

S T A T E M E N T o f S I G N I F I C A N C E

St. Augustine's fresco program is located inside of the church that was rebuilt after the infamous "Nativist Riots" in the spring of 1844. Succumbing to vandalism and fire, all of the parish's buildings and their contents were destroyed when furor was at its peak between Protestant and Roman Catholic groups. The church was reconstructed from damages paid by the City of Philadelphia upon suit filed by St. Augustine's.

Nativism was a national political movement adverse to Roman Catholics and the foreign-born. The particular concerns centered around religion and fears that the increase in Roman Catholic migrations would allow the pope to assume authority in the United States' governmental affairs. "Nativism" referred to those who were "native-born," i.e., citizens of the United States and their primacy over those not. It was a populist movement that was violent, but many of this political party were elected to office.

In this environment, St. Augustine's Church arose stronger, with a larger church designed by Napoleon LeBrun, a student of Thomas U. Walter. The architectural style was called "Roman Palladian" in Scharf & Westcott's 1884 *History of Philadelphia*.¹ The frescoes were begun by artist Nicola Monachesi in April of 1848, finished by late September of that year and then the church was dedicated in November. The exterior and interior designs were in **Neoclassicism** (or the "Neoclassical Style"),² in imitation of Roman churches. Monachesi's introduction of fresco on ceilings and walls in Neoclassical buildings was first seen at the Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange in 1834. The building's "Greek Revival" design, by William Strickland, Walter's mentor, had a dome with Monachesi's frescoes, but it paired the architectural style with the interior.

1

Scharf & Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, (Phila.: L.Everts & Co., 1884, p. ii1379) Full discussion is on pp. 1376 to 1380. This source also confirms the west wall remaining from the original church built in 1801. Refer to Appendix A. herein.

2

Neoclassicism is a renewed interpretation of the art styles from Fifth Century B.C. Greece and the First and Second Centuries A.D. Rome. The word, "Neoclassicism" is applied mostly late 18th century art, with popular interest in the classical civilizations.

Monachesi's work from 1848 at St. Augustine's is significant because the fresco program exists to prove that the medium was used in the United States prior to the interior painting project at the Capitol dating from 1855 to about 1888.¹ St. Augustine's frescoes are among the oldest in the nation; they certainly may be the earliest existing frescoes in an American church in such a program.² There is also significance in how these frescoes demonstrate a shift in interior decoration with hand-painted Neoclassical art transforming formerly plain walls to ornate surfaces. Monachesi had initiated an art movement shunning mere framed art for walls to adapting a European interior decorating tradition for any type of building, beginning with Neoclassically-designed structures. This genesis in decorative art had begun in 1832 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Center City, Philadelphia by Monachesi, but only St. Augustine's frescoes remain and are consistent to the building's architectural style.

Finally, St. Augustine's frescoes provide an art precedent in how Neoclassicism was broadened in our country on par with the European fresco traditions. Monachesi extended the Neoclassicism introduced by Benjamin West to American art in the 1770s. West had studied Neoclassicism as an art student at L'Accademia di San Luca in Rome, where Raphael's work was emphasized. Monachesi was also from L'Accademia, but accepted the challenge of fresco that no American artist dared. Monachesi's use of fresco in the Neoclassical Style provided the cultural ties to the art of antiquity that later would be standardized as "American," with our nation's founding.

Per Philadelphia Historical Preservation Code §14-2007(5), St. Augustine's fresco program qualifies for historical certification at (a), (e), (f) and (j).

1

These frescos at The Capitol were begun by Constantino Brumidi, with the frieze work by Filippo Costaggini until 1888.

2

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Hanover, Pennsylvania (Diocese of Harrisburg) claims a fresco from 1845 by Charles Gebhard, a German-born artist. But The Maryland Historical Society has very little information on him after an 1860 U.S. Census record. Also see Mulcahy, Geo., **The Diocese of Harrisburg, 1868-1968**, published by the American Catholic Historical Society, 1968, p. 14.

Aside from the instant nomination's qualifications for historical certification, St. Augustine's Church is itself a site within the Old City Historic District with certification on other bases. In 1995, the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission dedicated an official historical marker at the church from my submission under that office's criteria. The official marker was granted on the after-effects of the Nativist Riot attack at the church and how a law establishing policing forces in Pennsylvania was enacted. St. Augustine's location, within the boundaries of the City of Philadelphia in 1844 provided a venue to justify the legislation. Attached at end of nomination are relevant records to verify same.

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MONACHESI (Nicola), *peintre d'histoire, de portraits et de décorations, né à Tolentino en 1795, mort à Philadelphie en 1851 (Ec. Ital.)*.

Elève de G. Landi à l'Académie Saint-Luc à Rome. Il se fixa en 1831 à Philadelphie. Il a peint dans cette ville les fresques de la cathédrale, des églises Sainte-Marie, Saint-Joseph, Saint-Augustin et Saint-Philippe et celles qui ornent la Bourse.

Another source confirms St. Augustine's frescoes were executed by Monachesi. (E. Bénézit, **Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire**. Librairie Grund, 1976, p. 474. The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.)

Of the fresco sites listed in Bénézit, only St. Augustine's exist. "(L)a Bourse" is the Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange.

Benezit's source: Champlin, J.D., and Perkins, C.C. (Eds.) **The Cyclopedia of Painters and Paintings, Vol. III**. (NY: Scribners Sons, 1885, page 284) identified "St. Augustine's" as fresco site.

C R I T E R I A f o r C E R T I F I C A T I O N

(a) St. Augustine's fresco program from 1848 has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

CHARACTER-INTEREST-VALUE

St. Augustine's frescoes typify the prevailing Neoclassicism in the nation's art and architecture. Executed by artist Nicola Monachesi (1795-1851) who already had decorated some of the city's Roman Catholic churches since 1832, the St. Augustine's frescoes are decorative and in a style to corroborate with the church's exterior architecture, Neoclassical. All of the types of fresco paintings in this church are examples of the varying genres seen in American art from the 1820s to the 1850s: "history painting," "decorative art," a "Romantic" rendering, and reproductions or subjects inspired by First Century Roman Art or Raphael's Vatican works which are stylistically "Neoclassical."

At St. Augustine's are elements that Monachesi, the artist, also used in his paintings in non-Catholic sites, such as in the private residences where the same decorations with figures or in arabesques verify the artist's style. In **Philadelphia: A 300 Year History**, Dr. Russell Weigley cited a source referring to Monachesi's work at the George Newkirk house: "This tasteful manner of decorating the walls of noble mansions is becoming fashionable and seems to offer some encouragement to the fine arts."¹ At The Richard Alsop IV House in Connecticut (1839),² and at "Phil-Ellena" formerly in Germantown (Philadelphia) in 1844,³ Monachesi used the same figures and decorative art as at St. Augustines's in 1848. (Exhibits 16,17,31,32; at (f).) The origin of these three fresco programs is Raphael's frescoes at the Vatican, the "curriculum" that the artist studied at L'Accademia di San Luca.

¹ Refer to Appendix D. for secondary sources.

² Monachesi's fresco program at The Alsop House qualified it for listing as a National Landmark in 2009. See Appendix C.

³ See Carpenter, G.W., "A Brief Description of Phil-Ellena," in Appendix B.



Exhibit 16a: Alsop House (1839)
(photo by Alain Munkittrick)

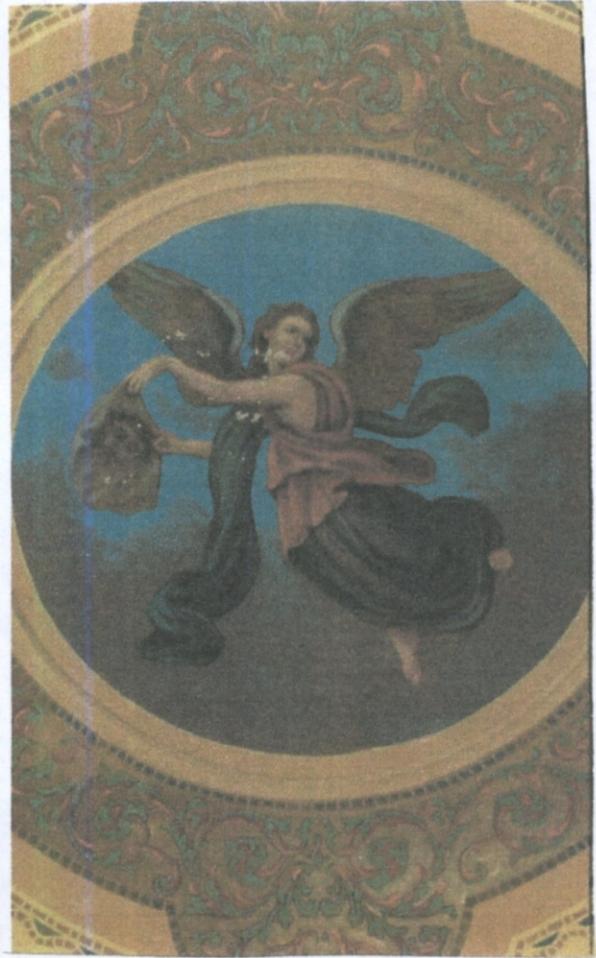


Exhibit 16b.:

St. Augustine's (1848)

Artist/decorator Nicola Monachesi's only two existing fresco programs have related designs, some of which are here and on the following page at Exhibits 17a. and 17b, 31 and 32.

In Munkittrick's research for The Alsop House's decorative origins, a citation from Allyn Cox held that these figures were from a "set of engravings called, 'The House of Raphael'" based on a "Vatican ceiling, since destroyed, but engraved by G.B. Piranesi (1720-1778."¹ These same figures would later be used by Brumidi in the "Senate Naval Affairs Committee Room" in 1858.(Exhibit 18).

¹ Refer to Appendix C: The Alsop House's nomination form for listing on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, p. 15. Richard Alsop, a businessman in Philadelphia built this house in Middletown, Connecticut for his mother. In 2009 it officially was approved as a "national Landmark" by the U.S. Dept. of Interior.

Another wingless floating figure from The Alsop House (1839) (top) became the template in 1848 for St. Augustine's angel bearing the three nails of Jesus Christ's Crucifixion.

Exhibit 17a.



Exhibit 17b.



The instant frescoes at St. Augustine's are proof of the early use of this particular medium in the United States, brought after a long period of use of the Neoclassical Style in sculpture and in architecture. Fresco is a method of painting onto wet plaster that was first seen as in Crete, dating to "1500 B.C."¹ It was extensively used during the Italian High Renaissance in the sixteenth century when Michelangelo and Raphael were simultaneously painting the ceilings and walls at the Vatican for Pope Julius II. Raphael's interpretation of the "Classical" styles in the Vatican stanze ("rooms") was the "Neoclassical" taught at L'Accademia di San Luca² where Philadelphia artist Benjamin West studied in the 1760s. West became the first American artist influenced by Raphael's Neoclassicism, but West painted in oil, not in fresco as Raphael.

