

## **Artists in Common** **Canadian-American Contacts**

Robert H. Hubbard

Volume 3, numéro 2, 1976

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077292ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077292ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

### ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer cet article

Hubbard, R. H. (1976). Artists in Common: Canadian-American Contacts. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 3(2), 35–54.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1077292ar>

## ARTISTS IN COMMON

### Canadian-American Contacts

Present-day discussion of Canada's "cultural identity"\* is in large measure elicited by a growing awareness of American influence.\* As such discussions are seldom based on any consistent body of facts, they are all too easily drawn into the danger zones of politics and polemics. Any remedy to this situation must be based on knowledge. What I have attempted here is a brief chronicle of the overlappings of Canadian and American art. If geography has made contacts between the two inevitable, history has seen to it that they are more on the side of Canadians working in the United States than *vice versa*. Even so, the scope of this survey is very wide, covering the whole history of Canadian art and most of American. In order to set limits to the field I deal here with those artists whose visits to the other country are significant in some way, and with those whose work in the other country calls for further investigation by scholars.

What little investigation there has already been of the cousinship of Canadian and American art has been in the areas of early Canadian architecture and sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Further reference to these is made here only in order to add new findings and to prepare the ground for later developments in these same arts. Painting, which has never been examined in this context, is the main field covered by this paper.

#### I

In the French colonial period (from the seventeenth century to 1759) artistic contacts

between New France and the American Colonies were very few. The clandestine trade route from Albany to Montreal was once thought to explain the simultaneous appearance of the veranda house in the two regions;<sup>2</sup> but which influenced which — if indeed there was any influence at all — was never decided. Other architectural contacts were either fortuitous or slight. Several forts designed by French military architects, including those at Niagara and Ticonderoga, now find themselves in United States territory. Quebec was too remote to have had artistic influence on Louisiana, and links with the Mississippi settlements were tenuous at best.

To this day, outside the Detroit Institute of Arts, the wood sculpture and decorative arts of New France are scarcely represented in the United States. A pair of carved wooden saints in the chapel of Fort Niagara is close in style to Quebec work of the eighteenth century, though the rustic altar-piece that contains them is not (Fig. 1)\*\* Their unknown origin poses a problem for the researcher. Some years ago a fine silver monstrance inscribed with the date 1686 was excavated on the site of the Jesuit mission at Green Bay.<sup>3</sup> Though its manufacture is French, its provenance is doubtless Canadian; representative pieces by the considerable native school of silversmiths in Quebec and Montreal may yet turn up on American soil.

Examples of painting, a minor art in New France as compared to sculpture, are so far lacking in American collections. Pierre Pierron (1631–1673),

\* This article is based on a paper contributed to the symposium "The Cultural identity of Canada" held at the Elevhjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin, in 1973 in connection with the exhibition "The Artist and the Land: Canadian Landscape Painting 1670–1930" organized and catalogued by the present writer.

1. R. H. HUBBARD, "European Backgrounds of Early Canadian art", *Art Quarterly*, XXVII, No. 3 (1964) 297–323.

2. Ramsay TRAQUAIR, *The Old Architecture of Quebec* (Toronto, 1947), 67–68.

\*\* Sources of illustrations are given in the captions in cases where they are not identical with the owners of the works.

3. Marius BARBEAU, *Trésor des anciens Jésuites* (Ottawa, 1957), 52. Barbeau here also (76–77) catalogues the fragment of a French chalice found at Isaac Jogues's place of martyrdom in New York state.

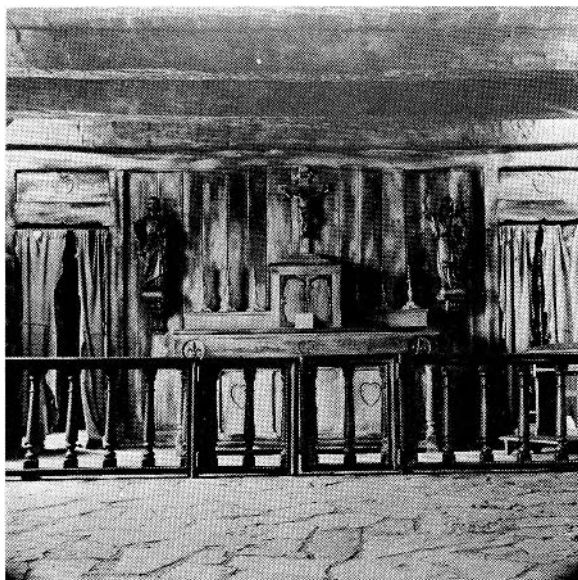


FIGURE 1. Anonymous, *Reredos in Chapel of Fort Niagara, Youngstown, New York, 1725ff.*

a Jesuit martyred in upper New York state, is reputed to have painted pictures for use in evangelizing the Iroquois, but no trace of these has been found. The tradition that Michel Dessailant (fl. 1701–1723), known for his portraits and religious subjects in Quebec, worked at Detroit from 1706 to 1708 appears to rest on slender evidence.<sup>4</sup>

