

**NJS Presents****Museums, Archives, Artifacts, and Documents****In this Issue:*****Frank C. Herbst:******An Artist and Illustrator from Essex County, New Jersey; and a Case of Mistaken Identity*****By Joseph W. Hammond****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v6i2.220>**

*Frank C. Herbst (1890 – 1966) was a prolific and talented Essex County artist who not only provided illustrations for magazines, but also left behind a significant number of well-done landscape views of New Jersey, New York, and the surrounding area. This article outlines his life and career. It also corrects misinformation about Herbst that has been inadvertently disseminated through an important art reference work and the internet to a global audience.*

In the summer of 2019, the Monmouth County Park System acquired a small painting in oil on art board that depicts the Seabrook-Wilson House at Port Monmouth, New Jersey. This important historic structure, which incorporates architectural elements possibly dating to the early 1700s, serves as an activity center for the Park System's Bayshore Waterfront Park. The painting measures 12 inches high by 16 inches wide, and is signed "F. C. Herbst" on the reverse. Dating from ca. 1950, it captures a view of the house from the southwest in morning light. Two pickup trucks are parked at its side, with Sandy Hook Bay shown behind. The Seabrook-Wilson House had been purchased in 1967 by Middletown Township, which operated it as the Spy House Museum for over twenty years. Long-time curator Gertrude Neidlinger and her brother S. Travers Neidlinger owned the painting. It then entered a private collection after Gertrude's death in 1998.

In that same year, Middletown Township transferred ownership of the landmark house to the county Park System.<sup>1</sup>



*View of the Seabrook-Wilson House*, oil on art board, 12" x 16," ca. 1950, signed "F. C. Herbst" on the reverse. Collection of the Monmouth County Park System, Lincroft, New Jersey.

Frank C. Herbst is a well-known artist and illustrator from the Newark area of Essex County, New Jersey. A biographical entry for him in *Who Was Who in American Art* provides the following information:

**HERBST, FRANK C.** [*Illustrator*] b. 1912, Cairo, IL / d. 1970.  
**Addresses:** Newark, NJ. **Studied:** AIC (B.F.A.) with B. Anisfeld.  
**Member:** SI. **Exhibited:** AAS, 1902. **Works:** Marine Hospital,  
Lexington, KY. **Comments:** **Teaching:** RISD, 1947-52. **Sources:**  
WW31; P&H Samuels, 220.<sup>2</sup>

The abbreviations in the above text stand for:

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<sup>1</sup> "Seabrook-Wilson House Information Sheet," Monmouth County Park System, August 2011, accessed 26 January 2020,

<http://co.monmouth.nj.us/documents/130/seabrook%20wilson%20house%20public%20information%20sheet.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who Was Who in American Art, 1564 – 1975* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1999), v. 2, 1538.

AIC	Art Institute of Chicago
AAS	American Art Society, Philadelphia, PA.
RISD	Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI.
SI	Society of Illustrators, New York, NY.

The two sources cited stand for the *American Art Annual*, Vol. XXVIII, 1931; and *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West* by Peggy and Harold Samuels (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1976).

To summarize the above biographical sketch, Herbst was born in Illinois in 1912; studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and where he studied with Boris Anisfeld (who headed their Advanced School of Painting from 1928 to 1968); then by 1931 settled in Newark, NJ; and became a member of the Society of Illustrators in New York. He also taught at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence from 1947 to 1952. Herbst died in 1970.

There are, however, obvious conflicts in the above entry. An artist born in 1912 would hardly exhibit in Philadelphia in 1902. So the date may represent a typographical error, or that particular fact may just be placed in the wrong biographical sketch. Also, a comparison of works by Herbst with those of Boris Anisfeld (1878/79 – 1973) shows no relationship between the two styles as Anisfeld is known for modernist-leaning landscape and fantasy painting. Anyway, the information from *Who Was Who in American Art* has been entered into an online art reference database at [www.askart.com](http://www.askart.com), and then copied globally by other art databases, auction houses, art historians, and dealers who have handled works by Frank Herbst. *Who Was Who* and Askart are two of the most widely used and trusted art reference sources in the world.