It was Monachesi who introduced fresco to the U.S. in 1832, integrating this medium into the Neoclassicism of this country. Although fresco would become more popular by yet another alumnus of the Accademia di San Luca (Brumidi) at the U.S. Capitol in 1855, the medium was unknown and rarely used in the 1832 to 1851 period but for Monachesi whose work only now exists in Connecticut and here at St. Augustine's in this instant program. But there is circumstantial documentation that the frescoes by Brumidi in Washington, D.C., may have been "inspired" by Monachesi's work in Philadelphia prior to Brumidi's hiring in 1854.

O'Connor found that the Capitol's Superintendent of Construction, Montgomery C. Meigs, recorded seeing his only example of a fresco in the U.S. in Philadelphia at the Merchants' Exchange in the spring of 1854. O'Connor called this 1834 fresco by Monachesi his "earliest public example" of a fresco³ (See Appendix D.) By August of 1854, Meigs wrote that he had read a book on

...the works of Raphael in the Vatican...very beautiful...

1

Janson, H.W., **History of Art**. New York: Abrams, 1977, p. 87.
"The Toreador Fresco," (colorplate on p. 105).

²The Accademia is presently called "L'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca," in Rome, Italy.

³Also refer to O'Connor's websites, op. cit.

rich and harmonious in color, simple and beautiful in design...This book will give us ideas in decorating our lobbies.¹

Meigs' trips to Philadelphia in search of frescos as models for the Capitol were frequent; no other reported sites where the hand of Monachesi painted in fresco. But Meigs' insistence on using fresco and the Vatican's rooms by Raphael is a strange manner of referring to the work of Monachesi that was so accessible in Philadelphia for him to see. And at St. Augustine's, the fresco program has parallels in the figures, forms and arabesques that Brumidi would paint in the U.S. Capitol years later. (See Exhibit 18.)

All of this involved a new kind of decorating for interiors-- which St. Augustine's again represents from its 1848 date. The shift from plain or papered walls to hand-painted decorative art in interiors had been on the European continent for centuries, especially in France, Germany and in Italy in both religious and in secular buildings. Janson had attributed the "new style of interior decoration" to English architect Robert Adam (1728-1792) who used a colorless medium to create raised surface "sculptural decorations" with "stucco ornament." Adam formed the stucco in designs from "illustrated books about...the finds at Herculaneum and Pompeii" which were very popular.² The excavations of these towns, covered for centuries with the ash from the volcanic Mount Vesuvius provided an influence in art that would last for decades. Adam's interior stucco designs were in the 1770s and in England; in the 1840s, in the United States, Caskey & Moss found that "paper" was the choice for "wealthier homes," with the patterns on the paper as the decoration under framed, hanging wall art. (See discussion (f).)

¹ See "O'Connor, Francis V., "The Mural in America," Part Four, for his comments on Monachesi's fresco at the Exchange and for his sources, the Architect of the Capitol's Archives. (AOC) which also provided the information for Wolff, W. (Ed.) **Capitol Builder: The Shorthand Journals of Montgomery C. Meigs, 1853-1859, 1861.** Washington, D.C.:GPO, 2000, p. 106.

²Janson, op. cit., p. 560.

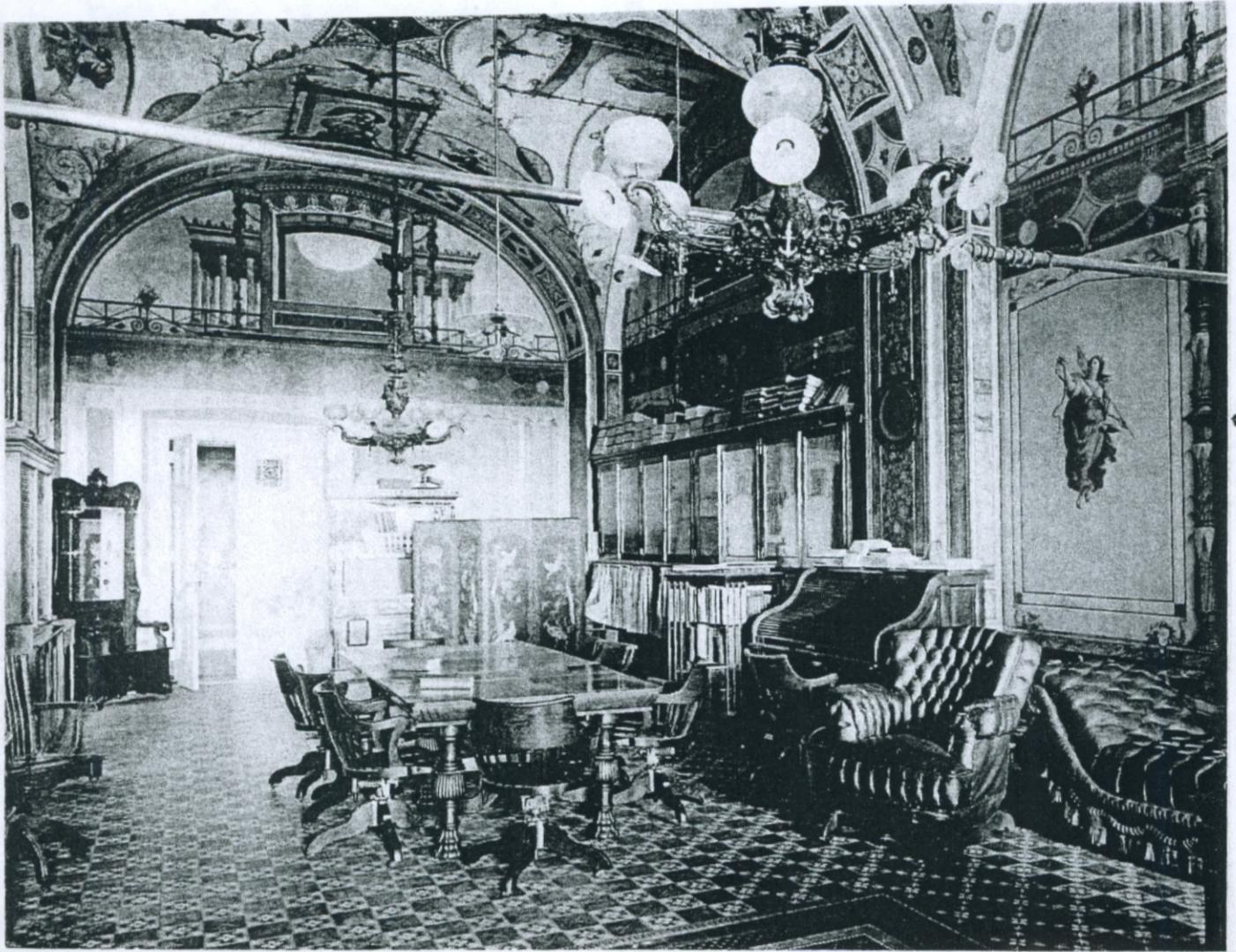


Fig. 6-13. Room S-127 as it appeared c. 1900. By the turn of the century, Brumidi's murals were partially obscured by bookcases and other furniture. Note the original bronze chandeliers decorated with anchors.

From Glenn Brown, *History of the United States Capitol*, 1902.

Source: Wolanin, Barbara, **Constantino Brumidi** Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1998.

"The Senate Naval Affairs Committee Room"

(The U.S. Capitol)

Brumidi used the same designs in this room, as were already painted by Monachesi at St. Augustine's: the "floating" figures on solid-colored backgrounds (on walls in Washington, on the ceiling at the church); ceiling and wall spaces divided into geometric shapes with arabesques; in colors used by Raphael in the Vatican *stanze*.

Brumidi painted this room about ten years after the St. Augustine frescoes were completed in 1848.

Exhibit 18.

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If hand-painted decorations on ceilings and walls were a "Philadelphia" tradition, there had not been sufficient recognition. Despite the numerous nineteenth century sources, Gilchrist¹ and what were in the private diary entries of Sidney George Fisher in 1839, then with Samuel Breck in 1879, Monachesi's work in churches fell short even secondary to the notables. As a "decorative" artist, Monachesi's contribution to interior design had not been related to its architectural effect. Certainly Monachesi's introduction of fresco AND decorating walls and ceilings in Neoclassicism was cultural, if the art style seemed to overwhelm American Art. No one can deny that interiors with decorated ceilings and walls elicit a different response from the viewer than barren spaces. Such was the impact of Monachesi's work that exists here at St. Augustine's fresco program, but not in the sources.

Munkittrick's research on The Alsop House in Connecticut also revealed where "fine art" did not often include "decorative art." Thus, the National Landmark's frescoes by Monachesi did not have a chronology in how decorating interiors resulted from the artist's initial frescos inside of St. John the Evangelist Church in 1832. Edward B. Allen's **Early American Wall Paintings, 1710-1850**, (1926) published by Yale University Press recorded that The Alsop House's fresco program were "unrivaled by any in the country at that time"; Samuel M. Green considered Alsop's frescos "unique in the domestic architecture in America" and "the most elaborate program of decoration" in his **American Art: A Historical Survey**.² Munkittrick had relied upon old photographs of "Phil-Ellena,"³ and Carpenter's book for verifying Monachesi as the artist of both residences. But if

¹ Gilchrist, A.A., "The Philadelphia Exchange: William Strickland, Architect," in Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 43, No. 1 (1953), p. 91. See Appendix D.

² See Appendix C, NHL nomination, p. 11 fn20.

³ All "Phil-Ellena" primary sources are at The Library Company of Philadelphia.

these art historians had seen St. Augustine's frescos, they would have noted clear similarities in the painted geometric forms that delicately balance around larger paintings; in the varied arabesques; and in the solitary female figures (with wings at St. Augustine's) on solid-colored backgrounds. What Monachesi the artist-decorator tried at The Alsop House in 1839 and at "Phil-Ellena" in about 1841 was repeated at St. Augustine's. Presently, The Alsop House and this church's frescos are the earliest existing works by Monachesi to show how Neoclassicism extended to interior "decorative art." (Also see discussion at (f): "Decorative Art.")

The groupings of Neoclassicists is yet another point of interest concerning St. Augustine's fresco program: where the artist/decorator plans the interior art based on the exterior design. This had not been the case at St. John's with its Gothic-like facade, nor at the other churches, except at St. Philip's later. Mikelberg's M.S. Thesis listed "Greek Revival" architects and their buildings, with a notation to which homes that had Monachesi's Neoclassical paintings in the interiors. (Refer to Appendix D.) First, Monachesi was with Strickland at the Patterson House and Exchange, then with Walter and the amateur architect, industrialist Carpenter.¹ At St. Augustine's Monachesi's interior decorations correlated with Napoleon LeBrun's design, in the same way as they did at St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic Church in about 1840. St. Philip's was a purported fresco site, according to Benezit. (p.21) It was in a more Roman design, not "Greek," and simple, using stucco and brick. St. Augustine's "Roman Pallatine," in contrast, features **quoins**² at the corners, just as at Independence Hall (1731) and prominently at Mount Pleasant mansion in Fairmount Park.(1761) These buildings were "Georgian," and inspired by the **Four Books of Architecture** by Andrea Palladio³; hence the reference by Scharf &

¹ Mikelberg, S.F., "A Decorative Analysis of Phil-Ellena, A Greek Revival Philadelphia Mansion." Univ. of Penna., 1992, p. 33.