## II

Oddly enough, it was in the British colonial period in Canada (from the 1750s to Confederation in 1867) that the first real contacts were made between French Canada and the United States. Long after the British had evacuated Detroit, Montrealers were supplying that outpost with Indian trade silver. One of them, Joseph Schindler (fl. 1760–1786) himself went to Detroit, only to be drummed out of the town for some unspecified misdemeanour. Antoine O'Neal (c. 1770–c. 1820) and Victor Rouquette (fl. 1818–1824) (Fig. 2) were among the resident Detroit silversmiths who carried on the old Canadian traditions well into the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Reversing the flow, a few American silversmiths were among the Loyalists who came to British

North America after the Revolution. One of the more important was Charles Oliver Bruff (1735–1817) of New York, who fled to Shelburne, Nova Scotia, in 1783. Works by him, though known in his place of origin, have yet to be found in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

No examples of sculpture from this period so productive in Quebec, appear to have found their way across the border. Of furniture, however, there was a continuous exchange. Early American pieces were brought by Loyalists or later imported by Canadians. On the other hand, many Canadian pieces have gone south over the years. Such is the case with a bird's eye maple work table which the Winterthur Museum has recently ceded to the Royal Ontario Museum (Fig. 3). Winterthur had acquired it as a New Brunswick, New Jersey piece through a mistaken reading of the maker's label —



FIGURE 2. Victor Rouquette, *Chalice, 1819*. Archdiocese of Detroit (Detroit Institute of Arts).

4. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. II (1969), 187–188; François GAGNON, "Le sieur Michel Dessailant, peintre", *Documents* (juillet 1971), 7–12.

5. Another was Dominique Riopelle (1787–1859). For the early Detroit silversmiths cf. E. P. RICHARDSON, *The French in America* (Detroit, 1951), 198–203.

6. Other Loyalist silversmiths included Munson Jarvis (fl. 1742–1825) who came from Stamford, Connecticut to Saint John, New Brunswick, and Jordan Post (1770–1853) who emigrated from Hebron, Connecticut, to Toronto. Cf. John LANGDON, *American Silversmiths in British North America* (Toronto, 1970).



FIGURE 3. Thomas Nisbet, *Work Table*. Maple and mahogany, c. 1820. Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum (Winterthur Museum).

which turned out to be that of Thomas Nisbet (c. 1780–1851), the leading cabinet-maker of Saint John in the province of New Brunswick.<sup>7</sup> Old Canadian furniture is probably still being bought and sold unrecognized in the United States, as either “Early American” or “French Provincial”.

Classic Revival architecture in Canada, with its close family ties with the United States, is now under active investigation by scholars.<sup>8</sup> The Gothic

7. Huia G. RYDER, *Antique Furniture by New Brunswick Craftsmen* (Toronto, 1965), 28, 30–31.

8. Marion MACRAE and Anthony ADAMSON, *The Ancestral Roof: Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada* (Toronto, 1963); HERITAGE TRUST OF NOVA SCOTIA, *Founded upon a Rock: Historic Buildings in Halifax* (Halifax, 1967); Peter John STOKES, *Old Niagara on the Lake* (Toronto, 1971); KINGSTON COMMITTEE OF ARCHITECTURAL REVUE, *Buildings of Historic and Architectural Significance*, 2 vol.

Revival in Canada has long been known, but in the light of recent studies<sup>9</sup> deserves a further note, because its overlappings with the United States are particularly important. Canada’s first Gothic monument, Notre-Dame in Montreal was designed in 1824 by the eccentric Irish-American architect James O’Donnell (1774–1830) who is buried beneath his masterpiece. This church, outwardly and inwardly adorned with the full panoply of Gothic ornament, yet retains the essential character of the Regency style, which is to be found in O’Donnell’s Classic design for Columbia College in New York. Another British-trained architect Frank Wills (1819–1857) reversed O’Donnell’s pattern of migration. Arriving at Fredericton in 1845 to build the Cathedral after a preliminary design in Butterfield’s “Early Pointed” style, he later settled in New York to design a series of wooden Gothic churches.<sup>10</sup> But he returned to Canada the year before his death to prepare plans for Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal.

It was, however, in the painting of the British colonial period that the most lively interchange between the two countries took place. It is interesting to find a painter so genuinely French Canadian as François Beaucourt (1740–1794) sojourning across the border and advertising his talents in Philadelphia; it would be more interesting still if one of his all-too-rare portraits were to turn up in the United States. Amongst the Loyalists in the Maritime provinces, coming as they did from the well-to-do society of the American sea-board, artists were curiously few. Most of the names on record are those of miniaturists and silhouettists.<sup>11</sup> But there is ample evidence in both countries of the activity of a later arrival from London, Robert Field (c. 1769–1819). Immediately on his arrival in Baltimore in 1794 he set up a practice there and in Washington and Boston. His work, influenced by Gilbert Stuart’s

(Kingston, 1971–1973); Ralph GREENHILL *et al.*, *Ontario Towns* (Ottawa, 1974); Barbara A. HUMPHREYS, “The Architectural Heritage of the Rideau Corridor”, *Canadian Historic Sites Occasional Papers*, No. 10 (Ottawa, 1974), 11–71.