The two sources cited in the Herbst entry in *Who Was Who* were checked. The 1931 edition of *American Art Annual* provided very little information:

Herbst, Frank C. 152 LaFayette St., Newark, NJ Illustrator, and member of the Society of Illustrators <sup>3</sup>

The 1976 Samuels book on artists of the American West simply repeated the above information, also citing the 1931 *American Art Annual*. The authors did, however, indicate that the Anschutz Collection of western art in Denver, CO, contained a work by Herbst entitled *The Outlaw*.<sup>4</sup> So all of the additional facts contained in the *Who Was Who* entry for Frank Herbst appeared together in that encyclopedic work for the first time.

In an effort to expand existing knowledge of the life and artistic career of Frank Herbst, searches were begun in such internet resources as Ancestry.com, GenealogyBank.com and Newspapers.com. The findings indicated immediately that the entry in *Who Was Who* was seriously in error, suggesting strongly that information pertaining to another artist had been inadvertently introduced into the Herbst text. The results of the internet-based searches are presented in the remainder of this article.

Frank C. Herbst was born in Newark, Essex County, New Jersey, on 10 October 1890, a son of Ignatz Herbst and Amelia Heitlinger.<sup>5</sup> The 1900 Federal population census indicates that the family then lived at 152 Lafayette Street in Ward 5 of Newark in a household headed by Amelia's father Matthew Heitlinger, age 69. A native of Germany, he had become a United States citizen in 1853. The house was located in Newark's Ironbound District, a block from the elevated

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<sup>3</sup> *American Art Annual*, v. XXVIII for the year 1931 (Washington, DC: The American Federation of Arts, 1932), 572.

<sup>4</sup> Peggy and Harold Samuels, *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1976), 220. The Anschutz Collection is now known as the American Museum of Western Art – The Anschutz Collection, housed in The Navarre Building in Denver, CO. The Herbst painting is no longer part of the collection. An oil on canvas work measuring 37 inches high by 26 inches wide, it appeared as a cover for *Adventure*, a popular pulp magazine published between 1910 and 1971. The painting is signed "F. C. Herbst" in the lower right corner, and is dated 1927. It was sold on 26 July 1991 at Eldred's Auction Gallery in East Dennis, MA.

<sup>5</sup> "New Jersey Births and Christenings Index, 1660 – 1931," Ancestry, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2539&h=675809&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX198&\\_phstart=successSource](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2539&h=675809&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX198&_phstart=successSource).

mainline tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Other members of the household included daughter Amelia Herbst, born in New Jersey in August 1859; son-in-law Ignatz Herbst, age 50, who had been born in Germany but who became a US citizen in 1870, and who was employed as a shipping clerk for the Central Railroad of New Jersey; grandson Frank Herbst, then age nine and attending school; and a second grandson Edward J. Herbst, who was then only five years old, having been born in January 1895.<sup>6</sup>

By 1910, Ignatz had become head of the Herbst household at the same Lafayette Street address. But Frank, then age nineteen, had found employment as a silver designer, demonstrating an early aptitude for art and drawing. Silver manufacturing was then a major Newark industry.<sup>7</sup> Ten years later, the family had been reduced to Amelia Herbst, then age sixty, son Edward J., age twenty-five, and son Frank C., age twenty-nine and employed as a musician. They still resided at 152 Lafayette Street in the Ironbound District.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, however, the three of them moved to a modest suburban residence at 29 Holland Road in South Orange, Essex County, owned by Edward. He had embarked on a successful career in Newark's insurance industry. The two sons,

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<sup>6</sup> "U. S. Population Census, 1900, New Jersey, Essex County, Newark District 1, Ward 5," Genealogy Bank, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/census/image/v2%3A16DABE9A383D710A%40GB3CENSUS-16DABD57666AC338%402415021-16F6A209B5ADE11C%40?person=p\\_38104942](https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/census/image/v2%3A16DABE9A383D710A%40GB3CENSUS-16DABD57666AC338%402415021-16F6A209B5ADE11C%40?person=p_38104942).

<sup>7</sup> "U. S. Population Census, 1910, New Jersey, Essex County, Newark Ward 5, District 35," Ancestry, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7884/31111\\_4330865-00921?pid=167928554&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7884%26h%3D167928554%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_psrc%3DGwX199%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX199&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&\\_ga=2.196733548.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7884/31111_4330865-00921?pid=167928554&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7884%26h%3D167928554%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_psrc%3DGwX199%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX199&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.196733548.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769).