² **quoin** (pronounced as "coin"): a solid exterior angle of a building.

³ Published in 1570 in Italian, the volumes of Neoclassical designs were used by untrained architects, such as Thomas Jefferson.

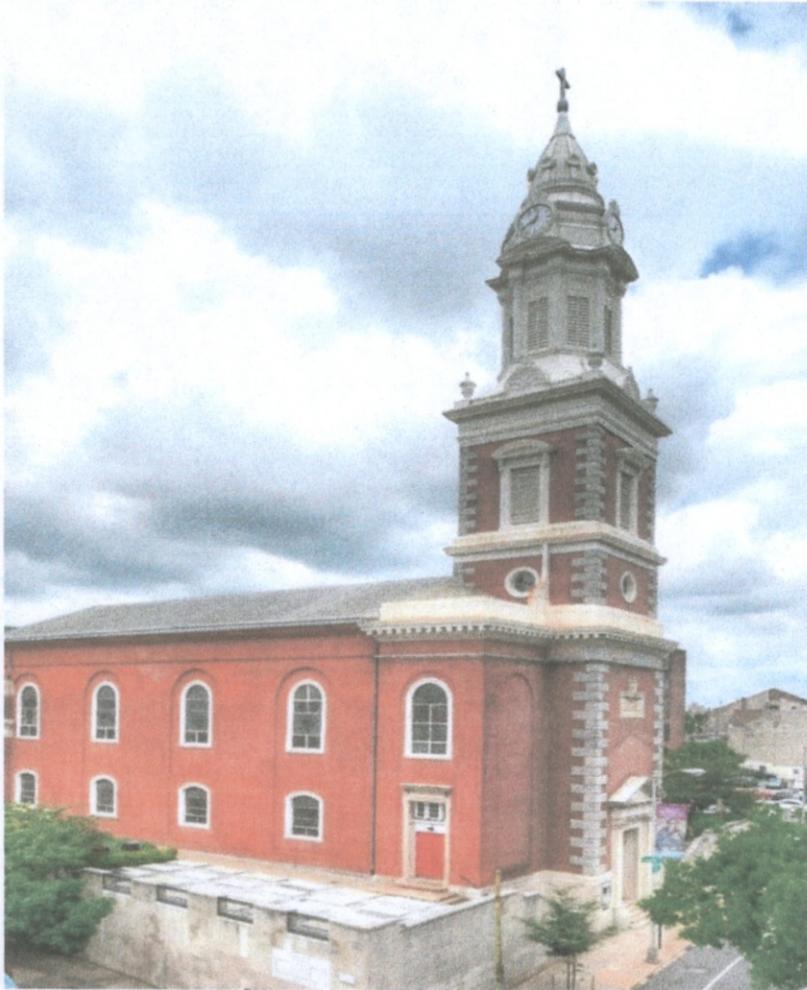


Exhibit 19.

St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church, seen looking northwest.

Westcott to St. Augustine's "Roman Pallatine" design. LeBrun¹ was about twenty-seven years old when St. Augustine's and the instant frescoes were ready for the 1848 dedication. This was probably the last collaboration that Monachesi had with any architect before his death in 1851.

¹ LeBrun (1821-1901) had his own office in 1841 at age 20. His designs included the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and numerous churches in New York City where he moved his office in 1864. LeBrun's designs of municipal buildings in New York and in the suburban Philadelphia counties are also notable. (Reference: "Philadelphia Architects and Buildings," at philadelphiabuildings.org.)

Thus, St. Augustine's fresco program's value extends to architecture for interior spaces, in manipulating surfaces into decorative expressions. It is this aspect that has long gone unnoticed at this church, and should have been recorded as the model and early example of "Vatican art" transferred to this country before the frescoes at the U.S. Capitol. Philadelphia was considered "the most cosmopolitan city in the nation,"¹ in the 1830s and 1840s when Neoclassically-designed buildings from the most prominent architects of that age worked here, some alongside of Monachesi. The instant fresco program exists to show a much earlier use of fresco, of the Neoclassicism used in the new manner of interior decorating, in "decorative art," and as a precedent in how American church interiors began the European art tradition of painting the ceilings and walls.

St. Augustine's frescoes present designs also painted in the private residences of influential Philadelphians who were not Roman Catholic and did not object to "Vatican art" as decoration for where they lived during the contentious Nativism years. In this sense, art--such as the program at St. Augustine's--suggested a factor in unifying the classes of people in Philadelphia where the solidarity with the Church in Rome was symbolized by this art style. Nevertheless, the "Vatican art"² for non-Catholics did not matter: Neoclassicism in decorative art perpetuated until the end of the century in various building interiors and became part of the history of American Art. St. Augustine's frescoes should be noted in this history for the aforementioned reasons.

1

Brown, et al., *American Art*, New York: Abrams, 1979, p. 164. This book also has a section on "Philadelphia and Washington," on the exchange of architects from Philadelphia who contributed to the building designs at the new capital.

2

This is my term for the Neoclassical art by Raphael that Monachesi introduced through his frescoes that succeeding artists had continued in the United States, such as at the U.S. Capitol.

C R I T E R I A f o r C E R T I F I C A T I O N

(e) St. Augustine's fresco program--is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

Nicola Monachesi (1795-1851) is in every art dictionary for his "celebrated" art career that began upon his arrival in Philadelphia in late 1831. He was invited to the city for his skills as a fresco and oil painter, having acquired the knowledge and practice as a student at the Accademia di San Luca (Academy of St. Luke) in Rome. As previously stated, Monachesi learned his craft by studying Raphael's works because of the particular curriculum at the school that emphasized Raphael as the "ideal" for artists. Two Germans were responsible for this course: Anton Rafael Mengs and Johann Winckelmann guided artists such as Benjamin West in what art historian Chastel called "the cult of Raphael"¹ from the 1760s through to at least the mid-nineteenth century.

Gilchrist noted that Monachesi was taught by Gaspare Landi (1756-1830).² He was a frescoist and oil portraitist,³ which Monachesi would be same while in Philadelphia. Thomas Sully was among the artists competing for local patronage, but upon seeing that Monachesi gained initial press from fresco painting at St. John the Evangelist, the elder expressed admiration. Sully was known for portraiture, as was his son-in-law John Neagle. Yet, according to the consistent news publications on Monachesi's progress, his reputation was more on "decorative art," than in portraiture, although he was more than adept at the latter.

¹Chastel, Andre, *Italian Art*, New York: Faber & Faber, 1963, p. 374.

²Gilchrist, op. cit.

³Chastel, op. cit.



Alumni of L'Accademia di San Luca, Rome

who painted in Neoclassical art tradition in Philadelphia

Artist	Years of Neoclassicism in Philadelphia
Benjamin West (1738-1820)	1770s*--1800s
Nicola Monachesi (1795-1851)	1832-1851
Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880)	1863-1864**
Filippo Costaggini (1837-1904)	1870s-1899

*

West did not return to Philadelphia after he finished his art studies at L'Accademia in Rome. He did instruct Philadelphia-based artists from his London studio. His students included Gilbert Stuart, Sully and Charles Wilson Peale, father of Neoclassicist Rembrandt Peale.

**

Brumidi painted at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in these years, and none of his frescos exist to date.



-34-

Scharf & Westcott's *History of Philadelphia* (1884) mentioned "Signor Monachesi" with St. John's founding and how the artist was responsible for decorating other churches in the city.¹ But, these historians did not place Monachesi in line with the other Italian-born artists and sculptors who had been coming to Philadelphia since the late eighteenth century at the behest of the architects who need them. (Refer to Appendix A.)

The artist and the architects

The significance of Monachesi's work at St. Augustine's is where the Neoclassical Style required artists and sculptors to work with Neoclassical architects such as Latrobe, L'Enfant and Strickland on building projects here in Philadelphia, then later in Washington, D.C., the capitol city. Architects would direct which art form would accompany each part of the buildings' exteriors as well as what materials would be used. In 1834, Monachesi had his first collaboration with William Strickland who designed the Merchants' Exchange. Neoclassical frescos appeared on the dome and walls of the Exchange, a move that Strickland's pupil, Thomas U. Walter would never have allowed. As Goode would write: "Walter...adhered to the philosophy of those trained in the Greek Revival movement of the 1820s, which called for a chaste classicism in architectural interiors..."² Walter designed the Matthew Newkirk House in 1835 in the "Greek Revival Style" he preferred, but probably saw the much publicized decorative interiors done by Monachesi.³ Twenty years later in Washington, D.C., at the Capitol whose dome he designed, Walter would have no influence on however the interior of his dome appeared.

¹ Scharf & Westcott, op. cit., pp. ii 1067;ii 1380.

² Goode, Jas., "Thomas U. Walter and the Search for Propriety," in Kennon, D., (Ed.), *The United States Capitol*. Athens: Ohio State University Press, 2000, p. 97.

³ Weigley, op.cit., citing "The U.S. Gazette" February 3, 1837.

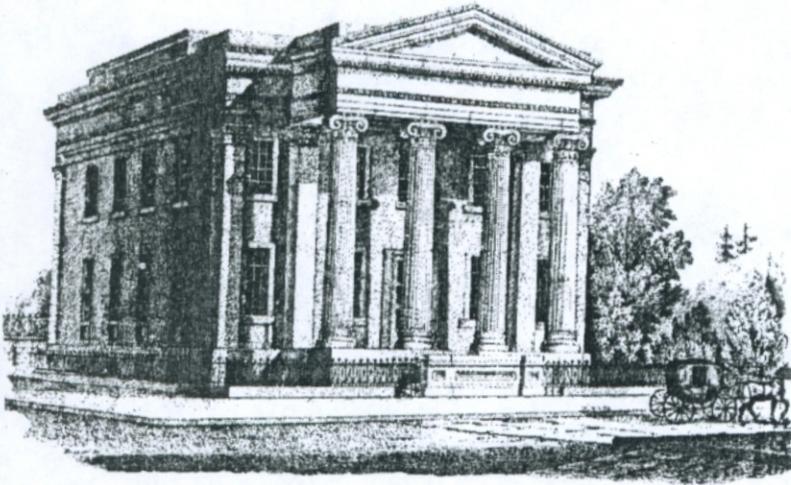


Exhibit 20.

Monachesi painted frescos for railroad magnate George Newkirk in a Roman theme in Walter's "Greek Revival" design.

