



Baltimore's Own Little Italy Artist: the Artwork of Tony DeSales

Rita D. French, Perrin L. French, Irvin F. Lin

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Baltimore's Own Little Italy Artist: the artwork of Tony DeSales is a biography/art and a regional history book. It contains sketches and photographs of historic buildings, maritime scenes, churches and rowhouses in Baltimore City, Fells Point and Little Italy. Sketches of historical sites in Washington, D.C., Annapolis and New Jersey are also included. Captions of historical interest are provided with the sketches and photographs. The captions that accompany the artwork range from topics such as Italian and Polish immigration to the East Coast, a history of the founding of the Smithsonian Institution to the history of the Moran Towing Company and the Vane Brothers Chandlery operating out of the Port of Baltimore.

Tony DeSales was a Baltimore institution. He was a self-taught al fresco artist who sold his sketches of Baltimore, Annapolis and Washington scenes from his corner in Little Italy for thirty-five years. Fawn and High Streets is at the intersection of four Italian restaurants where Tony DeSales greeted tourists and made himself the center of the neighborhood. He took care of his mother, who often accompanied him on the corner while he worked. He introduced people to his mother and chatted with celebrities and locals who dined in the Italian restaurants. He did errands for the older Italian ladies in the neighborhood and had a significant influence on many of the local young people. He hand-published a small newspaper that contained stories, poetry and prose about the people of Little Italy.

Many visitors to the Baltimore area collected the artwork of Tony DeSales. He gave out postcards with his sketches on them to tourists and asked them to mail them back to him when they arrived home. The book contains a sampling of the postcards returned to him from all over the world. It is an inspirational story of a man who lived his life to express his artistic talents and who put relationships with people before all other pursuits.

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