<sup>8</sup> "U. S. Population Census, 1920, New Jersey, Essex County, Newark Ward 5, District 139," Ancestry, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6061/4313333-00874?pid=75403821&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6061%26h%3D75403821%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_psrc%3DGwX200%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX200&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&\\_ga=2.239200835.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6061/4313333-00874?pid=75403821&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6061%26h%3D75403821%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_psrc%3DGwX200%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX200&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.239200835.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769).

who remained unmarried, lived at that address for the remainder of their lives.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Frank continued his music career, being listed as a musician in an orchestra in the 1930 U. S. Census.<sup>10</sup>

On 12 June 1936, Frank Herbst applied to the U. S. Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection for a Seaman's Protection Certificate. The application confirmed that he had been born in Newark on 10 October 1890, and that he resided at 29 Holland Road in South Orange. But interestingly, Herbst listed his occupation at "Music Leader" on the S.S. Manhattan.<sup>11</sup> This very large luxury passenger liner had become the flagship of the United States Lines following its launch in 1931. Until 1939, it served on the New York to Hamburg route, followed by several others. It became a troop ship in 1941, and never returned to passenger service.<sup>12</sup> As part of his Seaman's Protection application, Frank Herbst attached a photograph of himself (see below). The 1940 U. S. Census continued to list his occupation as "Musician" and the industry as "Board Ship" perhaps still serving on the prestigious S.S. Manhattan.<sup>13</sup>

While enjoying his primary career as a musician, Frank Herbst was also earning a reputation as a skilled artist and illustrator. From his beginning as a silver designer by 1910 at age nineteen, he advanced to the point that he was selling illustrations as early as 1918. This particular

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<sup>9</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, 11 November 1966.

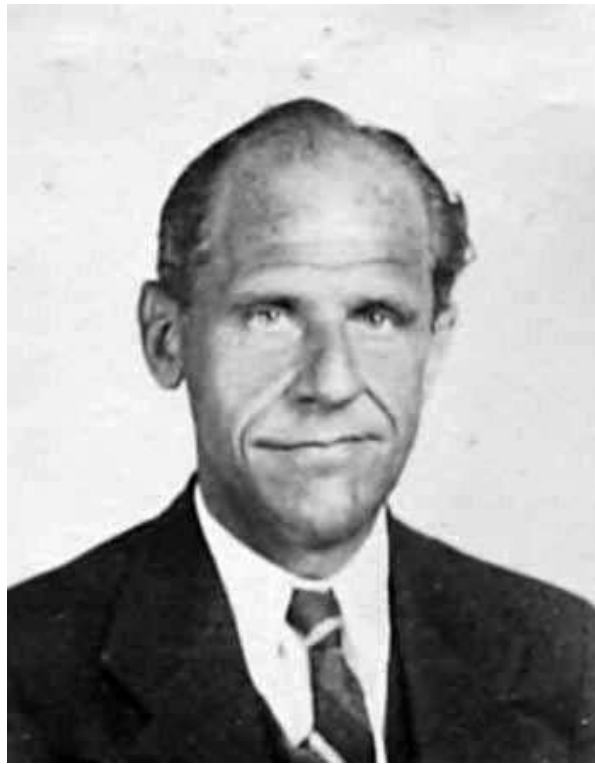
<sup>10</sup> "U. S. Population Census, 1930, New Jersey, Essex County, South Orange, District 608," Ancestry, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4660896\\_01049?pid=19796704&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6224%26h%3D19796704%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26phsrc%3DGwX201%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX201&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&\\_ga=2.197316079.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4660896_01049?pid=19796704&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6224%26h%3D19796704%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26phsrc%3DGwX201%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX201&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.197316079.1947206642.1578229769-708910842.1578229769).

<sup>11</sup> "U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection, Application for Seaman's Protection, No. 104069, Port of New York, 12 June 1936," Ancestry, 5 January 2020, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/61257/41383\\_647350\\_0401-00587?pid=121195&treeid=&personid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX220&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/61257/41383_647350_0401-00587?pid=121195&treeid=&personid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX220&_phstart=successSource).

<sup>12</sup> "SS Manhattan," Wikipedia, accessed 28 January 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Manhattan\\_\(1931\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Manhattan_(1931)).