Thomas Ustick Walter, Matthew Newkirk Mansion. Louis C. Tuthill, History of Architecture, from the Earliest Times; its Present Condition in Europe and the United States (Philadelphia, 1848). The Athenæum of Philadelphia.

In defense of Walter, however, the Roman interiors of the First and Second centuries A.D., and, the Vatican's sixteenth century *stanze* were the models of nineteenth century American frescoes such as the ones begun by Monachesi in Philadelphia: St. Augustine's fresco program is proof of this identification of styles. Walter distinguished Greek from Roman-- maintaining "Classicism" from "Neoclassicism" and the combination of the styles millennia ago. For the individual not able to discern what the Romans did not adapt from the Greeks, Monachesi's frescoes seemed to conform with Walter's architectural design at The Newkirk House. But the better, more cohesive relationship between the exterior architectural design and the interior was definitively at St. Augustine's with the Roman plan by LeBrun correlating with the instant fresco program.

Monachesi's second known association with an architect was with Napoleon LeBrun (1821-1901) at St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic in the Queen Village (Southwark) neighborhood in Philadelphia. Designed in 1839 when LeBrun was but eighteen years old¹ and about

¹Moss, Roger, *Historic Sacred Places of Philadelphia*. Phila.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, p. 88; Appendix D.

to leave his mentor, Walter's office, St. Philip's Neoclassical plan is more Roman than Greek with its facade with piers and simple pediment over a stuccoed wall. LeBrun's architectural style was unaffected by remarks that Walter would later memorialize in his lectures in 1841 about Roman architecture: "...totally unfit for the enjoyment of the more intellectual charms of gracefulness and harmony" found in **Greek architecture**.¹ Certainly St. Augustine's use of the quoins at the building's corners honors both the "State House" (Independence Hall) and the Church of Rome, institutions to which parishioners supported in loyalty and as citizens. The symbolism at the time was appropriate and in good taste.

At St. Augustine's, just as at St. Philip's, there is a continuity of the Neoclassical (or "Roman") Style from entrance to the interior, as if the facade's design prepares the visitor to what to expect inside. Monachesi's fresco programs at the Greek Revival Merchants' Exchange or Newkirk House, or at "Phil-Ellena," (a Greek Revival designed by its owner, George W. Carpenter), did not have this stylistic merging achieved at St. Philip's or at St. Augustine's at that time. The churches had architectural spaces created from the fresco paintings, relying upon Raphael's models; descriptions of the Exchange and Newkirk House do not include the geometric "framing" that Monachesi used at The Alsop House (1839).



Exhibit 21.

St. Philip Neri
Church in Queen
Village, in a
19th century
depiction.

¹Amundson, J.A. (Ed.) Thomas U. Walter, *The Lectures on Architecture, 1841-1853*. Phila.: The Atheneum of Phila., 2006, p. 106.

The artist and his peers

Nicola Monachesi became a naturalized United States citizen in 1839, thereby identifying him as an "American" artist when he worked at St. Augustine's in 1848. His fellow artists in Philadelphia were primarily Neoclassicists or markedly influenced by Neoclassicism. But none would venture to using fresco as Monachesi did, in strict imitation of Raphael's Neoclassicism.

In the c. 1830 to 1840 decade, Neoclassically-trained artists in the United States painted mostly in oil and on portable surfaces and in a variety of genres. Some deviations from typical "Neoclassical" subjects arose here in Philadelphia with artists Thomas Doughty and Thomas Cole by the mid-1830s with their dreamy landscapes, a theme that had been subordinated to portraiture in the past. "The Hudson River School" of art really began with these Philadelphians' works here in a move that advanced towards nature and the American landscape instead of the imported art that patronized French and Italian scenes with old ruins or celebrated buildings. (Refer to Exhibit 24, p. 38)

Monachesi's first exhibit at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was in 1832 with only one "original," but notable "after Raphael" paintings that went on to be sold--they were in demand. "The North American Magazine" the next year commented on Monachesi's copy of Raphael's "Madonna della Seggiola," as "beyond all praise." This is the same Madonna that Rembrandt Peale painted in Exhibit 22. This Peale, one of the many children of Charles Wilson Peale, studied under Benjamin West in 1802, learning Neoclassicism. His career began and ended beyond Monachesi, producing works in oil. Peale (1778-1860) painted in the same softness as other Neoclassicists, but also was able to paint distinctly "American."

6. *Madonna della Seggiola*, after Raphael, after 1830

Oil on canvas mounted on panel. 22½ x 18½ in.
Old St. Joseph's Church, Philadelphia

Exhibit 22.



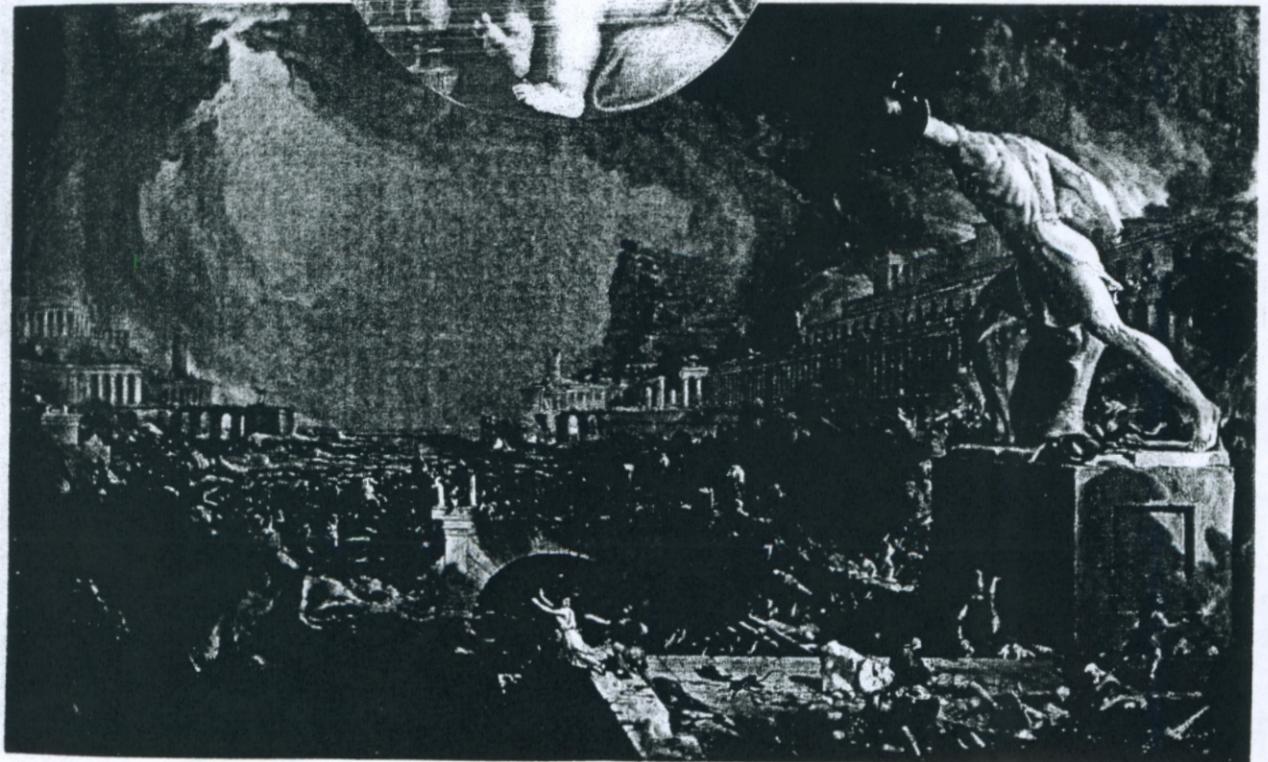
These images represent the local art environment in which Monachesi worked in Philadelphia. Monachesi also copied from Raphael, but did not contribute to fine art as these two peers. Cole was influential in The Hudson River School of art, but it was obvious that Renaissance artist Raphael's Neoclassical Style was what his patron wanted with this commissioned work. (below)

Exhibit 23.

Raphael's *Madonna* (1514)



Exhibit 24.



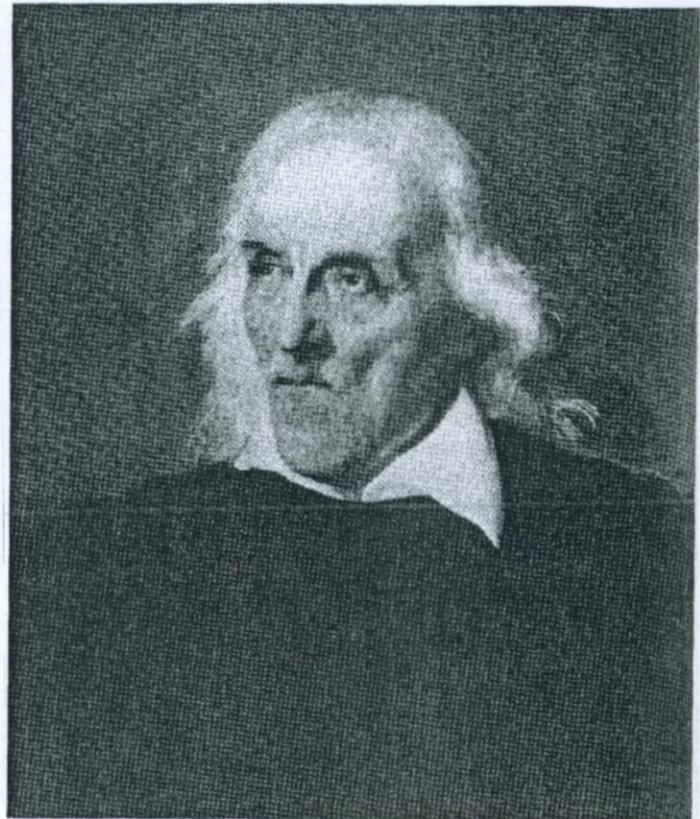
Thomas Cole. *The Course of Empire: Destruction*. 1833-36. Oil on canvas, 39 x 61".
The New-York Historical Society

Monachesi's ability to paint fine art subjects justified listing him as a "historical" and "portrait" painter, like Peale. However, only documentation, not the actual fine art of Monachesi exists, such as the broadside on the artist's rendering of "The Massacre of Miss Jane McCrea," c. 1840, and the news clips. For **Building Little Italy** (1998), Richard N. Juliani, Ph.D. relied on a 1929 source with the Monachesi portrait of Lorenzo DaPonte, below herein as Exhibit 26. Yet, Monachesi probably felt at ease competing with Sully, Neagle and others in Philadelphia. Note how Sully's "Queen Victoria" (1838) appears stylistically compatible with Monachesi's "DaPonte" of the same decade. (Exhibits 25-26)



Thomas Sully. *Queen Victoria*. 1838. Oil on canvas, 36 x 28½". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Francis T. S. Darley, 1914

Exhibit 25.



