

"Frederick Dielman New Windsor Artist"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The December 5, 1896 issue of Harper's Weekly carried an article about the paintings and sculpture in the new Library of Congress building under construction in Washington, D. C. The writer made mention of two mosaics "Law" and "History" created by former New Windsor resident and artist Frederick Dielman. Excerpts of the article were reprinted in the December 12, 1896 issue of the Democratic Advocate:

"Royal Cortissoz has been discussing in Harper's Weekly "Painting and Sculpture in the Congressional Library." In the last issue, December 5, the 7th article, he discusses two works of art by Mr. Frederick Dielman, the well-known artist of New York, and formerly of New Windsor. Two handsomely executed illustrations accompany the article. The decorations are two panels, which Royal Cortissoz says are neither sculptures nor paintings in the strictest sense. He continues: "They are mosaics. But they possess obviously the character of pictorial art, and in their position they fulfill practically the same mission as that of a painting upon canvas. They have color; they have atmosphere. They have, too, to go straight to the point, merits which quite justify the employment of a medium not often used for the same purpose in America. Pictorial mosaic is an old story in Italy; and in Venice particularly, where these panels were executed, the art of putting a really elaborate motive into such enduring form is to this day carried to a high degree of finish. Travelers will recall the modern panels introduced in the facade of San Marco, and possibly many who have studied those mosaics, as well as the examples in the facade of the Florentine Duomo, have wondered who the same decorative expedient was not used more by American architects. To put a famous painting into mosaic, as has been done by the Vatican workmen for the altars of St. Peter's is, on the whole, a doubtful thing to do, but when a design is deliberately made for the mosaic worker, its details being rightly adapted to the facts of his material, a good result is bound to be secured. Mr. Dielman confirms this last assumption, and he even improves upon the work of those painters in Italy, Baraldno and others, who have been most conspicuous for their decorative achievements. He has not amplified their idea, which is indeed, as old as antiquity, but he has escaped the spectacular element and the over-crowded style, as of an art trying to do too much, which somehow diminish the legitimate value of such panels as may be encountered every here and there from Venice to Naples. He has made his compositions simple and massive. They would look well on canvass. They lose nothing by being executed on a plan permitting far less subtlety. In fact, where have been no compositions by Mr. Dielman on any scale or in any form which have been more satisfactory than these dignified works, destined to go over the mantels in one of the congressional reading rooms. Both panels are admirably poised, admirably proportioned. "Law is enthroned in the first decoration upon a dais that is itself a happy idea, striking aptly the architectural note of the whole scheme, and the imposing figure binds together two groups which continue this structural feeling. "Industry," "Peace," and "Truth" on the one side, "Fraud," "Discord," and "Violence" on the other, are unmistakably contrasted in all that their personalities can symbolize; but as factors in a decorative whole they balance one another beautifully. There is no monotony in this balance, either. The differences in the attitudes are slight enough to leave the equilibrium of the composition undisturbed, yet the seven figures are artlessly placed, and the mosaic has the proper animation, the proper vitality.

The panel dedicated to "History" is less animated, perhaps, but it is no less successful in its grouping; and here again the central figure is shown against a background which could not have been more ingeniously, more effectively contrived. The throne, with its heavy inscribed arms and two curving

extensions, finds a happy culmination in the pillars and pediment of the distant Parthenon, and the graceful Muse who stands erect at this point possesses a carriage and a demeanor which are in accord with their noble setting. "Mythology" and "Tradition," the latter accompanied by a youth in whom the artist aims to suggest "a possible future singer or poet," are seated with a naturalness of pose and gesture which makes this, like the companion panel, seem a thoroughly spontaneous production. Altogether, Mr. Dielman has accomplished with tact and skill a task which was not easy."

The two mosaic panels by Dielman were installed over the mantelpiece in the House of Representatives Meeting Room. The room also featured seven ceiling panels representing "The Spectrum of Light."

Photo caption: Frederick Dielman formerly of New Windsor posed in front of a large canvas in his New York studio at the turn of the century. Historical Society of Carroll County, gift of Mrs. D. Snyder Babylon.