

MUSSOLINI.

see H2009.22.1

CHARLES MAREGA AND THE BUST OF MUSSOLINI.

In the City Archives there is a plaster bust of the Italian dictator, Mussolini; whose body was hung up by the feet during the war, 1939-1945, after or during Italy's capitulation.

The "VANCOUVER DAILY PROVINCE", Sept 21st 1949, under the caption "BUST OF MUSSOLINI NOW GIARES AT WALL", by Ron Thornber, City Hall Reporter, tells of how it got to the City Archives, but tells part only.

THE STORY AS TOLD BY MAJOR MATTHEWS.

"The telephone rang" said Major Matthews. "A voice said that some one in the Flack Block, north east corner of Cambie and Hastings, was speaking, and asked if I wanted a bust of Mussolini and two framed pictures of the king of Italy, and his queen; the voice said the bust was the work of Charles Marega. I replied that most certainly I wanted it; that we had no sample of the famed sculptor's work in the Archives; I would like a sample. That Mr Marega was the sculptor of the Harding Memorial; the Joe Fortes Memorial; King Edward VII Memorial, of Capt. Vancouver's statue, of the Pioneer "Maple Tree" memorial; the Pauline Johnson Memorial, and others, and that I did not think his bust of Mussolini should be destroyed merely because we did not like Mussolini. The bust was the work of a celebrated citizen of Vancouver, and should be kept. So the voice said "You shall have it; send for it". So" said Major Matthews, "I did send for it and got it with the two framed portraits".

"Before the voice hung up the receiver", continued Major Matthews, "I asked. 'How did it fall into your hands'."?

"The answer was. 'When the war with Italy started, the Italian Consulate here in the Flack Block was closed. All the papers and contents of the office were moved to the basement. The gentleman who had been consul was consul no longer, and did not want anything, so it was sent down to the basement and remained there until the war was over, and since. Recently the Italian Consulate has been opened again, and, of course, the new Consul naturally does'nt want any of the old stuff--unless it is furniture or something of that nature. He certainly does not want a bust of that old devil Musolini. So that was why I phoned you".

"Major Matthews said that, to this day, he does not know who sent the bust, and that he never formally acknowledged it. What he did say was that, someday, when there was a military parade as part of some celebration, he would like to dress up a dummy man, put the head of Mussolini on it; hire a truck, and erected his dummy on a gallows with the heels up and Musso's head down.

-@-@-@-

The bust rests on a square block of plaster, and, on one top corner is a monogram M forming a square with C in the centre. It was sent to the City Archives about 1947

see H2009.22.1

CHARLES MAREGA AND THE BUST OF MUSSOLINI

The plaster bust was sent to Major Matthews at City Archives after the Italian Consulate office was closed at the outbreak of W.W.II. The work was fashioned by sculptor Charles Marega, who came to Vancouver in 1909. Many homes and businesses were enhanced by his work. His well known sculptures included the Harding memorial in Stanley Park, Joe Fortes fountain, Burrard Bridge sculpture, and the concrete lions, Lion's Gate Bridge. Marega died in 1939.

Reference: Imredy, Peggy
A Guide to Sculpture in Vancouver
NB 247 156 1980



ADD.MCS. 54 VOL 19 Box 6 CATEGORIES - BUSTS

see H 2009.22.1

REMOVED
DO NOT REMOVEAT THE CITY HALL

SEP 21 1949

Bust of Mussolini Now Glares At Wall

By RON THORNER

The Vancouver Daily Province City Hall Reporter

Glaring gloomily into a dark corner of City Archives on the ninth floor of City Hall is a great stone face almost three feet tall. It is the one item in the archives that strikes a sinister, incongruous note. The work of a world-famous sculptor, it is the bust of a man damned by the world, Mussolini.

How it came to the archives and into the care of Major J. S. Matthews from another dark corner in the city is an unusual story. Briefly, it goes thus:

Reposing originally in the Italian embassy in 100 block West Hastings, the glowering visage was hastily relegated to the cellar of the building when the embassy closed its doors at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. There it lay until 1946, covered with dust and packing cases under a flight of stairs, when it was disinterred by an inquisitive janitor who offered it to the major.

Almost grotesque in its ugliness but beautifully fashioned, the bust is the work of Charles Marega, an Italian artist well-known and remembered here for his work on the Harding Memorial in Stanley Park, the Pauline Johnson Memorial and the stone lions guarding the entrances to Lions Gate Bridge.

He died here in 1939.

Uneasy as to just what to do with the huge head, but reluctant to destroy craftsmanship at its best, Major Matthews had the huge, leering face hoisted atop some filing cabinets and with a twist of grim irony, faced it to the wall.