9. Franklin TOKER, *The Church of Notre-Dame in Montreal, an Architectural Survey* (Montreal and London, 1970); Douglas RICHARDSON, “Hyperborean Gothic, or, Wilderness Ecclesiology and the Wood Churches of Edward medley”, *Architectura*, No. 1 (1972), 48–73.

10. Phoebe B. STANTON, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture, an Episode in Taste 1840–1856* (Baltimore, 1968).

11. Including John Ramage (c. 1748–1802) in Montreal and William Beastalt (fl. 1795–1797) in Saint John, New Brunswick.

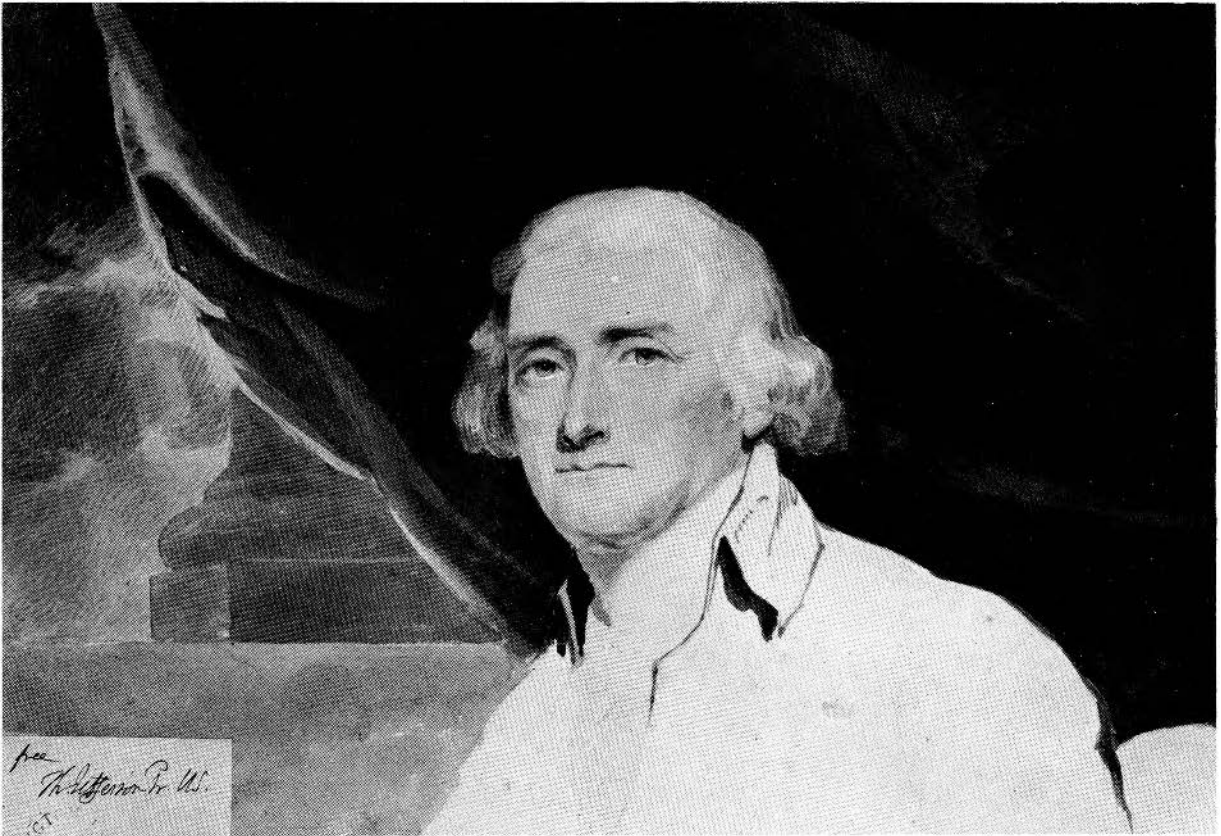


FIGURE 4. Robert Field, *Thomas Jefferson*, water-colour, 1797? New-York Historical Society.

style, comprised portraits of the Federal gentry and of the first two American presidents (Fig. 4). In 1808, however, he departed and turned up in the little garrison city of Halifax, causing no little stir by his fine clothes and grand manner. Turning from miniatures to oil portraits, he painted governor, military officers and Loyalist bishop (Fig. 5) in a style of restrained elegance. But in 1816 or 1817 he just as abruptly left for Jamaica where he died.

