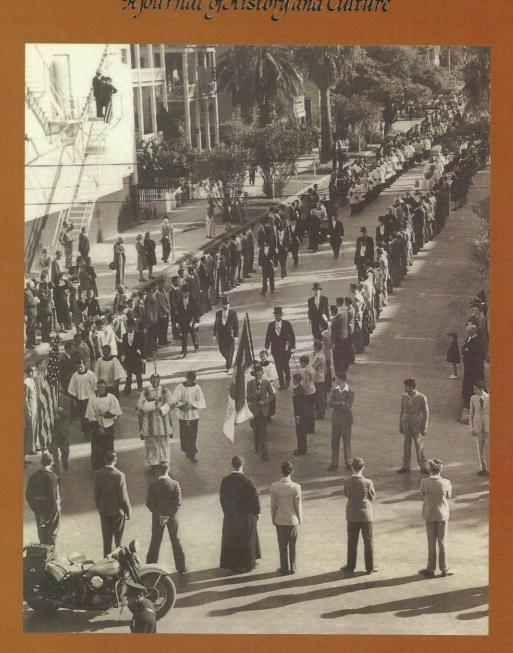
A Catholic Southwest A Journal of History and Culture



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Front Cover: Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus participating in a Catholic procession in Galveston, Texas, c. 1945. The Fourth Degree Knights are wearing formal attire, including black top hats. Photo courtesy of Galveston-Houston Archdiocese, Archives and Records. With permission (image enhanced for publication by Kevin Duffy of Louisiana State University).

Back Cover: Joseph I. Driscoll, Texas State Deputy of the Knights of Columbus, 1923-1932. Photo courtesy of the Catholic Archives of Texas. With permission.

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Courage and Endurance in the Catholic Southwest

In this issue of Catholic Southwest, we have two scholarly articles and three short essays the journal's new "Notes and Documents" section. The two scholarly articles both treat mortant Catholic events in the twentieth century. Eric Platt's study of Archbishop Joseph armel's efforts to desegregate the Catholic schools of New Orleans sketches the portrait of Catholic prelate who was determined for the Catholic schools to maintain their moral as the civil rights movement swept the South and the federal courts took action to racial segregation in public education. Against ferocious and determined opposition, and bishop Rummel desegregated the Catholic schools of the New Orleans Archdiocese; act, he achieved real racial integration long before the public schools ended their racial station of students.

Richard Fossey's study examines the response of the Texas Knights of Columbus to the baserical anti-Catholic bigotry that engulfed Texas in the early 1920s. Acting in concert the Knights of Columbus national leaders and the Catholic bishops of Texas, Texas scights of Columbus crafted a reward program to discredit the infamous "bogus oath," a baseful libel against the Knight of Columbus that was being circulated by the Ku Klux Klan and its sympathizers.

Both essays present profiles in Catholic courage. Archbishop Rummel witnessed a burning cross on the lawn of his rectory and lost a parish church to segregation-inspired arson. The Texas Knights stood up against the Klan during a time when the Klan was at its zenith as a terrorist organization—even kidnapping and torturing Catholic priests.

This issue's "Notes and Documents" section contains three fine reflective essays that illustrate the enduring faith of ordinary Catholics in the Southwest. Amanda Bresie tells the story of St. Peter's Catholic Church, founded by German immigrants in the North Texas town of Lindsay in the late nineteenth century. When the first church was destroyed by a tornado, parishioners rebuilt it, completing one of the loveliest of Texas' ethnic painted churches. The photographic images that accompany Bresie's essay capture the astonishing beauty of St. Peter's, a hidden-away monument to the endurance of Catholic culture in Texas.

Glenda Carne contributed a reflective essay on a letter written by Zohmah Charlot, Catholic artist Jean Charlot's widow, shortly after her husband's death in 1979. Writing to the editor of a Benedictine publication, Zohmah Charlot sought to impress on the Benedictines that her husband, who had completed one of his greatest church paintings in St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas, was a devoted secular Benedictine who had been buried in accordance with his wishes in the robes of a Benedictine monk. Carne's essay is a significant contribution to a growing appreciation of Jean Charlot as a great twentieth-century Catholic artist.