Portrait of Lorenzo DaPonte by Nicola Monachesi. DaPonte sought to promote Italian literature and culture in Philadelphia and New York. (From *Memoirs of Lorenzo DaPonte*, ed. and ann. Arthur Livingston [Philadelphia, 1929])

Exhibit 26.

Monachesi's fine art works, however, are secondary to his contribution to American Art with his decorative art that had its introduction to the United States at St. John the Evangelist Church in Philadelphia. When the frescos were executed there in 1832, a dynamic change occurred: painted ceilings and walls as in the European tradition...and in fresco. "Vatican art" suddenly became popular in the homes of wealthy Philadelphians; Catholic churches, then non-Catholic ones began decorating to excite worshippers. From the former cathedral that was the seat of the diocese that once included all of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, one-half of New Jersey and all of Delaware, an art innovation was begun in the United States.

St. Augustine's fresco program remains in true form to this 1830s to end-of-century era with the Neoclassicism that is never tiring or obsolete. Monachesi's decorative art in houses of worship has a precedent at St. Augustine's.

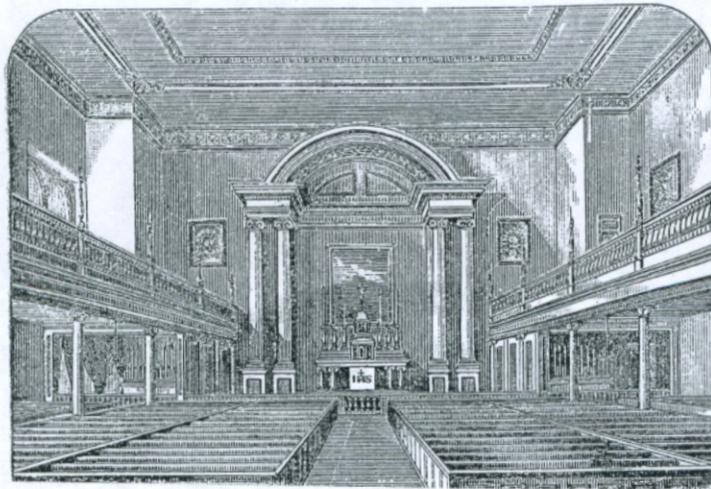


Exhibit 27.

This print of Old St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Philadelphia shows the common practice of hanging art in interiors of some churches. Monachesi painted frescoes there before 1840, slowly changing how interiors in the future would appear. (See Exhibit 34.)

C R I T E R I A f o r C E R T I F I C A T I O N

(f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

St. Augustine's fresco program is the earliest existing example of the Neoclassical Style used in a church to create "decorative art" when interior spaces were beginning to shift from plain or papered walls to hand-painted designs on ceilings and walls in the 1830s and 1840s.

FRESCO

Nicola Monachesi's commission at St. John the Evangelist Church was highly publicized for his use of fresco, a "first," in the United States, according to "The Philadelphia Inquirer" of November 26, 1832, and other publications. (Refer to Appendix B.) There was a public fascination with the introduction of fresco here in Philadelphia that called for its origins, method of application and...why no American artist wanted to paint in fresco, especially those artists who were Neoclassicists.

In April of 1833, "The North American Magazine" wrote that fresco was "so novel in this country" and cited a 16th century Italian source who wrote: "Many of our painters excel in oil and water colours, and yet fail in Fresco; because of all kinds of painting, this requires the greatest strength of genius to execute; great resolution and great knowledge to give every stroke its just character..."¹ The editor of this article, Sumner Lincoln Fairfield, then included a copy of a letter by Philadelphia artist Thomas Sully who commented on Monachesi's frescoes:

The nature of Fresco Painting limits the artist to great simplicity of means in the execution of his work; while it allows the power of elevated composition, correct drawing and expression, it denies the operation of elaborate colouring and finish...²

¹

"North American Magazine," No. VI, April, 1833, Vol. I, p. 367.

²

Ibid., p. 371. The entire article is in Appendix B.

Fresco required more preparation for the artist, who worked against air temperature and drying. The image below shows how a fresco artist--actually a team lead by the head artist--execute frescoes in stages. The first stage begins with the laying of wet plaster onto the surface area. The artist works in sections, in newly "fresh" wet plaster each day as the composition is completed. There is some "underdrawing" by the use of the design on heavy paper with pinholes punched around the outlines of the forms. This was then placed upon the area and charcoal pushed into the holes and onto the surface, creating an outline or guide for the artist.

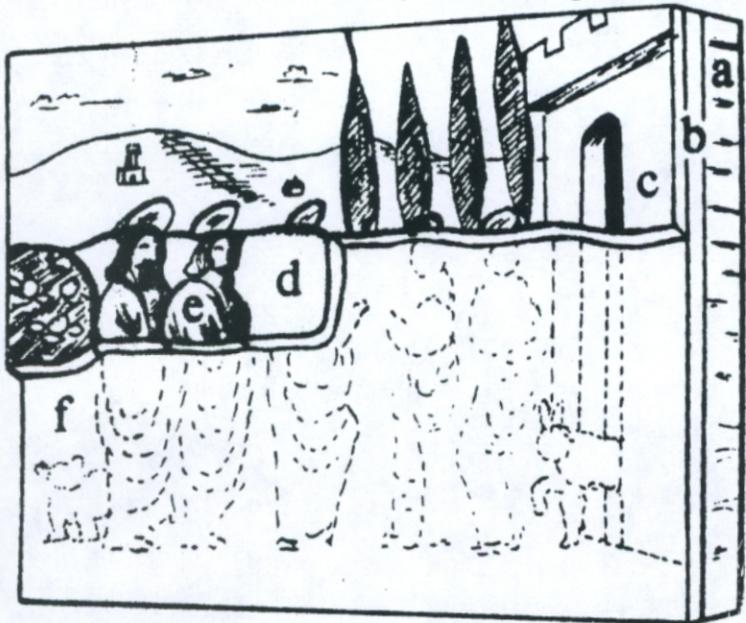


Exhibit 28.

Source: Frederick Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*. New York: Abrams, 1974, p. 19.

This is the same process used at St. Augustine's ceiling and wall, 1848.

11. Partially finished fresco at beginning of a day's work.
Joints between previous days' work indicated in heavy lines
a. masonry wall b. arriccio c. painted intonaco of upper tier d. new intonaco ready for color
e. previous day's work f. underdrawing in sinopia

This was the method taught at L'Accademia di San Luca in Rome where Monachesi learned fresco prior to Constantino Brumidi, a student who came later to the school. Brumidi painted the interiors of the U.S. Capitol in this same manner from 1855 to about 1879. This was said to be how Raphael did fresco painting at the Vatican from about 1508 to 1520, according to Hartt. (citation above.)

Indeed, while Brumidi had the honor of painting frescoes in our nation's most important building,¹ Monachesi had already broken this ground in Philadelphia. In fact, the same Mr. Fairfield commented from Monachesi's work at St. John's in 1833:²

Fresco painting is especially well calculated for large apartments, to ornament temples, churches or any public edifice of magnitude...

The dome of the central building of the capitol at Washington, instead of being cut up as it is into pigeonholes and gingerbread work, had it been left a perfect smooth surface, and a series of Fresco paintings depicted on it, illustrating the most remarkable events of our early history, would have been a work worthy of a great nation.

It is not yet too late.

The dome at St. Augustine's has frescoes and a "history painting" of the saint hovers above the nave, exactly in the thinking of Fairfield--and maybe others, too. St. Augustine's was at least the second dome that Monachesi frescoed. with the Merchants' Exchange³ as the possible first, in 1834.

The swiftness in executing fresco is matched to its complexity with the materials involved. Although no studies were performed on St. Augustine's frescoes, there is some information from Brumidi's Capitol frescoes that might lend some edification as to how the students from the same Accademia di San Luca in Rome had done their respective works in this country. Myers⁴ confirmed that Brumidi had "pounced" charcoal "through perforations" to make the outlines of

¹Wolanin, op. cit., pp. 176,192-5. Also see Catherine S. Myers, "A Study of Constantino Brumidi's Painting Technique in the Senate Corridors," Ibid., pp. 198,199-209.

²"The North American Magazine," op. cit., p. 366.

³Refer to Gilchrist, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴Op.cit., p. 201.

his designs paced by each day's work on the wet plaster. Brumidi "appears to have used pure fresco" in some areas, she confirmed through analysis: Monachesi's early work was in "true" or **buon fresco**, the same. But, as the Brumidi frescoes disclosed, the artist also applied oil to dry plaster--which is what Monachesi had done at The Richard Alsop IV House in Connecticut in 1839. It is possible that St. Augustine's frescoes are not solely "true" but had oil painted to "retouch," as Myers found in Brumidi's. Furthermore, "Artists recognized the limitations of fresco for achieving depth and contrast...They added all types of organic binders including casein, egg, and glue, painting over the already drying surface."¹

Despite the shortcomings of fresco, what Monachesi began in Philadelphia in 1832 was sufficient for the Augustinians to hire him for the new church in 1848 after a long line of successful commissions and praise. Fresco was a method few artists, if any during Monachesi's lifetime here, had tried, but it was impressive. In 1854, the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol's construction, Montgomery C. Meigs travelled throughout the country looking for examples of fresco, finding one in his home town where his father, a reputable doctor, worked. In April of 1854, Meigs wrote of Monachesi's frescoes in the dome of the Merchants' Exchange: "I have never seen a fresco except a monochromatic painting on the ceiling of the Philadelphia Exchange..."² If Meigs saw the program at St. Augustine's, he never reported on it--he evidently had Raphael's "Vatican art" in mind for the Capitol's interiors after seeing the Monachesi fresco at the Exchange in Philadelphia.³

¹Myers, op. cit., pp. 204;206.

²See O'Connor who published this in "The Mural in America," Part Four, pp. 3 and 4 herein in Appendix D.

³Wolff (Ed.), op. cit., p.106.

The Neoclassical Style

There was already an art tradition established in the United States in Neoclassicism prior to Monachesi's arrival in late 1831. Philadelphia was the location of several major Neoclassical building projects using "Georgian" or "Palladian" styles; then came the "Federal" by the end of the eighteenth century, which had standardized forms from ancient Greek and Roman architecture into ones in this nation for an "American" tradition. Architecture had the stated proof of overall acceptance of the "classical" art style, followed by sculpture, which was as "monumental" in character as buildings.

Our first presidents' tastes in Neoclassicism, a general term for the renewed interpretation of the Classical Style from Golden Age Greece and the first centuries of Rome, furthered use of a style in imitation of the great civilizations that inspired our form of government. Architects from Philadelphia contributed to the building designs in Washington, D.C. and artists were brought from mainly Italy to sculpt forms as seen on Greek and Roman pediments, columns and other sites where decoration was appropriate. Scharf & Westcott's **History of Philadelphia** listed artists from Philadelphia, who from the 1790s to the 1820s had left the city to carve in stone or in marble for government buildings in Washington. (See Appendix A.) Monachesi's peers in sculpture in Philadelphia, Giuseppe (also known as "Francesco") Jardella (1793-1831) and E. Luigi Persico (1791-1860) created the "tobacco leaf" capitals and pediment statues on the east wing of the Capitol respectively in the c. 1815 to c.1822 period. They were Neoclassicists, sculpting as those from antiquity in a style that would continue at the Capitol's construction for decades.