By this time, however, the principal genre of painting in Canada was not the portrait but the landscape. And view-painting it was that first set Canada on its nearly exclusive course. The view-painters<sup>12</sup> (who also worked in the Thirteen Colonies up to the Revolution) were mostly British officers who had been trained in their military academies to record topography in water-colour drawings. The best of them was Thomas Davies (c. 1737–1812),<sup>13</sup> a Royal Artillery officer trained at

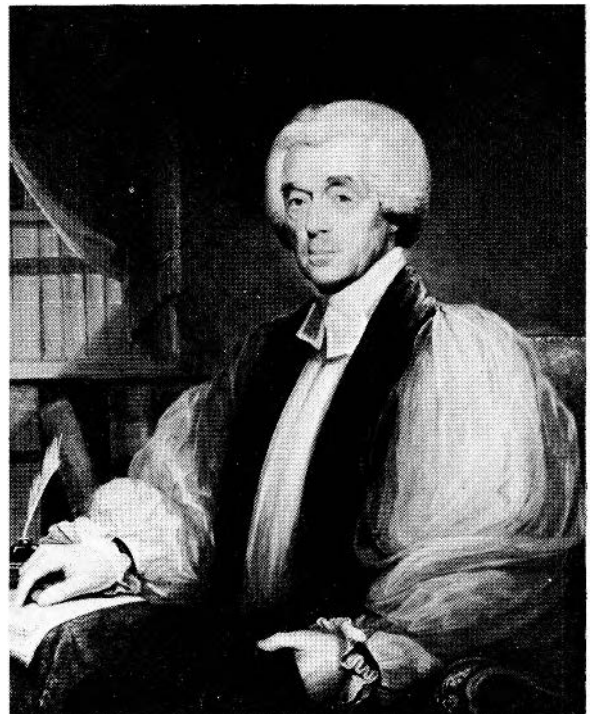


FIGURE 5. Robert Field, *Charles Inglis, Bishop of Nova Scotia*, 1810. London, National Portrait Gallery.

12. Michael BELL, *Painters in a New Land, from Annapolis Royal to the Klondyke* (Toronto, 1973); Mary ALLODI, *Canadian Watercolours and Drawings in the Royal Ontario Museum*, 2 vol. (Toronto, 1974).

13. R. H. HUBBARD, ed., *Thomas Davies* (Ottawa, 1972); R. H. HUBBARD, *Thomas Davies in Early Canada* (Ottawa, 1973).

Woolwich. In 1759 he made records of Amherst's expedition to Ticonderoga, and on the campaign of 1760 was the officer who hoisted the Union Jack over Montreal — of which he painted a charming view in the picturesque manner. Then, on a mapping expedition on Lake Ontario, he made a view of Niagara Falls, which was probably the first to record the Canadian autumn colours. The primitive, the picturesque and a touch of his friend Paul Sandby's perspective merged to form the pleasant style of his views of Flushing (Fig. 6) on

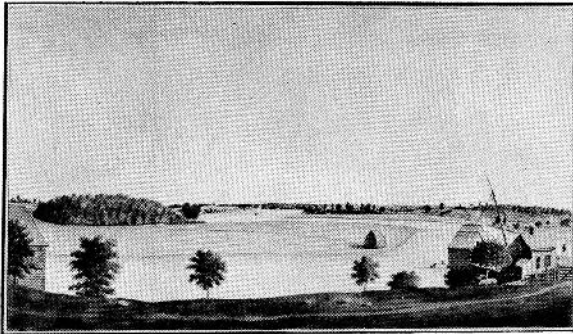


FIGURE 6. Thomas Davies, *Near Flushing*, water-colour, 1765. Henry Francis du Pont (Winterthur Museum).

Long Island and the Battle of Fort Washington. A final peace-time posting to Quebec in the 1780s gave him an opportunity to perfect his water-colour technique and to elaborate his naïve vision, so that he was able to give the northern landscape in all its breadth and colour its first adequate treatment in history (fig. 7).

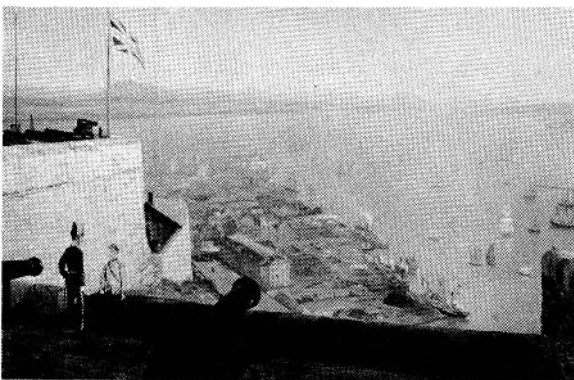


FIGURE 7. Thomas Davies, *Montmorency Falls*, water-colour, 1791. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

In the nineteenth century, only a few topographical painters,<sup>14</sup> now mostly civilians,

14. Including George Isham Parkyns (1750–1820) and Charles de Saint-Memin (1770–1852) who called at Halifax on

were still at work in both countries. Of these the best known is William Henry Bartlett (1809–1854),<sup>15</sup> a professional illustrator of travel books. He visited the United States in 1836–1837 and Canada in 1838. The results of these journeys were a series of elegant Turner-esque views which were engraved in Nathaniel Willis's *American Scenery* (1840) and *Canadian Scenery* (1842) respectively. Differing sharply from him was Peter Rindisbacher (1806–1834),<sup>16</sup> a young Swiss who was one of a group of settlers who sailed through Hudson Strait to the Red River settlement in 1821 and who eventually settled at St. Louis, Missouri. The views he painted along the way constitute an animated folk art. Different again was the famous Audubon who singled out the wild-life component of the landscape. In 1833 after extensive travels in the United States he visited the Gulf of St. Lawrence to paint northern birds with his usual flair for dramatic action and decorative design.