Finally, Ryan Patterson, a recent intern at the Catholic Archives of Texas, produced a delightful essay about the founding of San Salvador Catholic Church in Burleson County, Texas by Sicilian immigrant families who settled along the Brazos River in the early 1890s. According to a parish tradition, San Salvador was constructed after Ouida Scarmardo, a twelve-year old Catholic girl from one of the immigrant families, was visited by "the lady in

A Reflection on Zohmah Charlot's 1979 Letter to the Editor, *Kansas Monks Newsletter*

By Glenda L. Carne*

I first learned of the work of Jean Charlot in 1997, almost 20 years after his 1979 death from cancer. I was researching Mexican muralists for a lecture in an Arts and Cultures of Mexico course I was teaching in Colorado Springs. Mr. Charlot introduced himself to me through a thoughtful University of Colorado, Boulder, master's thesis that described Charlot's mural work and the work of the other three well-known Mexican Muralists, *Los Tres Grandes*: Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros. From the thesis, I learned that Jean Charlot had been the Director of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center from 1947 to 1949, a Center I grew up visiting. How could I not know such an important artist had lived in the community in which I was teaching?¹

The Mexican art class was small, but it so happened that one student was the son-in-law of an artist who worked with Charlot at the elite Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs during the late 1940s. His in-laws had remained in contact with Charlot after he left Colorado Springs and moved his family to Hawai'i. The student brought some of his family's paintings to class to share and wanted to talk about Charlot, so I had more work to do.

The Fountain Valley School (a school for boys only until the late 1970s) was so close to my childhood home that my father frequently rounded up our Springer Spaniels on school grounds when they escaped through the backyard fence of our home, bordering on the School's then sprawling acres. As I continue to study Charlot's life, I have recently read John Charlot's memorial of his father's death, and Zohmah Day Charlot's letter to the Kansas Benedictine monks responding to a column in Kansas Monks, the Benedictine Abbey's newsletter. Zohmah's letter to the Kansas monks caught the attention of Richard Fossey, the editor of Catholic Southwest, and he asked me to comment as a follow-up to the cover-story piece Amanda Pierce and I completed for the 2014 edition.² When re-reading Dr. Charlot's memorial of his father's death, I could not help but draw a comparison to the death of my own father, an outdoorsman, just a plain man, who was ailing and eventually died at home from cancer, like Charlot, just one year after I taught that Mexican Art class.3 Fresh from the completion of a Master's Degree in American Studies and preparation for a Mexico class, I wanted to learn more about the artist who worked in my community and needed to know more to provide information to my students. I walked a downtown Colorado Springs neighborhood placing notes in mailboxes, looking for the house on Boulder Crescent where

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Charlot painted a fresco. I found and photographed the fresco, *Tortillera*," a repeated theme in Charlot's work. Since then, the house and painting have both been relocated. A few years later, I respectfully stalked long-time resident Martha Tilley whose husband, Lewis Tilley taught under Charlot at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. I managed to convince her to allow me into her home to photograph and study a mural panel that Charlot had given her and her husband in 1949. Martha called the piece "*Maria*." It is one of Charlot's many depictions of Luz Jimenez, his friend and favorite model.

It continues to be difficult to find Jean Charlot in the Colorado Springs art and culture archives. He was "processed through" the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center during a time of administrative turmoil. He clashed with controlling non-artist members of the Board and the Center's Administrator, Mitchell Wilder. It is a blurry story around Colorado Springs. Several fabricated rumors circled the community, including the gossip that Charlot was a Communist, didn't complete his duties, and also that he was more interested in self-promotion than the Center. There is a large oil painting by Charlot at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center. It is usually somewhere on display, but has moved several times during the last 20 years. I also believe the fresco piece removed from the Charlot home is somewhere at the Center, listed as a tempera painting. There is little left of Charlot's work at the private Fountain Valley School. Tiles he created with his students have been removed. There is no true fresco mural, altar painting, or Stations of the Cross in Colorado Springs, although Charlot wished to complete all of these during his tenure in Colorado. After his lukewarm reception in Colorado Springs, Charlot and his family left Colorado and landed happily in Hawai'i, which remained Charlot's home until his death in 1979. Colorado Springs seems to want to forget its mistake in not doing a better job of honoring Charlot's artistic contributions to the community.