<sup>13</sup> "U. S. Population Census, 1940. New Jersey, Essex County, South Orange," Ancestry, accessed 5 January 2020, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2442/m-t0627-02340-00431?pid=134866876&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D2442%26h%3D134866876%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_phsrc%3DGwX223%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=GwX223&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&\\_ga=2.195784492.1028684059.1580221360-708910842.1578229769](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2442/m-t0627-02340-00431?pid=134866876&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D2442%26h%3D134866876%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3DGwX223%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=GwX223&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.195784492.1028684059.1580221360-708910842.1578229769).

dated work was entitled “Concert Crowd.”<sup>14</sup> Like so many other aspiring area artists, Herbst studied at the Art Students’ League in New York City.<sup>15</sup> A prestigious school founded in 1875, it reported in 1924 a staff of twenty-six instructors and 2,394 students. They offered a wide range of instruction in painting, drawing, illustration, sculpture, etching, lithography, composition, woodblock, and color printing, with day, evening and Saturday classes to attract a wide range of students. Tuition ranged from \$52 to \$120 for eight months, putting enrollment at the League within range of individuals with even modest incomes.<sup>16</sup>



**A photograph of Frank C. Herbst attached to his 1936 Application for Seaman’s Protection.**

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<sup>14</sup> An internet search for dated works by Frank C. Herbst turned up thirteen examples out of eighty that have been sold at auction since 1988. Seventy-seven of the latter can be found on [www.askart.com](http://www.askart.com). Those bearing dates range from 1918 to 1953.

<sup>15</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, 11 November 1966, 19.

<sup>16</sup> *American Art Annual*, vol. XXI for the Year 1924 (Washington, DC: The American Federation of Arts, 1925), 259.

The commercial work turned out by Frank Herbst included magazine covers and illustrations, often for popular pulp publications such as *Adventure*. They included western as well as war-time themes, in addition to social scenes. At the same time, Herbst produced a significant volume of landscape and cityscape paintings in a traditional if somewhat Impressionistic style. He found art inspiration throughout the greater tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, but especially around his native Newark. A very brief biographical entry for Herbst appeared first in the 1925 edition of *American Art Annual*. It simply stated “HERBST, FRANK C., 152 LaFayette St., Newark NJ.” It went on to indicate that he was an illustrator and a member of the Society of Illustrators in New York City.<sup>17</sup> This very short entry appeared without change in the 1927 edition of *American Art Annual*, and also in the 1931 edition discussed above, even though Herbst and his brother had moved to South Orange about 1922. The Newark address was where he had grown up.

Frank Herbst apparently did not return to his shipboard musical career following World War II. For many years thereafter, he maintained an art studio in Newark, an easy commute from South Orange. His obituary noted that he exhibited his work at shows, won many top awards, and that his paintings had entered many private collections.<sup>18</sup> The Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibits of the 1960s proved to be a good venue for Herbst. This semi-annual event in New York City had become an extremely popular marketplace for collectors interested in more traditional landscape painting such as Herbst produced. In the fall exhibit of 1962, as noted in the *Jersey Journal* newspaper published in Jersey City: “Frank Herbst of Newark will receive a Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit award for an oil painting, ‘Jersey Canal,’ which will also be a part of

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<sup>17</sup> *American Art Annual*, vol. XXII for the Year 1925 (Washington, DC: The American Federation of Arts, 1926), 527.

<sup>18</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, 11 November 1966, 19.



the traveling exhibit. He also won a fifth honorable mention in the oil section for another painting, ‘End of Road.’”<sup>19</sup>

The following year Herbst received a first prize in oils at the September Washington Square event. An article in the *Jersey Journal* article noted that his studio was then located at 643 Broad Street in Newark.<sup>20</sup> Washington Square awards continued to be given to Herbst, by then in his mid-70s. In June of 1964, his painting entitled “West Ninth Street” received first prize in oils.<sup>21</sup> A year later, the *Jersey Journal* announced, “Top Prizes in NY for NJ Artists”

The Bruce Stevenson Memorial Award, given by his widow, Ruth Rolston Stevenson, who is also an artist, will go to Frank Herbst of Newark. Winner of fourth prize in oils, the painting is called “Gaylordsville, Conn. Back Yard.” Another of Herbst’s paintings, “Grey Day, Jones Beach,” won him another honor – a Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit Travel Exhibit award.<sup>22</sup>