It was only a matter of time when Neoclassical painting would

fully emulate the interiors of the classical civilizations. Or, interiors would base their decorating scheme on later styles, in Italian Renaissance interpretations of the buildings and interior spaces of antiquity, as at the Vatican, done not by Michelangelo, but by Raphael.

Raphael (1483-1520) had a particular style described by Professor Hartt as more appealing to Pope Julius II. (Julius is best known for his caustic relationship with Michelangelo.) Hartt wrote that Raphael's frescoes "...set forth the new ideals of Julius' reign and...provide(d) a new amplitude and harmony of space and form." ¹Raphael's fresco, "The School of Athens" at the Vatican is "...universally recognized as the culmination of the High Renaissance ideal of formal and spatial harmony..." ² Thus, these Neoclassical frescoes by Raphael rendered a basis for architectural interior design in conformity with the exterior.

At St. Augustine's, the pattern of the ceiling frescoes is a balance of one distinct geometric form: around a rectangle, in symmetry. The circles interconnect by the arabesques--swirling designs--just like Raphael used in "The School of Athens." (Exhibit 15.) In fact, what makes St. Augustine's special is that this fresco program mirrors Roman churches' interiors **in the United States**--when this manner of solidarity with the Church in Rome was new with American churches.

An interior such as the one in the image of Old St. Joseph's reflected Anglo-Protestant use of plainness, with the exception of the hanging wall art of Roman Catholic religious figures. (See Exhibit 27). St. Augustine's continued Monachesi's intro-

¹Hartt, op. cit., p. 460.

²Ibid., p. 462. The right side of this Vatican fresco is herein on page 18.

duction of Raphael's Neoclassicism, as in the interiors of Old St. Mary's and St. Philip Neri, both in Philadelphia decorated prior to St. Augustine's program. These frescos, and those of the Alsop House and Phil-Ellena fully explain what the Neoclassical Style was in the early nineteenth century with Monachesi. The Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul at Logan Square, where a protracted construction that began in 1846 finally ended in about 1862 during the Civil War, had extended Neoclassicism in church interior decoration, even to the end of the century in the Archdiocese.¹ Scattaglia painted in Neoclassicism outside of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia into the Commonwealth's rural areas, furthering this Neoclassicism first used in Philadelphia with Monachesi in the 1830s. Today, most would associate this style more with religious interiors than with the interiors of First Century Rome--or with Raphael's Vatican **stanze**.

"Decorative Art"

St. Augustine's fresco program is, by category, "decorative art" which is not the same as "fine art." The origins of Monachesi's work in this genre allude to Raphael's work in the **stanze** that Pope Julius II wanted decorated, as a form of interior decoration. The result was that these "decorated" rooms represented the highlight of Raphael's career.

A late nineteenth century art dictionary² placed decorative art more on par with its architectural effects where

...it (decoration) is designed with a view to the shape and character of the space which it fills...to fulfil(sic) a definite purpose.

¹ See "American Architects and Buildings" database for Scattaglia's biographical information, written by Sandra L. Tatman, Ph.D. of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia. An 1891 letter at the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Records Center showed this decorator at work.

² "Adaline's Art Dictionary," New York: D.Appleton & Co., 1891, p.120.

Exhibit 29.

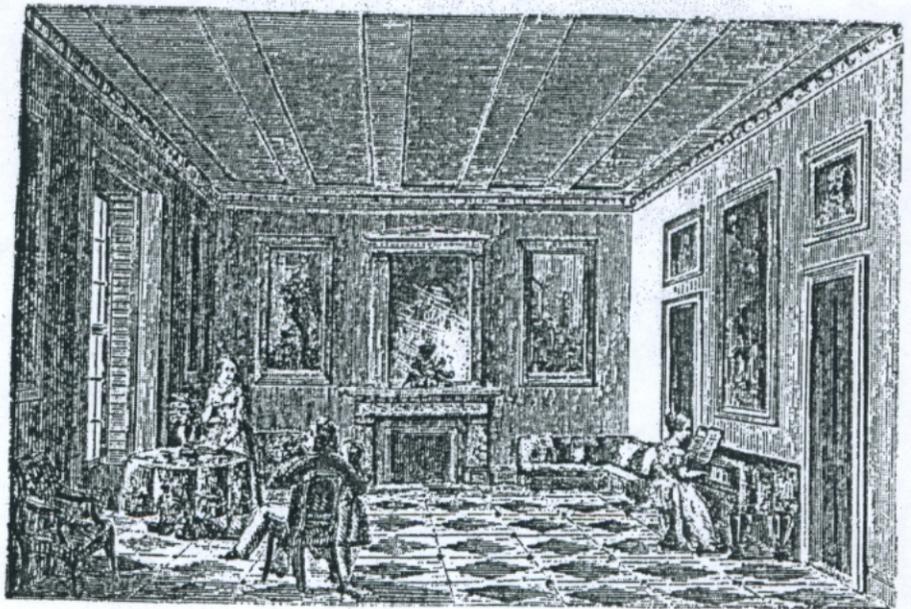
In Victorian Interior Decoration, American Interiors, 1830-1900, art historians Gail Caskey Winkler and Roger Moss included these images to show the starkness of the interiors of Neoclassical (or here, "Greek") styles, circa 1840.



St. Augustine's fresco program from 1848 is an example of the change--by introducing European interior decorating from antiquity, or from Raphael's High Renaissance interpretation of Classicism.

Exhibit 30.

Two Grecian Interiors: Top: Jane Rebecca Griffith, by Oliver T. Eddy (c. 1840). This view shows half of a double parlor finished in the Grecian style. The pattern covering the entire floor might be carpeting or a painted floorcloth. (The Maryland Historical Society) Right: A parlor in the country house finished in the Grecian style, as illustrated in Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses. The window appears to have interior shutters and the floor wall-to-wall carpeting without borders. The pictures are hung in relation to the architectural features of the room. (The Athenaeum of Philadelphia)



Next pages: Note ceilings--prior to Monachesi's introduction of Neoclassical decorative art to interiors, this was not done or seen in American interiors.

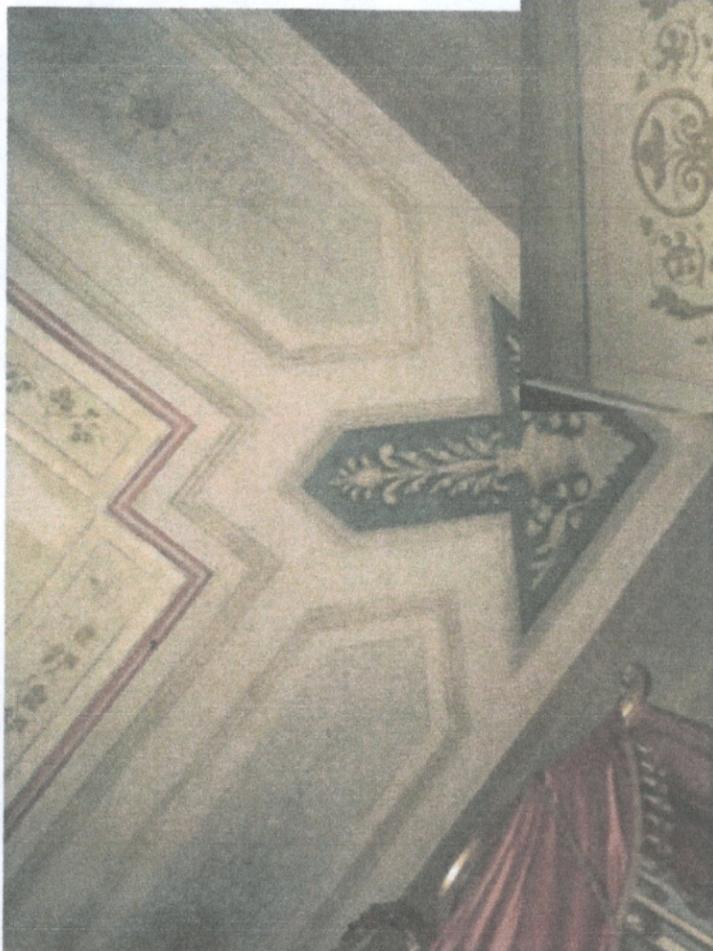
Phil-Ellena

c. 1841-1844



-49-

Exhibit 31.



Monachesi's arabesques--
similar to St. Augustine's.

Alsop House (details)
1839.



All images by Alain Munkittrick.

Phil-Ellena (Germantown) Philadelphia, c.1841-44. Monachesi's decorations.

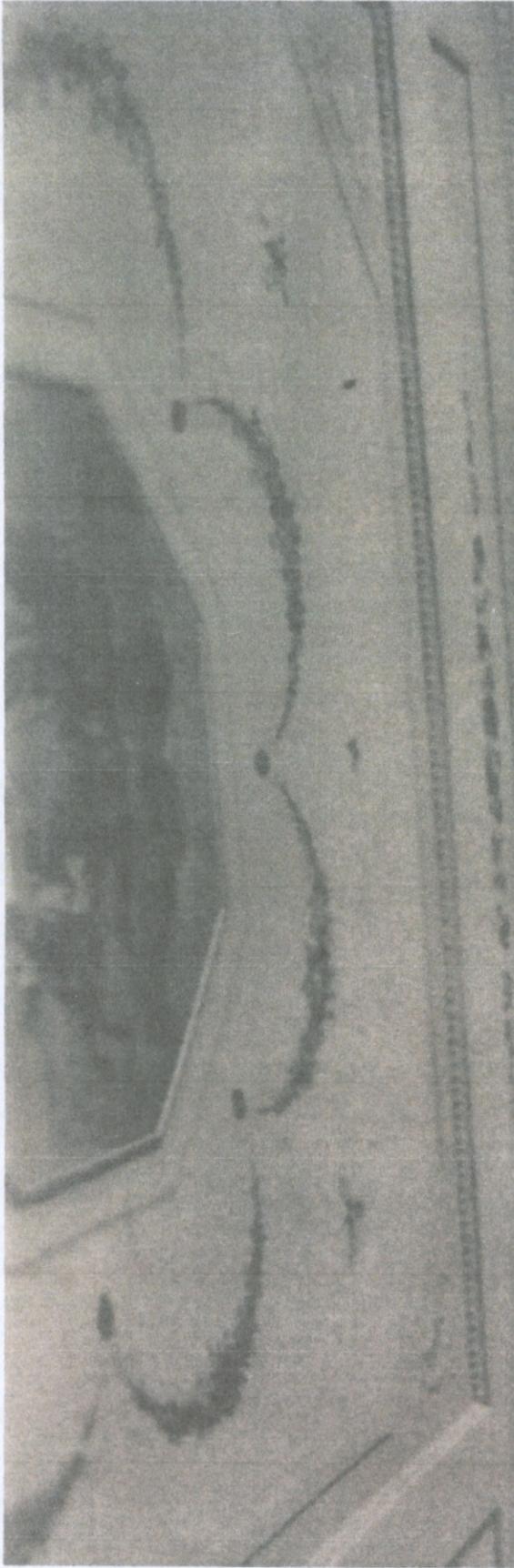


Exhibit 32.



