

**Collection:** *Michael Cervino Memorial Collection  
of Material Related to Gaetano Federici*

**Accession:** 2014.066.01

## Finding Aid

**Date Range:** 1908-1960

**Bulk Date:** 1920-1959

**Creator:** Donor's father, Michael Cervino

**Containers:** 7 Acid free boxes

**Size:** 4 letter size boxes, 2 legal size boxes and 1 oversized box (3" d x 23" w x 31" l)

**Storage Location:** Lambert Castle Library/Archives

**Aid Created By:** Helen F. Berkenbush, Volunteer

### Biographical Information:

Gaetano Federici (1880-1964) was a prolific Paterson sculptor, working from around 1900 until shortly before his death in the early 1960s. Federici's portfolio includes private statues and cemetery stones, as well as many of the public statues found in the Great Paterson area. Forty Federici pieces can be found within a two mile radius of Paterson city hall, including two of the three statues in front of city hall itself. Most of these pieces are still in place today. Many of Federici's subjects are themselves notable figures, both on a local and national level, including politicians, philanthropists, religious leaders and comedians. The artist worked in many mediums, including stone, bronze and plaster and many of his plaster scale models have also survived, several are held in the PCHS collection.

Gaetano Federici was born on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1880 in Castlegarde Italy, the first child of to Antonio and Theresa Federici. Sometime after his son's birth, Antonio Federici immigrated to America in an effort to support his family. Gaetano and his mother followed Antonio to Paterson later, when Gaetano was seven. The family resided in several areas of Paterson including a house on Totowa Ave. and, in 1894, the family moved to Antonio's business quarters in Paterson. Gradually Gaetano was joined by his six siblings: Albert, Antonio, Domenick, Antonetta, Marie, Giuli, Rosa, and Loretta.

In 1894, Gaetano began school at age nine, attending first School 14, followed by School 6 and finally Paterson High School. During these years Gaetano was known to his classmates as "Tom Fredericks," a name developed by his father to mask the family's immigrant origins. At first glance it appeared that Gaetano would follow in the footsteps of his father and pursue a career in architecture. However, it soon became clear that the younger Federici was more interested in the decorative embellishments of his father's projects than the architecture itself. It was Gaetano's mother Theresa who fostered and encouraged his artistic development.

Gaetano left high school to apprentice in New York City under sculptor Giuseppe Moretti in 1897. His training would progress quickly with Moretti and in 1899 he entered formal studies at the Arts Student League. He also apprenticed to Henry Bonnard Foundry and the Roman Bronze Works as a bronze-caster, to round out his skills.

As his career progressed, Gaetano decided to return to Paterson, despite potential opportunities elsewhere. His first commission came in 1905, for the James F. Stewart memorial. Part of the success of Federici's career is timing, as he began creating public statues for a city which was rebuilding and revitalizing after a major flood, fire and several large strikes in early 1900.

Gaetano married Orsola Alois on April 29, 1908. His parents were not thrilled with the match of this mill worker's daughter to their talented son. In 1909 Orsola gave birth to a son, Antonio Canova. Antonio was joined by Teresa Maria in 1914. Gaetano Federici died on February 15, 1964 and is buried with other members of his family in Holy Sepulcher Cemetery, Totowa, under a sculpture of his own creation.

For more information on the life and work of Gaetano Federici, refer to *Gaetano Federici (1880-1964): The Artist as Historian*, edited by Flavia Alaya, 1980.

### **Archival History:**

The items in this collection were purchased from the Federici family after the artist's death by the donor's father. The donor's father, Michael Cervino (1930-2013) retained the files for his lifetime, after which they passed to his daughter Daniele (the donor). This collection was appraised by the donor, and a copy of the appraisal is included with the collection for reference.

### **Scope notes and Content:**

This collection contains a large quantity of photographs, some documents, some books and some original sketches by Gaetano Federici. The photographs can be separated into two categories, those of Federici's work, the artist at work and his family. Other photographs of artwork, many from Italy, are also included. These photographs are assumed to have been used by the artist for inspiration or consultation and have been sorted into separate files.

The books included in the collection were also reference materials. They include gallery books and illustrated books with classical and biblical scenes. The documents related to Federici's commissions (including Laughing Girl's exhibition) and more inspirational material.

The original sketches are both loose and in a sketchbook. They are described on the box list. An oversized portfolio was also included in this collection.

### **Series:**

Upon receipt of this collection, the items were mixed together with no particular order. It was decided to separate the items by material type (photographs, documents etc.) and then separate by subject. All photograph related to Gaetano Federici's original works were grouped by the work and identified when possible. The inspiration photographs were separated based on their subject matter.

The contents of the portfolio were removed from the portfolio to protect the material, but it was noted on the box list which items were original stored in the portfolio. These items have been placed in an oversized box along with the original portfolio.

Along with this document collection, two bas relief plaques were also donated (2014.066.02-2014.066.03).