

“Annie” honors immigrant history through art

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

It's never too late to pursue that which you love, and Oxford's Ann-Marie Moscoffian Richard, better known as “Annie,” is living proof. Harboring a love for drawing since kindergarten, she chose to return to art in her sixties, after taking classes at Worcester Art Museum via a scholarship acceptance that came with opportunity and tears.

“I cried. This was something I wanted to do all my life,” Moscoffian, who moved to Oxford at the age of six (in the year 1939) recalled. “Since kindergarten, I've just wanted to draw. In Junior High we had an Art teacher come in on Fridays and I couldn't wait to see him. I waited eagerly for him. I straightened papers. To this day, I can still remember teachers hanging my drawings up on the wall.”

After graduating from Oxford High School in 1950, the artist may have put her crayons away, but she never really stopped drawing. In November of that same year, she joined the Women's Army Corp (WAC) and worked in the engineering branch as a draftsman, a skill requiring precise lines, logic, and measurement. “That was my assignment. I started out in photography, but was allergic to the chemicals. In order to take drafting I was supposed to have Algebra, but they accepted me anyway. I loved it.”

Little did Annie Moscoffian know that about forty years later an art school in Worcester would supply her with even more tools. “They gave me everything I needed to draw again.”

Annie's talent seems to be embedded in the maternal branch of her family tree. Her mother studied art in Germany and, later, worked as a commercial artist in Worcester in the 1920's. Her daughter is an international artist. “All of my work is realistic. I have to paint exactly what's there. I do water color, oil painting, pen and ink, pencil, and it's all the same to me,” she said. “They all feel natural.”

After her son-in-law, daughter and their partners moved to North Dakota in the year 1971, it felt natural for Annie to reside there, also, and take part in big art shows, which took place in Minot, ND. “Just about every time I entered a contest I won an award,” the artist recalled. Two years ago, she won First and Second Place and was encouraged to ‘keep at it’ by one of the judges, a full-blooded Indian.

“He liked my work and told me to keep it up,” she recalled.

Moscoffian kept it up, additionally, by teaching a group of neighborhood kids in Rugby, North Dakota, (two of whom have pursued the artistic world), using techniques learned in a book written by Betty Edwards, and titled, ‘Drawing on the Right side of the Brain’.

One of these techniques, known as Pen and Ink Stippling, produces a logical design through the use of repetitive rows of hand-drawn dots, a style that led her to take on her latest (and finished) project, a four-foot drawing of Oxford's Huguenot Monument, which was erected by Huguenot descendants in the year 1884 to commemorate the first settlers who came to Oxford from France via London (1687 – 1704) after escaping religious persecution. The monument stands proudly In Memory of the HUGUENOTS. Exiles for their faith who made their first settlement of Oxford.



Ann-Marie Moscoffian of Oxford stands with the Huguenot Monument at the Huguenot Fort Site.



President of Huguenot Memorial Society Jean O'Reilly accepts Pen and Ink Stippling Drawing from artist Ann-Marie Moscoffian

Located at 87 Fort Hill Road, at the forefront of eight-and-one-half acres of town-owned property, the monument, built by descendants of Gabriel Bernon and Andre Sigournay (wealthy French merchants who helped to finance and build up the Huguenot community through a wash leather mill, fort, and French Church, in addition to paid passage for settlers from England to Boston) stands erect at thirteen feet tall. The Huguenot presence “on the Fort Hill” was kept alive by the tenacity of a few women who chose to preserve the spirit of their ancestors by persuading men in the 1870's to purchase property from landowners. The encouragement of these women, rather shrewdly, led to the formation of the Huguenot Memorial Society.

Perhaps the spirits of these Huguenot women and men were present in Ann-Marie Moscoffian's art studio when, three years ago, she sat mulling over photographs of the monument, which had been taken by her friend (and Huguenot member) Nancy Daukz. “I kept looking at the pictures and thinking about drawing the monument, but kept the idea on the back burner. Then I thought it would be nice to do this in ‘pen and ink’ and got started.” Moscoffian worked on the drawing from January 22nd to August 1st of 2016. “This will be my last stippling for a while. I'm going to get back to color next.”

Before she gets back to color, Moscoffian has been busy celebrating her accomplishment of the Pen and Ink Stippling Drawing. On Sunday, September 18, during a function held at the home of Huguenot Memorial Society President Jean O'Reilly and husband, Paul O'Reilly; Annie presented the drawing for the first time to Huguenot group members, and those of the Oxford Historical Commission. The work of art will need to be matted and framed before it can be hung, and will be preserved at the Oxford Town Hall.

“I'm just so happy to be honoring Annie,” said O'Reilly. “It's wonderful that the Huguenot Historical Site means so much to somebody that she would spend so much time on one piece. In some ways, this is her home. Actually, this is her home.”

For more Huguenot history, visit the group's website at Huguenotmemorial.societyoxford.org