Alsop House (detail)
1839 by Monachesi.

Architect Alain Munkittrick researched interiors of residences in the c.1830-1850 period to identify the artist of The Alsop House's many frescos--it was Monachesi who painted there in 1839. Note the figures in geometric forms, the decorative arabesques and balance of design. Monachesi did same at St. Augustine's in 1848.

Next page: Exhibit 33: St. Augustine's.



Detail from Edward Vollmer photograph (2015).

(j) St. Augustine's fresco program--Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

St. Augustine's frescos have contemporary significance where they exemplify all of the stated categories in this criterion. From the arrival of the Augustinian fathers in Philadelphia in 1796, there has been interest in what they did and how this site figures into Philadelphia's history. The religious Order of St. Augustine dates to 1256 with a strong mission dedicated to education. As one church historian wrote: "...the (rhetorician) Augustine first understood that the religion of the Church and a cultivated mind were not incompatible."¹ Indeed. Even while rebuilding the church, and while Monachesi

and his assistants were decorating in the instant fresco program, the clergy at St. Augustine's were continuing the work they had begun outside of Philadelphia, at the "Augustinian College of Villanova"² since 1842. As the first Roman Catholic school of higher education in Pennsylvania, the future Villanova University regularly published advisements such as this from September 21, 1848 in "The Catholic Herald." It was this prestigious level in cultural, social and historical standing that this religious group and site held locally. And their church would have to have an appearance in its interior equally as commanding.

The Catholic Herald.

THE AUGUSTINIAN COLLEGE OF VILLANOVA. This College, lately incorporated by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, is situated about ten miles from Philadelphia, between the Lancaster turnpike and Columbia Railroad, which pass through its extensive grounds. It may be reached several times a-day by the cars to Westchester, Columbia and Harrisburg; and from the College there is equal facility of access to the city. The drive over the turnpike is very pleasant, and is performed with ease in an hour and a half. The regular course of education will embrace the Languages, Science, &c., usually taught in Colleges, but, at the request of parents or guardians, it will be restricted to the branches in which they wish their Children or Wards instructed. At present, there are in the College nearly as many Students as can be accommodated, but a new Building, sufficiently large to receive a Hundred Students, now in rapid progress of erection, will be finished before the commencement of the next term in September. The Scholastic year begins on the first Monday in September, and ends on the third Wednesday in July. Besides lay assistants, several Clergymen of the Order of St. Augustin teach, and constantly reside at the College.

TERMS.

For Board, Tuition, Washing and Mending Linen and Stockings, per annum, \$150, payable half year, in advance.

Further information may be obtained by application at the College, or at St. Augustin's Church, Philadelphia.

J. P. O'DWYER, O. S. A., President.

jy20-3m

1

Hughes, Philip, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*. Garden City: Image Books, 1947, p. 61.

2

Rev. O'Dwyer, the college president was also St. Augustine's pastor for the rebuilding and fresco program.

Having an educated congregation, or a majority thereof at St. Augustine's set this parish a bit apart from others with a school that "existed prior to 1813," a "school-house" by 1838 with co-educational classes and lay teachers; a "Library Society" and "Youth's Literary Institute" were part of parish life and brought parishioners together with the Augustinians at their well-stocked library. Congregants also may have noticed the art works collected by the clergy. All of these possessions were destroyed in 1844, but St. Augustine's members, according to Scharf & Westcott, "voted three thousand dollars toward the expenses of the new church" in April of 1847. In the few months after the 1844 arson, many of St. Augustine's parish were invited to Old St. Joseph's¹ for services...and they saw the frescos of Monachesi on the walls and ceiling. (Refer to Exhibit 34) Old St. Mary's was around the corner from Old St. Joseph's and there were frescos there, too.

Scharf & Westcott were able to obtain a parish census from 1838 that did not burn in the 1844 fire, noting "3,002" members, mostly natives of Ireland and mostly adult, with no gender divisions.² How knowledgeable they were on art did not matter with the same ethnicities forming the backbone of the churches where Monachesi's frescos already were; it was a matter of budgeting a fresco program. As the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's bicentennial history wrote: "Most parishes in this era...relied on the steady commitment of ordinary people to raise money and organize labor to make a beautiful church a reality."³ A collection at St. John's was taken for Monachesi's frescos,⁴ but it seemed that St. Augustine's parishioners were prepared and wanted their church decorated.

¹ Op. cit., pp. 1378-9.

² Op. cit., p. 1378.

³ Archdiocesan staff, **Our Faith-Filled Heritage**. Strasbourg, France: Editions du Signe, 2007, p. 55.

⁴ "The National Gazette," November 24, 1832.

Many of the city's Catholics had already been worshipping in decorated churches in 1848. They were following the example set at St. John's on Thirteenth Street where Monachesi's frescos brought positive publicity to a cathedral rising from the scandal at the former cathedral, Old St. Mary's on South Fourth Street. Bishop Francis P. Kenrick, then the Coadjutor Bishop of Philadelphia in 1830 believed that a church in the "western" part of the city would bring a fresh start. And the church's interior was said to be "of almost unparalleled grandeur"¹ with imported stained glass windows adding more color with Monachesi's frescos. Kenrick and St. John's pastor, John Hughes gave Monachesi this commission after which Old St. Joseph's and Old St. Mary's, then St. Philip's hired the artist to paint frescos, some more "Raphaelesque" than others.

This decorative art for interiors was broadly popular in Philadelphia where Monachesi painted more residential interiors than churches, by Benezit's account. (See p. 21) The 1830 to 1850 period of art in Philadelphia brought all classes together with the frescos for middle and lower class Catholics at church or for the wealthy and influential with Monachesi's "Vatican art" in their homes.² But affording this interior decorative trend was an economic challenge for most Catholics in Philadelphia where Monachesi had decorated only five of the fourteen churches existing in 1848. The cultural and social attitudes of Catholics at that time might be indicated by how the Monachesi-decorated churches also happened to be the churches/parishes who provided the most services and aid to immigrant Irish arriving in Philadelphia.³ These same parishioners who funded frescos also had founded benevolent societies, raised money, established hospitals, orphanages and developed organizations in tandem with Kenrick's building program. The peak years, 1846-47, according to Dennis Clark, affected local institu-

¹ Souvenir book, "A Century and a Quarter: 1830-1955, St. John the Evangelist Church, Philadelphia.," Phila.:1955, p. 15.

² See Appendices B. and D.: Weigley; Fisher; Carpenter.

³ "The Catholic Herald" printed almost weekly articles on these various societies at these parishes from 1846 through the 1850s.

tions.¹"The Catholic Herald," meanwhile, began in 1847 and continued for almost twenty years, what would be published pleas for funding the elaborate cathedral project at Logan Square. This included demolishing, then rebuilding the seminary at another site. As Kenrick broke ground for the cathedral in 1846, the Irish migration increased, warranting construction of buildings to accommodate social welfare services, another huge financial burden for the Catholics of Philadelphia. It was only fourteen years from the dedication of the former cathedral, St. John's in 1832, and Kenrick pushed for building the largest Roman Catholic cathedral in North America in one of the city's worst years. An estimated "60,000" Catholics were expected to support all of these projects, plus other diocesan charities.²

In December of 1848, Kenrick and Hughes presided at St. Augustine's dedication³ with the instant fresco program looming above them. Both clerics were nationally-known defenders of Roman Catholicism, producing a prolific number of writings that attest to their aggressive characters during the years of Nativism. And both men appreciated fresco, the medium used by Raphael at the Vatican. When Hughes later rose to be the first archbishop of New York City in 1851, he wanted frescos to decorate St. Stephen's Church, but Monachesi had died. Hughes then hired Brumidi to paint what may be the first fresco in New York,⁴ about twenty years behind the introduction of fresco in Philadelphia. By 1854, Brumidi would have a Congressional commission to decorate the interior spaces of the U.S. Capitol where fresco was used at least until 1888 and in the Neoclassical Style of Raphael at the Vatican. The art style, the medium and how these programs were executed to imitate Raphael's work had been tested by Philadelphia's diverse demographics for over two decades before the Washington, D.C. programs elevated what Monachesi began into a **nationally** acceptable segment of **American art**.

¹Clark, Dennis, *The Irish in Philadelphia*. Phila.:Temple U. Press, 1973, p. 159.

²See Gallman, J.M., *Receiving Erin's Children*. Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of N.Carolina Press, 2000, p. 159.

³Scharf & Westcott, *op. cit.*

⁴Wolanin, B., "The Artist of the Capitol," in Kennon, *op. cit.*, p.176.

Using art, namely the frescos as "propaganda" or "political" symbols in Philadelphia in the late 1840s, as at St. Augustine's was more than intentional for the solidarity that the ranking clerics sought to maintain as hostilities among the lower and middle classes who lived near the Nativists perpetuated through the 1850s: in 1854, a Nativist candidate became the mayor of Philadelphia.¹ By then, Monachesi had died, leaving no heir to his skill as fresco artist and decorator of churches.

Between 1848, with the last fresco program in a Catholic church, at St. Augustine's, and 1863, there were no churches that were frescoed in Philadelphia, according to Benezit and archives.² In August of 1863, the records on the decoration of the interior of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul held that Bishop Wood had, in these Civil War years when the U.S. Capitol's interiors were not yet finished by Brumidi, commissioned the same artist to fresco the "largest cathedral in North America."³ Thus, "Bishop Wood's Address"

The Catholic church is not four cold, bare walls... (it) must be decorated and the decorations must be such as will justify the claims which the Church puts forth as the patroness and the mother of the arts and sciences.

Wood then "justified" his own claims by explaining why the artist, Brumidi, was using fresco, not just any other medium:

Thus we did in the most substantial manner--not by placing a little coloring on the smooth walls, which might peel off and then become a deformity rather than a finished work of art, but by painting it in the mortar, by absorbing the color...so that if the Cathedral lasts 500 years...

¹ Robert Conrad was the first mayor of the consolidated city in 1854, elected as a "Know Nothing" or "Nativist" Party member.

² See page 21 herein. Contemporary newspapers reported on decorated churches upon their openings. Parish histories sometimes also memorialized interior renovations, but most art decorators were not known before the 1874 hiring of Scattaglia by the archdiocese.

³ Wolanin, Barbara, **Constantino Brumidi**, Washington, D.C.: Gov't Printing Office, 1998, p. 159.

This was the impact of fresco--since it was first used in Philadelphia by Monachesi at St. John's in 1832.