My first published piece on Charlot's time in Colorado Springs was accomplished in 1999.6 A master's thesis from San Miguel de Allende in 2003 documents what happened at the Fine Arts Center.7 Regretfully, a mural or large-scale fresco painting was not completed in Colorado Springs. Consequently, this was a catastrophic aesthetic loss for the Colorado Springs community. Charlot discussed a mural commission in his initial letters accepting the position in Colorado Springs, and he prepared large-scale cartoons for a mural to celebrate the westward pioneer expansion. The mural would have been positioned outdoors in the Monument Valley Park in the Downtown area of Colorado Springs, with Pikes Peak as its backdrop. A few years ago, in the hopes of re-kindling an interest in Charlot in my area, I visited the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Division of the City of Colorado Springs and showed officials the cartoons of Charlot's mural. After a brief meeting, I never heard anything further. Regardless, Charlot's home until his death in 1979 was beautiful Hawai'i. He is revered in Hawai'i, where he accomplished many murals. For me, almost 20 years after being introduced to the life and art of Jean Charlot, it is much easier to "find" Charlot outside of my own community. Perhaps he finds me? As I have continued to study and learn more about his life over the past almost 20 years, I have built relationships and talked with people who knew Charlot or have pieces to the incomplete puzzle of what really happened in Colorado.

Last year, it was a true privilege to introduce the readers of *Catholic Southwest* to the important work and religiosity of Jean Charlot.⁸ I am honored to comment on a letter written in 1979, after Charlot's death, by his wife, Zohmah Day Charlot. The letter is a strong testimony to Charlot's Catholic devotion and the importance of his church fresco accomplishments. In preparing this piece, during an exchange of emails, I provided St. Benedict's Abbey

with a digital link to the 2014 *Catholic Southwest* Charlot article. The monks provided me with a copy of Mrs. Charlot's original letter, included with this reflection. One individual informed me that last year's article was being well received at the Abbey and was frequently missing from the table in a lounge.

Zohmah Day was very different from her husband. While Charlot was content to observe from a reachable distance, Zohmah was not. She married Charlot in 1939 after a long courtship. She and her husband had been participant witnesses to some of the most important artistic contributions of the twentieth century. The Charlot's honeymoon photographs were taken by their close family friend, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, Edward Weston. Jean Charlot worked in New York with some of the most renowned artists in the world. Throughout his career he remained close friends with all of the most distinguished Mexican and American artists of the time. 2 Zohmah Charlot realized her husband's intellectual and artistic genius, and she worked hard to help him create, teach, record, and publish. She struggled beside him to raise four children, record their lives and the lives of their colleagues, and pay their bills. She wanted people to remember her husband's important contribution to twentieth century art and art history, and the role his faith played in his project choices. Through this letter, she sought to remind the Kansas monks that Charlot's religiosity shaped the totality of his work and that their abbey contained a very special work of art, one of Charlot's tangible acts of devotion.10 Charlot was paid minimally and often donated his work to churches in lieu of receiving payment. Our Lady of Sorrows in Farmington, Michigan and the Benedictine Abbey in Atchison, Kansas were among his largest, distinctive, and most significant church works.11

Mrs. Charlot states in the letter that she "didn't believe he [her husband] was going to die," and appears to have written the letter soon after his death and during a period of tremendously deep grief. In preparing this reflection, when I had asked the Abbey for a copy of the original letter from Zohmah to the Abbey's newsletter editor, one individual described the letter as "interesting." I think Zohmah Charlot would have appreciated her letter being described in such a way—interesting! She was writing the letter as a follow-up to a brief column that appeared in *Kansas Monks*, the Kansas Benedictines' bimonthly newsletter, just about twenty years after Charlot had completed the Kansas Abbey altar frescos.

