

# John Sassi's Works Decorate Lancaster, Rock Hill

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Recently, some paintings inherited by Livia Capponia Sassi, a native of Italy, turned up at Winthrop College. They were purchased by Winthrop some six



Pettus

weeks before the death of Sassi's husband, John George Sassi, Dec. 31, 1945.

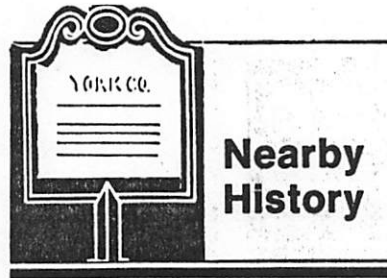
The Sassis are buried in Laurelwood Cemetery in Rock Hill under a monument Sassi carved a number of years before his death. "J.G. Sassi and his wife Livia Capponia. Born in the Nineteenth Century. After a long life, died in the Twentieth Century. Love ye one another." He was believed to be more than 100 years old.

Sassi was born and reared in Ganna, Italy, in the Alps near the Swiss border. His uncle T. Pelliti was an art instructor, and Sassi attended his school and others. He was more than 50 years old when he and his wife immigrated to America.

Sassi worked in a Vermont marble yard for nine years before coming south. In 1907 he was hired by the Yorkville Memorial works. He stayed with the firm for two years and then worked for the Palmetto Monument Company for 18 more years.

An article on Sassi written by Bob Ward for the State newspaper in 1937 says, "... He (Sassi) cut the first granite statue ever produced in the South — the Confederate Soldiers' memorial which stands today in Lancaster. Prior to that time all such works had been done in the North."

The statue referred to in Ward's article was modeled by a Lancaster Confederate veteran, Capt. Amos McManus. The strikingly handsome figure is 7 feet high and faces east. The whole monument is 30 feet in height. The stone was quarried by the Southern Granite Company at Stoneboro. The cost was \$2,000 and was financed by the



Lancaster Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

In 1921, in an international competition, Sassi won a commission from the city of Cunardo, Italy, to execute a memorial statue to the war dead of World War I.

Sassi used a Winthrop student as the model (name unknown) and called the bronze statue of a girl holding a wreath over head, "Winged Victory." Unfortunately, the statue was melted down during World War II and the metal re-used.

Sassi moved to Rock Hill in 1925. That year the Rock Hill Record reported a fire at the Sassi home, which damaged paintings by "early masters valued at \$75,000." The damage was estimated at \$22,000. The paper added that the "paintings were handed down from generation to generation of the Capponi family of Florence, Italy."

Winthrop College Museum displayed some of the Italian paintings in 1930. An account written on the exhibit said Livia Sassi was a descendant of Marquis Gino Capponi of Florence, Italy, "who bought one of these oil paintings from Albani, a Florentine artist, in the year 1606. The title of this painting is 'Peace.' The other

painting entitled 'Broken Vase' was purchased by the Marquis from this artist in 1589."

Sassi named his Rock Hill business the Rock Hill Marble and Granite Works. At first he operated on White Street, but before 1962 he moved to Saluda Street.

There is also a home near the Stoneboro quarry south of Heath Springs that is known as the "Sassi House." People in the area say the Sassis lived there at one time.

Some of Sassi's work is still visible. In 1929, Sassi made and lettered the inscription on the Andrew Jackson birthplace marker that was erected by the Catawba Chapter of the D.A.R.

In 1931, he lettered the granite marker erected in memory of Andrew Jackson Sr. in the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church cemetery in Lancaster County. In 1949, he cut the pedestal of the statue of Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson, mother of Andrew Jackson, in the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian cemetery.

A small item in the Evening Herald in 1941 stated that Sassi had promised to repair Bethesda Presbyterian church tombstones free — "... The Rock Hill marble man is known for his generosity and public spirit."

A Rock Hill statue done by Sassi was of a Mrs. Chisholm, owner of the funeral home, which is said to be a very good likeness. The statue is now in "an old unkept cemetery" across from Castle Heights School in Rock Hill.

Sassi also designed Laurelwood Cemetery's gate and general layout.

Are there other works that can be attributed to Sassi in this area?

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