The greatest of the view-painters, if only for the amount of territory he covered, was Paul Kane (1810–1871).<sup>17</sup> Of his journey in 1836–1841 from Toronto to New Orleans the only known record is an amateurish portrait of a Mississippi river-boat captain. His characteristic style was formed during a grand tour of the museums of Europe from 1841 to 1843, and his career took shape after an encounter with George Catlin in London. After a further sojourn in the United States he returned to Toronto in 1845 fired with enthusiasm to paint the West. A trial run in 1845 to the Great Lakes and inland as far as Lake Winnebago was followed by the epic journey of 1846–1848 to the Red River, Fort Edmonton, the Oregon country, Vancouver Island and back again over much of the same route. His landscapes, for all their novelty of subject, stylistically echo the Old Masters he had seen in Europe: it took a volcano (Fig. 8) to rouse him to dramatic expression. Likewise his portraits beneath their Indian trappings are paraphrases of Reynolds and Romney. Yet Kane was the prototype of the Canadian-American travelling artist, and it is not

North American tours; also the naval officers Emeric Essex Vidal (1791–1861) and John Poad Drake (1794–1883). To these may be added Edward M. Richardson (fl. 1863–1864), a pupil of Hayter active in the American and Canadian West; and Edwin Whitefield (1816–1892) and the mulatto painter Robert Duncanson (1817?–1872) who worked on both sides of the border.

15. Alexander M. ROSS, *William Henry Bartlett, Artist, Author & Traveller* (Toronto, 1973).

16. Alvin M. JOSEPHY, *The Artist Was a Young Man: the Life Story of Peter Rindisbacher* (Fort Worth, 1970).

17. J. Russell HARPER, *Paul Kane's Frontier* (Toronto, 1971).

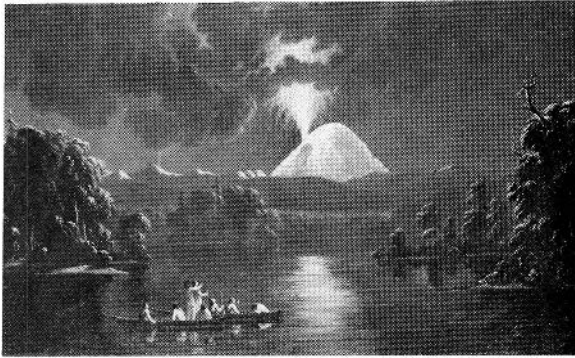


FIGURE 8. Paul Kane, *Mount St Helen's*, 1847. Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum.

without cause that collectors today in both countries compete to acquire his works.

His contemporary Cornelius Krieghoff (1815–1872)<sup>18</sup> also had an international career. This wandering German, whose anecdotal style betokens a stint at the Düsseldorf Academy, emigrated in 1837 to New York. There he enlisted in the United States Army and was sent to Florida to record the Seminole War. His studies are long lost, and renewed efforts should be made to recover them. After this he deserted to Canada, where his first known works date from his arrival near Montreal about 1844. Here he put the German style to practical use in scenes of *habitant* jollity, which appealed to the British in Canada but failed to endear him to the French. More genuine because less doggedly picturesque were his portraits of men and horses, of trains and steamships (Fig. 9)

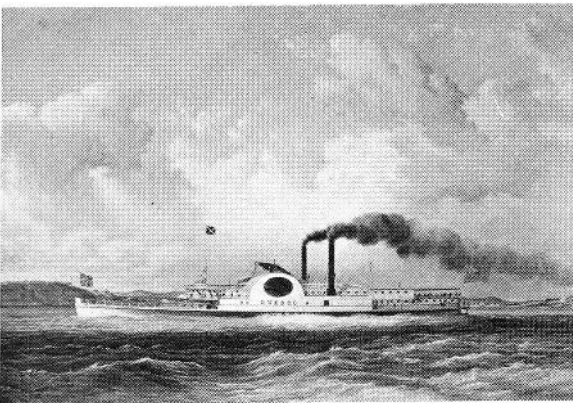


FIGURE 9. Cornelius Krieghoff, *The Steamship Quebec*, 1853. Toronto (National Gallery of Canada), Collection of Dr. W. R. Franks.

18. Raymond VÉZINA, *Cornelius Krieghoff, peintre de mœurs* (Ottawa, 1972); Raymond VÉZINA, "Attitude esthétique de Cornelius Krieghoff au sein de la tradition picturale canadienne-française", *Revue d'art canadienne*, 1, No. 1 (1974), 47–59.

subjects that were also popular in American art. But most significant are his landscapes in which an ability to capture the colour and forms of the northern scenery (Fig. 10) established him as a



FIGURE 10. Cornelius Krieghoff, *The St Anne River above the Waterfall*, 1854. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Collection of John A. Scott, formuly.

contributor to the central tradition of Canadian painting. Krieghoff's last years (c. 1867–1872) were spent in Chicago, but examples of his work there have not been found.