Preliminary photographs of the Kansas altar show that the fresco painting was a monumental undertaking. The 1959 photos show several levels of scaffolding and the many individuals involved in the construction of the fresco altar. 13 The completion of a true fresco really is quite an extensive event. Masons and assistants are required. Colors are mixed carefully on-site, and painting takes place at a speed that requires a synchronicity of an experienced and well-coordinated artist-led team. Similar to Charlot's lukewarm reception in Colorado Springs, the true contribution of Charlot to the Abbey seems not to have been fully appreciated in the Kansas Monks publication. For example, the column does not mention that Jean Charlot had been a faithful Benedictine Oblate since the summer of 1959 or that the painting of St. Joseph described in the newsletter was a gift from Charlot to the Kansas Benedictine monks. 14 Charlot's experience at the Abbey and his relationship with God were so personally important to him that he was buried in the black Benedictine robes given to him by the Right Rev. Cuthbert McDonald, who was Abbot in 1959, the time of the mural's completion. 15 These small details are things that would have been most important to Jean Charlot, but they were missed in the column. 16 Indeed, Charlot's Kansas Benedictine Abbey painting is grand and a genuine treasure for those who regularly experience its glory.¹⁷

Jean Charlot himself would never have written a letter like the one his wife Zohmah wrote to the Benedictines shortly after his death. Zohmah described her late husband as being sensitive about how he was treated, but not always eager to complain when things weren't going exactly right. He was an extremely stable, productive individual who kept his feelings to himself. He was level headed, fair-minded, and solid. He was also a bit of a taskmaster.

Gilberto Cardenas of Notre Dame, where Charlot painted murals both at Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College, says Charlot's work conveys contemplation and determination. As are all Oblates who integrate their prayer and work, Charlot was an exemplary Catholic. For Charlot, inspiration was an orderly process. His artistic passion went hand in hand with originality and faith. His keen sense of culture allowed him to convey his beliefs through the authentic illuminative action of painting an emotional story. Since he keenly understood the "integrated blend" of Catholic approaches, he communicated to God "in a number of languages." Charlot's religious work, a kind of culturally transliterated liturgical modernism, is clearly manifested in the Kansas altar. The stability and fidelity expressed in a true fresco, such as the altar in Kansas, is a testimony to Charlot's commitment to his faith and his true understanding of the acts of oblation. Although Saint Benedict lived in the sixth century, and Jean Charlot in the twentieth century artistic world, a world of revolution and change, the two are affiliated in their exemplary communication of a continual relationship with Christ and a life of constructive virtue. Charlot was not close to being a saint, nor had he intended to be a priest; but his obligation to his faith was honest, passion-filled and authentic.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, having experienced Europe and Mexico before coming to the United States, Charlot acknowledged that his contributions to liturgical arts had been modest.²⁴ When he arrived in New York, having left Mexico and the mural movement, he painted small oils of the entire way of the cross.²⁵ After an initial shock at discovering the difference between the American Catholic Church and the Church in European Mexico, Charlot wrote that he grew to "truly love the simplicity and common sense with which American monastic orders streamlined monasticism without hurting its essence".²⁶ He further observed that it was "logical that the United States Church, unburdened with the glorious ancient architectures of its European sisters should be the first to link itself again, on a large scale, with the live art of living artists."²⁷ In the United States, Charlot believed there was "a deepened contact with the Church wherein all geographic and racial (ethnic) dissimilarities become reconciled, a common denominator or nucleus that binds together laymen and clerics all around the earth."²⁸