◆ ◆ ◆

In the City Archives there is a plaster bust of the Italian dictator, Mussolini; whose body was hung up by the feet during the war, 1939-1945, after or during Italy's capitulation.

The "VANCOUVER DAILY PROVINCE", Sept 21st 1949, under the caption "BUST OF MUSSOLINI NOW GIARES AT WALL", by Ron Thornber, City Hall Reporter, tells of how it got to the City Archives, but tells part only.

THE STORY AS TOLD BY MAJOR MATTHEWS.

"The telephone rang" said Major Matthews. "A voice said that some one in the Flack Block, north east corner of Cambie and Hastings, was speaking, and asked if I wanted a bust of Mussolini and two framed pictures of the king of Italy, and his queen; the voice said the bust was the work of Charles Marega. I replied that most certainly I wanted it; that we had no sample of the famed sculptor's work in the Archives; I would like a sample. That Mr Marega was the sculptor of the Harding Memorial; the Joe Fortes Memorial, King Edward VII Memorial, of Capt. Vancouver's statue, of the Pioneer "Maple Tree" memorial; the Pauline Johnson Memorial, and others, and that I did not think his bust of Mussolini should be destroyed merely because we did not like Mussolini. The bust was the work of a celebrated citizen of Vancouver, and should be kept. So the voice said "You shall have it; send for it". So" said Major Matthews, "I did send for it and got it with the two framed portraits".

"Before the voice hung up the receiver", continued Major Matthews, "I asked. 'How did it fall into your hands'?"

MUSSOLINI,

Plaster bust by Charles Marega

card two

BUSTS

"The answer was. 'When the war with Italy started, the Italian Consulate here in the Flack Block was closed. All the papers and contents of the office were moved to the basement. The gentleman who had been consul was consul no longer, and did not want anything, so it was sent down to the basement and remained there until the war was over, and since. Recently the Italian Consulate has been opened again, and, of course, the new Consul naturally does'nt want any of the old stuff--unless it is furniture or something of that nature. He certainly does not want a bust of that old devil Musolini. So that was why I phoned you".

"Major Matthews said that, to this day, he does not know who sent the bust, and that he never formally acknowledged it. What he did say was that, someday, when there was a military parade as part of some celebration, he would like to dress up a dummy man, put the head of Mussolini on it; hire a truck, and erected his dummy on a gallows with the heels up and Musso's head down.

-@-@-@-

The bust rests on a square block of plaster, and, on one top corner is a monogram M forming a square with C in the centre. It was sent to the City Archives about 1947

The bust was transferred to The Museum of Vancouver on 2008-05-25

Add 1155 54 Vol 19 Box 6 (508-E-6) Accession # 86-115

*Mars**Anna**Marega
Mussolini*

6th Oct. 1950

THOMAS H. MAWSON, A.R.I.B.A.
1913

Dear Mrs Rogers:

The gravure from a portrait of Mr Thomas H. Mawson by Sir Hubert Herkomer, R.A., arrived safely, and is being placed in a small, but very long box for safe keeping. I am very glad you have entrusted it to our custody.

I recall Mr Mawson; how he designed a plan for what is now Lost Lagoon. It seems to me that he was the first to suggest its alteration from a forest shore unchanged since to dawn of time into something more exquisite. I know his proposal was received by a certain class with a measure of askance; as too elaborate; too 'fancy'; as alright for some Old Country place, but far too much for the wild west. It seems to me, from what I recall, that he was not appreciated as he should have been. I think Mr Marega suffered, too, from that lack of appreciation; at first more than later.

May I tell you. When Italy declared war the Italian Consulate here was closed; the desks, pictures, etc etc were put in the basement of the Flack Block. Among the possessions was a large head and shoulders of Mussilioni by Marega. When, after Peace came, and the Italian Consulate was reopened, naturally the new Consul did not want the large portrait--a photograph-- of King Humbert and His Queen; nor did he want the plaster head of Mussilioni. I heard about the quandary as to the disposal of the head, and asked for it, and have it. I argued that it was Mr Marega's work, and that our prejudice against Mussilioni should not be extended to encompass the art of Mr Marega. Mr Marega scupptured our most admired monuments, and as a specimen of his handiwork upon which he had devoted time and skill, I could not see my way clear to destroy it. I have been scoffed at; my judgment questioned and laughed at, and to appease the scoffers I put the gentleman high up on a pile of fying cabinets with his face to the wall.

Thank you so much for the portrait of Mr Mawson; your continued confidence is a source of much strength to me.

With my deep respects
Most sincerely,

Mrs Jonathan Rogers,
2050 Nelson street