A few minor landscape artists were at work in both countries. In the 1840s another German, August Köllner (1817–c. 1870) made views of several American and Canadian towns. He is one of the two candidates, with Alicia Killaly (1836–1908), for the authorship of a charming novelette in the form of six chromolithographs signed *A.K.* and published in 1868. In this series, *A Picnic to Montmorenci*,<sup>19</sup> the dashing Captain Bushie and the frolicsome Miss Muffin suffer mishaps while tobogganing on the ice-cone, come home late to face the ire of the girl's father, but live happily ever after. In 1845 Sir Henry Warre (1819–1898), a Royal Engineers officer, was sent from Quebec to spy out the disputed Oregon territory. The views he made along the way resemble those of Edward Lear in Greece; their colours are not eminently suited to the portrayal of western scenery (Fig. 11).

In the 1850s an Englishman, Frederick W. Lock (fl. 1843–1860), painted charming views of Vermont and Montreal, Niagara and Brockville; and a Scot, Robert D. Wilkie (1828–1903), a cousin of Sir

19. F. St. George SPENDLOVE, *The Face of Early Canada* (Toronto, 1958), 52–53; ALLODI, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1352–1357.



FIGURE 11. Sir Henry Warre, *Distant View of the Rocky Mountains*, wash drawing, 1845–1846. Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada.

David Wilkie, painted strong oils of Halifax before settling for good in Boston. These and other artists of their sort may well repay further investigation.

On the American side, only a few of the earlier landscape painters ever worked in Canada apart from those who made the customary pilgrimage to Niagara. The marine artist William Bradford (1823–1892) based a spacious oil or two on sketches he made on his Arctic trips.<sup>20</sup> Fitz Hugh Lane (1804–1865)<sup>21</sup> and Martin Heade (1819–1904)<sup>22</sup> are said to have made painting trips to the Maritime provinces and British Columbia respectively, but the results are as yet undiscovered. Frederic E. Church (1826–1900), having previously visited the Maritime provinces, made an extended voyage to Newfoundland in 1859. A series of sketches of icebergs (Fig. 12) and a chromolithograph after a lost picture form a not insignificant part of the work of this connoisseur of far-away places, but he never developed the

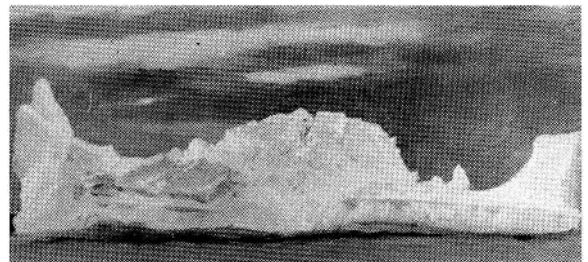


FIGURE 12. Frederic E. Church, *Iceberg*, oil and gouache, c. 1859. New York, Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design.

northern theme to anything approaching the exoticism of his South American subjects.<sup>23</sup>

Several American portrait painters may also provide new grist for academic mills. The portraits which the diarist William Dunlap (1766–1839) painted in Montreal in 1820 lie undiscovered.<sup>24</sup> Little is known of the American itinerant artists active in Canada. One of these, the Pennsylvanian James Bowman (1793–1842), was run out of

20. John WILMERDING, *A History of American Marine Painting* (Boston and Toronto, 1968), 194.

21. WILMERDING, *op. cit.*, 170.

22. Theodore E. STEBBINS, JR., *Martin Johnson Heade* (Maryland, 1969).

23. David C. HUNTINGTON, *The Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church: Vision of an American Era* (New York, 1966), 83–87.

24. Jules BAZIN, "Un peintre américain à Montréal en 1820", *Vie des arts*, No. 66 (printemps 1972), 20 (relates how Dunlap repainted one figure in William Berczy's *The McGillivray Family*).