Charlot's religious commitment seems to have bloomed in the mid-1950s when he began to focus, in a more personal way, on his Catholicism. In 1954, just a few years before he accomplished the Kansas Abbey frescos with mason Paul Hendrickson, he published in *Liturgical Arts.*²⁹ In 1958, and again in 1959 (just after he finished the altars at the Abbey), Charlot wrote of the "intense" experience he had on a trip through the Southwest and through New Mexico's villages where he met the Spanish-speaking *Santeros* known for their sculpting of *bultos* and *retablos*. He was impressed with the work of generations in communities where the artist had a place in the culture.³⁰

When I first began to learn about Charlot and his time in Colorado Springs, several people told me he had studied to be a priest, which is incorrect. However, living as a man of God was certainly an important part of Charlot's life purpose. Mrs. Charlot explained in her letter to the Editor of the *Kansas Monks* that her husband wore out his *Manual for Oblates*,



Jean Charlot creating the abbey frescos. This photo was probably taken by Paul Hendrickson.
Courtesy the University of Hawaii, Jean Charlot Collection and Bronwen Solyom. The Jean Charlot Estate, L.L.C. with permission.

July 2, 1979

Editor Newsletter, Kansas Monks:

Thank you for the sympathetic article on my husband's death in the April 1979 issue of your magazine.

As you do not mention that he was a Benedictine Oblate since the summer of 1959, when he painted the frescoes in St. Benedict's Abbey Church, I thought you would want to know he was a fathful one.

His first Manual For Oblates wore out from handling. He did have it repaired and kept on his studio table, in it he had put cards of Fra Angelica; an old photograph from his youth in France of Bernadette Soeur Marie-Bernard; El Señor de Villasca, Guanajato; Nuestra Señora del Socorro, Patrona de Valencia; Divina Pastora, Barquisimeto; a Madonna and Child from Brangues.

He bought a new Manual to use for his daily prayers, in this book the only addition are brackets around the text:

To the King of ages, immortal, invincible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

His Benedictine robes were a gift from Right Rev. Cuthbert McDonald. These we packed away in a trunk along with such other things as his World War uniform. He told me that he wanted to be buried in them, and so he was -- the black robes, then wrapped in a 100 year old white tapa, a fine Fiji mat, covered with maile and ilima leis.

He died on the last day of winter and was buried 23 hours later on the first day of Spring. It is my understanding that March 21st is also the Feast of St. Benedict.

I didn't believe he was going to die, and had no plans other than the robe, but it was if astrong force carried us along. The cancer had been eating him alive, but he refused any pain killers and the last day got out of bed as usual and spent a quiet, loving day with the family.

Aloha,

Zohmale Charlot

 ${\hbox{P.\,S.}}$ The State voted a State Memorial service where our Bishop Scanlan and the Governor spoke.

using it every day of his life, and that he was buried in his black Benedictine robes on the first day of spring, March 21, 1979, the Feast day of Saint Benedict.³¹

Zohmah Charlot's letter to the Abbey expresses three themes: Charlot's contribution to church decoration and storytelling, which is important to all Catholics; the power of an artist's underlying passion and devotion to his subject; and Charlot's personal experience as he established relationships at the Abbey. All three of these themes find expression in the altars Charlot created. Jean Charlot was a God-oriented man; a true example of stability.³² Charlot's "special field of devotion leans towards the physical matter without which sacramental and sacraments could not happen."³³ Charlot was "a painter to whom all things in both the inner and outer world come to be figured in physical, paintable terms." His totality of devotional work stands as a symbol of Charlot's constructive virtue culminating in artistic illuminative action.

At the beginning of this piece I talk about the importance of relationships in scholarly research, and later, about Charlot's relationship to his faith and with the individuals he encountered as he accomplished art and scholarship. Thanks to the Kansas Benedictine monks who provided photographs and Mrs. Charlot's original letter, still on file in the Newsletter office; to Mr. Fossey for the suggestion to create this piece; and to Dr. John Charlot, the artist's son, for the privilege of writing this commentary on the letter written by his mother and the work of his father.³⁴ Scholarly research is all about relationships. (Endnotes)