Yet, by the 1950s, all of Brumidi's frescos at the Cathedral Basilica were gone. Symbolically, Wood's insistence of having the artist paint at the cathedral during the Civil War years, and while Brumidi still was on commission at the Capitol, may have been to place the Church, as religion and structure, within the **American** popular culture. The cathedral's frescos were the nexus with the U.S. Capitol's program when there were no other artists in the U.S. painting in this medium. For the faithful, Wood said church decorations "instruct and edify those who may visit and pray," leaving, "I place dependence on your liberality, for the decoration of this church."¹ So, with the hierarchal approval, and funding from Catholic laity, interior decorating of local churches continued, albeit on this level, through the 1860s, thus extending the tradition in Philadelphia begun by Monachesi in 1832.

It would seem that art history sources would note these consistent developments in Neoclassical decorative art in fresco for interior spaces that began in Philadelphia, but no such credit has been reported. However, in the review of "when" and "why" interiors took on decorative art in the nineteenth century, John LaFarge (1835-1910) is cited for what he accomplished at Trinity Church in Boston in 1876. Art historians such as Brown, et al, claim that LaFarge--who was born after Monachesi finished several fresco programs in churches and residences in Philadelphia--was responsible for a "innovation" that had a nationally significant effect. As Exhibits 34 and 35 show, there is a very clear similarity between Old St. Joseph's frescos by Monachesi, c. 1835, and Trinity's encaustic paintings that have been called "the model for many later church interiors"² when the source could have seen St. Augustine's 1848 program, the last of Monachesi's decorated churches.

¹ Seminarian Staff, "A Cathedral is Built," in **Records**, American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, Vo., LXXV, Dec., 1964, No.4, "Bishop Woods' Address," pp. 211-13.

² Brown, op. cit., p. 305.

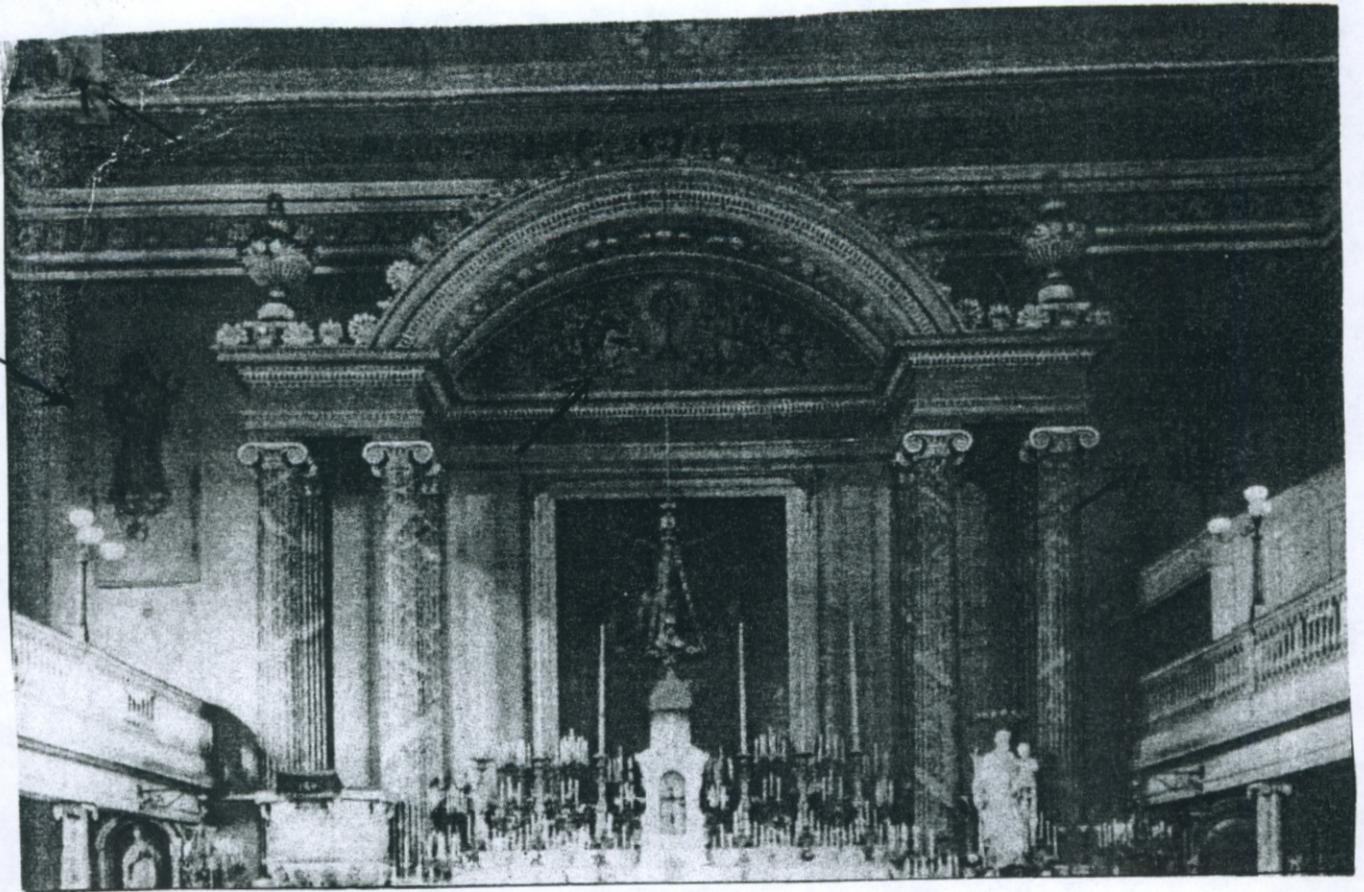


Exhibit 34.
Monachesi's frescoes at Old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia (1835-1840) abruptly dismissed hanging wall art. This, too, pre-dates LaFarge's paintings at Trinity Church, Boston (below) in 1878, whereupon interior decorating with hand-painted designs became a national trend.

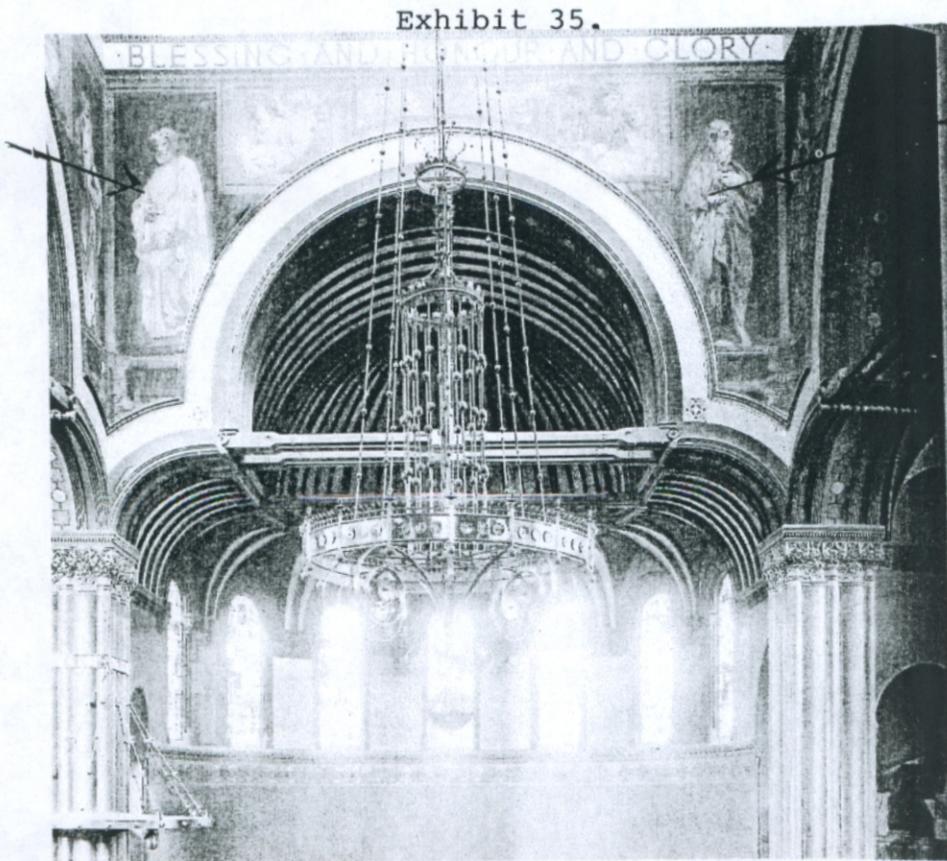


Exhibit 35.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia's hiring of decorative artist Lorenzo Scattaglia (1839?-1931) to work alongside of architect Edwin Forrest Durang on building projects from "1874"¹ also predates LaFarge's work at Trinity. What is remarkable about Scattaglia's work--which is evident in numerous churches throughout the archdiocese and elsewhere in Pennsylvania--is that he had adapted Monachesi's arabesques, use of geometric forms to encase the arabesques and postured his figures in "incident-related" scenes. Scattaglia's work closely imitated Monachesi's, even at St. Augustine's where, for the 1896 anniversary,² Scattaglia continued some of the 1848 designs to complement the original frescos.

Thus, the archdiocese officiated over church interior decor at least from that 1874 date, and built upon the Neoclassical art of which only now St. Augustine's bears as proof from Monachesi's work in that 1830s to 1840s period. Before Trinity Church, St. Augustine's fresco program held the "geometric harmony" that Chastel noted was Raphael's "tendency in architecture...to stress the surface aspects." Moreover, Hartt would have likened St. Augustine's frescos to the "High Renaissance ideal of formal and spatial harmony"³ that Monachesi had planned in every interior space where he was commissioned to decorate. And, finally, St. Augustine's frescos carried through the Neoclassicism from exterior architecture to the interior, which was not a "first" at Trinity Church in Boston. Such was articulated: "...it sufficed for LaFarge to be aware of architecture as sculpting space,"⁴ which had been done by Monachesi before LaFarge's birth. The instant frescos deserve due recognition to be a reference in art history and not to be overlooked.

¹Year determined from listing by Sandra L. Tatman, Ph.D. in "Philadelphia Architects and Buildings," *The Athenaeum*, 2014.

²McGowan, op. cit., p. 142.

³Chastel, op. cit., p. 228.; Hartt, op. cit., p. 462.

⁴Raguin, V. Chieffo, in "Decorator: John LaFarge," in O'Gorman, James.F.(Ed.), *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*. Amherst, Mass.: Univ. of Mass. Press, 2004, p. 120.

These frescos represent another contribution to the history of Philadelphia and to all of the Commonwealth from the Augustinians, as part of their heritage and their mission. For the reasons herein, St. Augustine's fresco program merits historical certification in compliance to the Philadelphia Historical Preservation Code §14-2007(5), (a),(e),(f) and (j).

Respectfully submitted on behalf
of St. Augustine's Parish:

April 9, 2015

Celeste A. Morello
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