The Washington Square accolades continued into 1966. At the June exhibit, according to the *Jersey Journal*, “Frank Herbst, a Newark artist who has won awards in several previous shows, will receive a third prize in the oils division – the Florence Kasten Award – for his painting called ‘Yacht Club.’”<sup>23</sup>

That would prove to be the last major award accorded to this talented and prolific Newark artist, as on 11 November 1966 the *Newark Star-Ledger*, carried the news that “Frank C. Herbst, 76, of 29 Holland Rd., South Orange, a popular artist, died yesterday in Orange Memorial Hospital.”<sup>24</sup> The obituary that followed described in brief terms his artistic background and career, funeral arrangements, that he had been a resident of South Orange for forty-four years, and that he left a brother, Edward J. Herbst. It also noted that “He was a member of the Musician’s Union of

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<sup>19</sup> *Jersey Journal*, 18 September 1962.

<sup>20</sup> *Jersey Journal*, 18 September 1963.

<sup>21</sup> *Jersey Journal*, 9 June 1964.

<sup>22</sup> *Jersey Journal*, 5 June 1965.

<sup>23</sup> *Jersey Journal*, 3 June 1966.

<sup>24</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, 11 November 1966.

New York and New Jersey.” That should dispel any lingering doubt that Frank C. Herbst the illustrator and Frank C. Herbst the musician were in fact the same person.



**The award winning Herbst painting entitled “Gaylordsville, CT, Back Yard,” pictured above, sold in February 2006 on iGavel Auctions. Oil on canvas, 11.5” x 15.25,” ca. 1964.**

A review of the Herbst works illustrated on [www.askart.com](http://www.askart.com) and on other internet web sites indicates that the Newark artist visited the New Jersey shore from time to time in search of artistic inspiration. Any number of his beach and marsh scenes resembles the bayshore and ocean coasts of Monmouth County. For example, in addition to the view of the Seabrook-Wilson House at Port Monmouth, a Herbst work entitled “Tied Up” may well depict the fishing boats along Compton’s Creek in nearby Belford. That anchorage, surrounded by salt marsh, has long featured tall poles to which the boats were tied.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Roy Pedersen, *Jersey Shore Impressionists: The Fascination of Sun and Sea, 1880 – 1940* (West Creek, NJ: Down The Shore Publishing Corp., 2013), 78 – 79. In his captions on Herbst, the author repeated the misinformation provided in *Who Was Who in American Art*.

Another Monmouth County scene by Herbst captured a large group of people standing in front of Old Tennent Presbyterian Church, a landmark and historic sacred place west of Freehold that had been built in 1751 – 52. While the attire of many individuals suggests a 1930s date for the work, a woman walking on the sidewalk toward the foreground appears to be dressed in colonial garb. Old Tennent has served for more than a century as a suitable site for holding historically-themed events, meetings, and special commemorative worship services.

In summary, Frank C. Herbst was a prolific and talented artist who not only provided illustrations for magazines, but also left behind a significant number of well-done landscape views of New Jersey, New York, and the surrounding area. This article outlines his life and career. It also corrects misinformation about Herbst that has been inadvertently disseminated through an important art reference work and the internet to a global audience.



*Tied Up*, illustrated in *Jersey Shore Impressionists* by Roy Pedersen. Oil on canvas, 14" by 18," ca. 1940.



***A Gathering at Old Tennent Church* sold on 13 November 2010 at the Rago Arts & Auction Center in Lambertville, NJ. Oil on art board, 12" x 16," ca. 1935.**

*Joseph W. Hammond retired in February 2019 as Director of Collections for the Monmouth County Historical Association, having engaged in the study of New Jersey history, material culture, and architecture for more than forty years. He served as Director of the Monmouth County Historical Association from 1978 to 1981. After an unrelated business career, Hammond returned to the Association in 2011 as a consulting archivist for the Hartshorne Family Papers project. In 2015, he rejoined the staff as Curator of Museum Collections, a position that was expanded to Director of Collections in 2016. Hammond holds a B. A. degree from Boston University, and an M. A. degree in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program of the State University of New York, College at Oneonta.*