- JoAnn Kiser, "Influence of the Posadas on the Creators of The Mexican Muralist Movement: Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, and Charlot" (master of arts thesis, University of Colorado, Boulder, 1991).
- 2 Glenda L. Carne and Amanda Pierce, "Jean Charlot's Southwest Religiosity," Catholic Southwest 25 (2014): 3-21.
- John Charlot, "The Death and Burial of Jean Charlot, February 12, 1898-March 20, 1979," Honolulu Magazine XIV (6) (December 1979): 78–87.
- 4 At the time of writing this piece, the last known location is the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.
- A photo of the movable, Celotex fresco painting of Luz Jimenez gifted to the Tilleys is available in the 2014 issue of *Catholic Southwest*.
- 6 Glenda L. Carne, "Jean Charlot in Colorado Springs," *Cheyenne Mountain Kiva: The Journal of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Center* 3(3) (Summer 1999): 18-25.
- 7 Jeffery Brown, "Jean Charlot in the World and Colorado" (master of fine arts thesis, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, Instituto Allende, 2003).
- 8 Glenda L. Carne and Amanda L. Pierce. "Jean Charlot's Southwest Religiosity."
- 9 Lew Andrews, Weston and Charlot (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Amy Gilpin, "A Spiritual Manifestation of Mexican Muralism: Works by Jean Charlot and Alfredo Ramos Martinez" (PhD thesis, University of Illinois, Chicago, 2012): 124-125.
- 12 "Jean Charlot Dies," Kansas Monks Newsletter, Atchison, Kansas, (April, 1979): 8.
- 13 Photos of the mural painting are courtesy The Jean Charlot Collection, University of Hawai'i, © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.

- 14 Photo courtesy Denis Meade, Atichson, Kansas. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.
- 15 Original letter written by Zohmah Day Charlot to the *Kansas Monks Newsletter* provided by Kansas Monks. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.
- 16 "Jean Charlot Dies," Kansas Monks Newsletter.
- 17 A discussion of Charlot's religious murals is available in Amy Gilpin's PhD dissertation.
- Zohmah Charlot, "Notes After Jean Charlot's Death," http://www.jeancharlot.org/on]C/writings/zohmah Charlot/1980, University of Hawai'i Collection. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.
- 19 Gilberto Cárdenas, "Self-Portrait, Jean Charlot," Face to Face (University of Notre Dame, Snite Museum of Art, 2003): 78-81.
- 20 "The Fountain Valley School Alumni Bulletins," The Fountain Valley School, Colorado Springs, CO, 1948-49 (June1948): 5. In addition, Clara Duff, Director of Alumni Relations, The Fountain Valley School, personal conversations, 1997-1998.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Frank J. Sheed, "Jean Charlot," Born Catholics (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 107.
- 23 Timothy Fry, OSB, Editor, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982).
- 24 Jean Charlot, "Thirty Years at It," Liturgical Arts 21(2) (February, 1953): 37.
- 25 Jean Charlot, "Catholic Art in America: Debits and Credits," *Liturgical Arts* (November, 1958): 21-23.
- 26 Frank J. Sheed, "Jean Charlot,"110.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid., 112-113.
- 29 The black and white photographs of Charlot working in Kansas may have been taken in 1959 by Paul Hendrickson, project mason. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.
- 30 Jean Charlot, "Report on American Culture: Art," *The Critic, A Catholic Review of Books and the Arts* (Aug.-Sept. 1959): 23-29, 79.
- 31 Zohmah Charlot, letter to the Kansas Monks Newsletter, 1979, Charlot Collection, University of Hawai'i of Hawai'i, © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.
- 32 Timothy Fry, OSB.
- 33 Frank J. Sheed, "Jean Charlot,"113.
- For a complete history of the Benedictine Monks and their Abbey, see *Kansas Monks, A History of St. Benedict's Abbey*, by Peter Beckman, OSB, published by the Abbey Student Press in Atchison, Kansas. Special thanks to Fr. Denis Meade, Br. Placidus, Br. Emmanuel Orrino, and John Benning of the Kansas Abbey. Color photos of the altars are courtesy of John Benning. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.