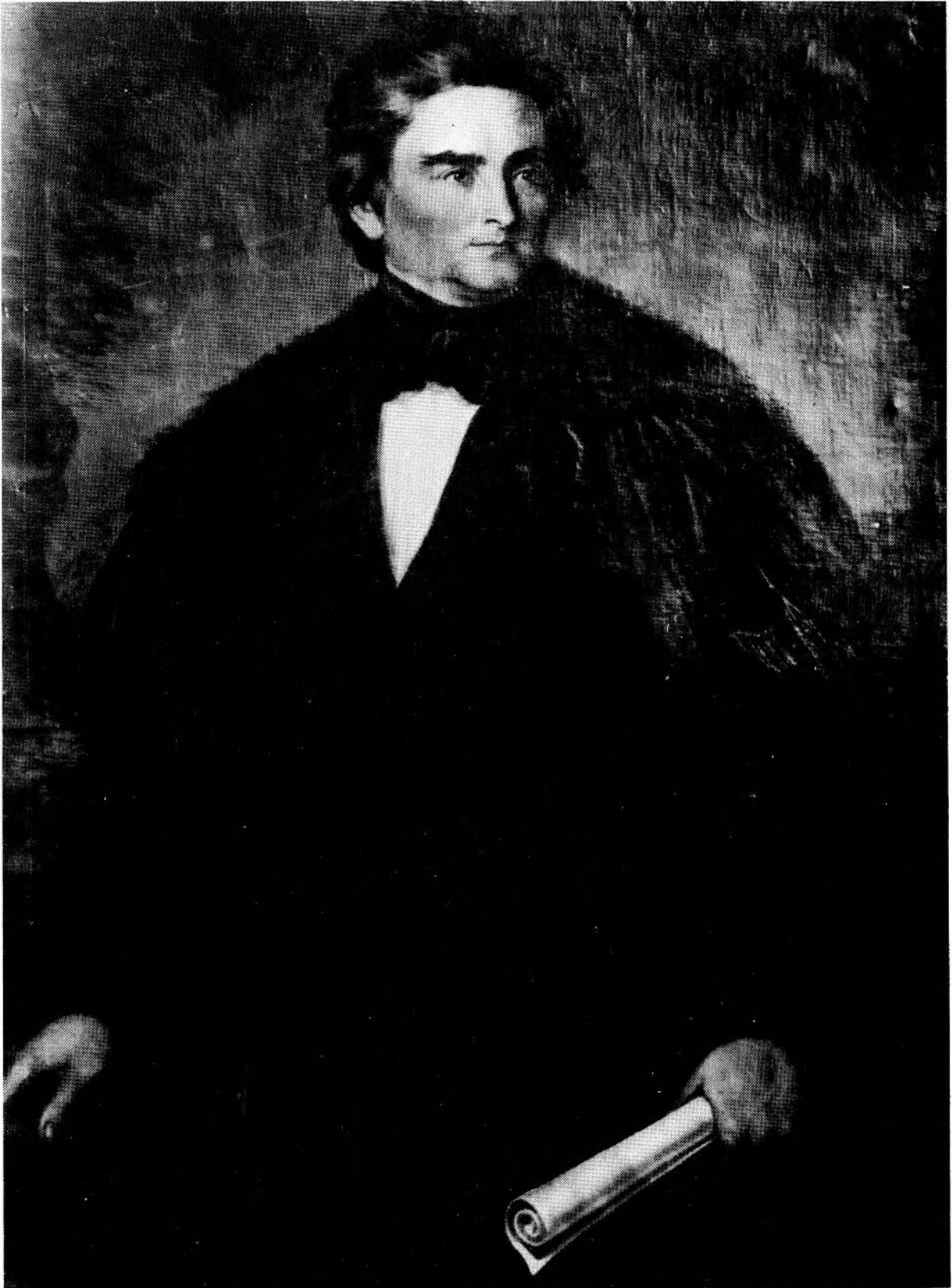


FIGURE 13. James Bowman, *Henry Dodge*, c. 1840. Madison, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Quebec by the Paris-trained Antoine Plamondon for having invaded the latter's domain. Bowman then appeared successively in Montreal, Toronto and Detroit before going to Madison, Wisconsin, to paint a billowing portrait of the Territorial governor Henry Dodge (Fig. 13) in a style that has faint echoes of Plamondon's neo-classic style.

It is a relief to turn from the amateurism of the itinerants<sup>25</sup> to the freshness of the folk-painters. These artists formed a fortuitous link between the two countries, not only because they were active in both but because they appealed to a common taste for simplicity of design. A sensitive female portrait (Fig. 14) by John Bradley (fl. c. 1830-1847), the



FIGURE 14. John Bradley, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1836. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

American primitive known for the fine *Cellist* in the National Gallery, Washington, has recently been found in Ottawa; and Canada has a number of anonymous folk-artists of her own, whose style resembles that of the Americans. But it was the Quebec primitives — unknowingly nurtured on the

25. Others included Nelson Cook (1817-1892) who painted portraits in Toronto before going to Saratoga Springs and Rochester; Henry D. Thielcke (fl. 1832-1866) who worked in Montreal, New York and Chicago; and Albert Gallatin Hoyt (1809-1856) who was active in Maine, the Maritime provinces and Boston.

old French traditions of linear beauty and harmonious colour — who produced the most distinctive work (Fig. 15). Some examples of Canadian folk-art have doubtless found their way into the United States and may one day have to be sorted out from the American primitives.

### III

Incongruously the period in Canada from Confederation in 1867 to the end of the nineteenth century was marked on the one hand by an incipient nationalism in art and on the other by the growing influence of the United States. Lacking the architects to design all her new buildings, the Dominion imported a number from the nearest source. Thus the Canadian Pacific Railway, when it was completed in 1885, called on Bruce Price (1843-1903), the fashionable New York architect, to plan its first railway hotels. Expressly for this commission Price, who epitomized the eclecticism of his period, invented the "château style".<sup>26</sup> Though the French Renaissance style was obviously too early in date to have appeared in Canada in its own time, the Château Frontenac is undeniably appropriate to its commanding site on the great rock of Quebec.

