especially dramatic. Sadly, all were destroyed in a major fire at City Hall in 1957.

Bartlett remained deeply involved in Chicago’s civic life. He and his father were founders of the Cliff Dwellers which brought together artists, architects, and authors, and the laymen who supported them. In 1913, he served on a commission, along with Howard Van Doren Shaw, to create the first municipal Christmas tree and its elaborate setting in Grant Park. He was appointed to the Illinois State Art Commission and was a founding member of the Arts Club of Chicago, which championed modern art. His changing style over the decades, especially with his canvas paintings, demonstrates Bartlett’s commitment to modern art. He was once quoted as saying, “One hundred years from now, the world must know when we painted. Our present art should be in tune with the skyscraper, the radio. Our books are decidedly modern. Our architects and musicians are modern. So must be the painter.”

By the time of his third marriage in 1931 (he was widowed twice), Bartlett left Chicago permanently, splitting time between his winter home, Bonnet House, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (an incredible historic home open to the public), and his summer home in Beverly, Massachusetts. He died in June 1953, four years after suffering a debilitating stroke, and was interred at Chicago’s Graceland Cemetery. His murals at Second Presbyterian Church, together with other works around the city that have withstood the test of time, are a testament to his artistic genius and serve as an important link to Chicago’s vibrant art community in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Tiffany that he withdrew from the competition, noting enthusiastically that Bartlett’s plans should be carried to completion.

In 1911, Bartlett collaborated with Holabird and Roche again, this time on a series of murals to decorate the Council Chambers in the new City Hall.

TREE OF LIFE CELEBRATION

A celebratory event to mark the completion of the *Tree of Life* conservation project and all its surrounding art works was held on March 25, 2023. The event gave Friends an opportunity to thank all the donors and supporters who made this transformative project possible. Conservators involved in the well-orchestrated work that took four months to complete were also acknowledged and thanked. These included Parma Conservation, Gilco Scaffolding, Archistoric Products, and National Decorating Co. An audience Q & A gave the eighty plus attendees an opportunity to hear fascinating stories about the issues encountered and the challenges faced during the conservation work. Following the program, a reception was held during which President Miller offered a Prosecco toast to all donors and conservators and to the completion of the largest restoration project Friends has accomplished to date.



Peter Schoenmann from Parma Conservation one of our restoration vendors in-paints leaves to finish the work on the Tree of Life mural.



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FREDERIC CLAY BARTLETT AT 150: CELEBRATING THE ARTIST AND COLLECTOR



Saturday, June 17, 2023

9:00 am to 12:30 pm

Location:

**Second Presbyterian Church
1936 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60616**

Artist and collector Frederic Clay Bartlett was born on June 1, 1873 in Chicago, the son of a partner in the successful wholesale hardware firm of Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett & Co. In honor of the 150th anniversary of his birth, this symposium brings together several individuals who will speak about various aspects of his life and career. The event will take place at the National Historic Landmark Second Presbyterian Church, which features one of the largest extant collections of Bartlett's works, including the recently restored *Tree of Life* mural (1903), pictured left.



Schedule:

9:00 am - Check in and tours of the sanctuary

9:30 am - William Tyre, Executive Director and Curator, Glessner House, will speak on Bartlett's life and career, including significant Chicago commissions.

10:10 am - Jeffrey Nigro, Research Associate, Art Institute of Chicago, will speak on the Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, assembled by Frederic and Helen Bartlett.

10:50 am - Break

11:10 am - Video presentation. Take a virtual tour of Bonnet House, Bartlett's artistic winter home (and gardens) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

11:50 am - Peter Schoenmann, principal, Parma Conservation, will speak about the recent restoration of Bartlett's huge *Tree of Life* mural on the front wall of the sanctuary

12:30 pm - Closing and additional tours

Tickets:

\$40 per person/\$32 for members

To purchase tickets go to: historicsecondchurch.org

All sales are final, no refunds or exchanges.

* All members must sign in to our Neon database to receive member discounts. First login to your account. If you have questions regarding your account, please email info@historicsecondchurch.org.

Co-sponsored by Glessner House and Friends of Historic Second Church. Please note that this symposium is only being offered in-person.

