

**Collection:** Gaetano Federici Collection**Accession Number:** 2013.023

## Finding Aid

**Date Range:** 1880-1981**Bulk Date:** 1921-1980**Creator:** Unknown; PCHS**Other Numbers:** 2005.23.4-.7 and 1994.5**Number and type of containers:** 8 Flip-top document boxes**Size:** Each box measures 10 ¼ x 12 ¼ x 5, total volume 5022 ½ in<sup>3</sup>**Storage Location:** PCHS Library and Archives**Aid Created By:** Anthony Guido, intern

### 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 Castleggrande 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.

### **Scope and Content:**

The Federici Collection is an archival collection which focuses on the life and works of Gaetano Federici, both during the artist’s lifetime and after his death. It consists of two main components, items from Federici’s lifetime and items relating to an exhibition of his work. Overall, the collection consists of photographs, original sketches, notes, correspondence, personal papers, pamphlets and receipts.

Many of the photographs reveal the artist at work and the many processes for creating a public bronze sculpture. Official dedication photographs and family photographs are also included. The sketches appear to mostly be portraits of people, presumably models for future sculptures. Some of his subjects include family members and self-portraits. One book contains Federici’s own gazetteer of his works, on index cards which provide basic descriptions of the statues. This collection also contains research notes created by the Passaic

County Historical Society for the implementation of an exhibit on the life and works of Gaetano Federici.

**Series:**

Upon beginning this finding aid, the Federici Collection resided in eight boxes all of which were already organized, by either a member of the Federici family or by a member of PCHS, possibly while conducting research for the exhibit and book. The collection therefore contains some items with individual accession numbers. These numbers, where possible, have been indicated on the box list and are also noted above. At the time of this writing, it is unclear how many items within this collection may be from the sketch portfolio (1994.5) if any.

Each box was separated into folders, which were also already organized before being documented. Each box was also organized into different subjects. Most of the photographs that were in the folders were already protected before being documented.