Friends of Historic Second Church gratefully acknowledges the following memberships, donations, and contributions from February 16, 2023 - May 12, 2023

\$10,000 - \$49,999

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Museum
Bruce Oltman
Emily & Majid Razafsha
Sharon Sylvester
Michael Trier
Scott Vandermyde

In Memory of Don West
Ann & Mike Belletire
Ross & Nancy Berlin

Second Presbyterian Public Tour Schedule:

Saturdays:
11:00-3:00pm

Sundays:
12:15pm
(after worship service)

Or call
800-657-0687
to arrange a private tour

Under \$100

Tracy Maria Allen
John A Dally
Paul Doros
Loretta Gratiias-Bremer

MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS



Jim Murphy of Venturella Studio and John Clark of Wardell Art Glass remove glass

Earlier this Spring while Friends was celebrating the successful completion of the *Tree of Life* project, Venturella Studio was back in Chicago. With the help of John Clark from Wardell Art Glass they removed a third Tiffany window from the sanctuary in order to undertake a full restoration. This time, they had come for *Mount of the Holy Cross*.

Bill Tyre covered the news of the windows imminent removal and restoration in the Spring 2023 issue of Friends newsletter, *The Herald*.

The window removal is now complete and the window has been transported to Venturella Studio. The restoration is expected to take a year with the window's return planned for late Spring of 2024. Something new since the first two window restorations by Venturella Studios is that the studio has moved from its longtime location in New York

City overlooking Union Square to a new location in upstate New York. The new studio is located in Troy on the banks of the Hudson River. *Mount of the Holy Cross* will be the first window from Second Presbyterian restored in the new studio space.

Work on the window is generously supported by a \$500,000 gift from an anonymous donor in honor of the late Richard H Driehaus.

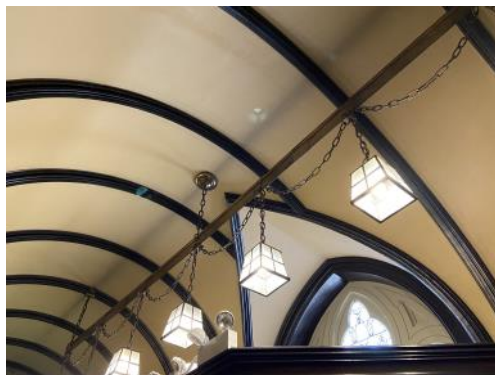
SHINING LIGHT IN THE SANCTUARY

As reported in the Spring 2023 edition of *The Herald*, the Sanctuary Lighting Restoration Project is well underway thanks to a generous grant from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. All ten of the large sanctuary chandeliers were cleaned, rewired and reinstalled in time for Easter. The ten plaster angel brackets have also been restored to architect Howard Van Doren Shaw's original pastel color palette.



Restored Chandeliers

Immediately after Easter, the next phase of the project began with removal, by B & Z Electric, of the six art-glass under-balcony light fixtures on the south side, and the large narthex fixture consisting of an eight-foot long decorative metal bar from which are suspended seven Arts and Crafts styled metal lanterns. These fixtures were taken to the Archistoric Studio for cleaning, repair and rewiring. The old 1901 cloth covered



Finished lighting and Narthex painting by Archistoric and National Decorating Company

wiring connecting to the fixtures was pulled out and new wiring was installed. With the large narthex fixture out of the way, painting of the narthex ceiling, walls and decorative plaster ribbing could begin. Painters from National Decorating Service worked over a period of two weeks to clean and restore the narthex to the original colors. Take a look when you next visit the church. The fixtures and the narthex walls shine as they did in 1901. Next up will be the painting of the Narthex tile floor.



**FRIENDS of
HISTORIC SECOND CHURCH**

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Contributors: Ann Belletire, Heather Kendall, Nate Lielasus, Linda Miller and William Tyre.

BECOME A MEMBER

Have you visited the church yet in 2023 to witness the glorious transformation of the *Tree of Life* mural? Have you stood in front of the *St. Paul Preaching at Athens* restored Tiffany window to delight in details not seen in a hundred years and in the vividness of the colored glass with the sun streaming through? Or admired the ten restored crown chandeliers with the knowledge, and relief, that the old 1901 wiring has been updated? Or witnessed the gently colored robes of the conserved angel brackets above each chandelier? All these projects were accomplished within the past several months and YOU helped make them possible. Please keep that momentum going by joining or re-joining Friends of Historic Second Church today. In 2023 you will be part of another Tiffany window restoration, as *Mount of the Holy Cross* has begun its year-long conservation. This important restoration work continues thanks to your ongoing support. Your membership matters! We hope to hear from you.

To purchase a membership visit:

<https://www.historicsecondchurch.org/membership>



Thanks to volunteers Jim Peters, Sam Seidel, Mike Shawgo and Ermiuski Urbino for putting the balcony pews back in place after the scaffolding was removed.

Mission Statement

To preserve and restore the art and architecture of Chicago's landmark Second Presbyterian Church and to engage neighbors and the world in sharing our passion for its beauty and significance.

Friends of Historic Second Church is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. All donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.