In official architecture in Canada a different style prevailed; and here the international flow of talent was reversed. In 1859 Thomas Fuller (1823-1898) and Augustus Laver (1834-1898) had won the competition for the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. The results were a high point in the development of High Gothic design: buildings remarkable for their siting, scale and bold detail. On the strength of these architects were called to Albany, where their eclectic design for the New York State Capitol touched off a major battle of the styles. Subsequently they designed the San Francisco Court House in the ultimate in Victorian Baroque.<sup>27</sup> Towards the end of the century the situation changed once more. Fuller returned to Canada and to a soberer, more massive style. The Richardsonian Romanesque style flourished mightily in Canada at the same time, often at the hand of American designers.

26. Harold D. KALMAN, *The Railway Hotels and the Development of the Château Style in Canada* (Victoria, 1968).

27. Walter E. LANGSAM, "Thomas Fuller and Augustus Laver: Victorian Neo-baroque and Second Empire vs. Gothic Revival in North America", *Journal, Society of Architectural Historians*, XXIV, No 3 (October 1970), 270.



FIGURE 15. Jean-Baptiste Roy-Audy (attributed), *Madame Léandre Lemaitre-Auger*, c. 1838. Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts.

In sculpture, Canada's own artists were able to meet her modest needs and few were called in from outside. One minor connection with the United States was made by Louis Jobin (1844–1928), the last of the traditional wood-carvers of Quebec. In the figures of saints supplied to churches all over the province of Quebec he modified his inherited Baroque with touches of the Gothic Revival and of the cigar-store Indians he had carved in New York. The occasional American priest would drop into his shop at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré and order a statue for some parish in New England, the South or the Middle West.<sup>28</sup> Efforts to trace these have so far failed.

It was in painting that the liveliest exchanges took place. Paradoxically the first national artistic efforts seemed only to increase American activity in Canada. For this situation two governors-general of Canada,<sup>29</sup> as well as the principal of a university and a transcontinental railway, were responsible.

Canada's third governor general, Lord Dufferin, on his extensive tours in the 1870s, was staggered by Canadian scenery and urged artists to exploit it. To activate them he invited a prominent American painter-traveller to visit him at his residences in Ottawa and Quebec. So it was that Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) sketched the majestic panorama of the St. Lawrence from the citadel in Quebec (Fig. 16)

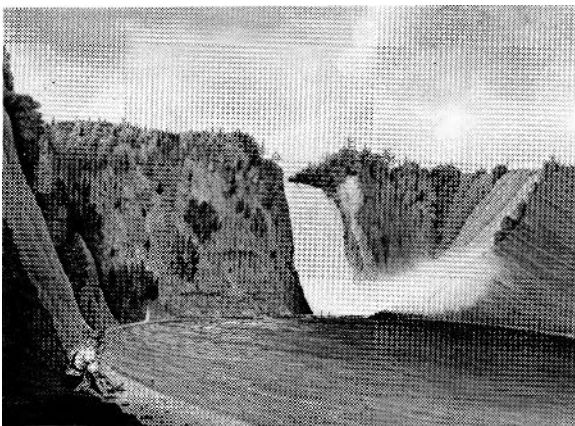


FIGURE 16. Albert Bierstadt, *The St. Lawrence from the Citadel, Quebec*, after 1880. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

and the view of Ottawa from Rideau Hall. Bierstadt's luminous style had a strong influence on Canadian painters. Lucius O'Brien (1832–1899),

whom Dufferin's successor Lord Lorne nominated as first President of the Royal Canadian Academy, submitted as his diploma a fine silvery view of the Saguenay (Fig. 17). This was just the thing his viceregal patrons had been looking for. Bierstadt evidently encouraged Canadians to paint the West, for the work of O'Brien and others in British Columbia reflect his style.

Meanwhile Lorne was encouraging the Rev. George M. Grant, principal of Queen's University, to undertake a ambitious publishing venture. The two fat volumes of *Picturesque Canada*<sup>30</sup> that appeared in 1882 contained the first description of Canada from coast to coast and were copiously illustrated with wood-engravings. O'Brien as art editor closely modelled his book on the contemporary *Picturesque America*<sup>31</sup> even to the extent of hiring the same New York production men. These in turn commissioned the American painter Thomas Moran (1837–1926) to make a dozen views of Niagara Falls. With the participation of others from both countries, *Picturesque Canada* was a truly international affair.

The Canadian Pacific's employment of artists to publicize the West resulted in some interesting pictures — which in their turn owed something to Bierstadt and Moran. One of the artists was John A. Fraser (1838–1898) who began in Toronto as a tinter of photographs and painter of atmospheric landscape. Later he moved to Boston, returning in the eighties to paint the Rocky Mountains. Fraser's American work remains unknown, but not that of his brother-in-law Henry Sandham (1842–1910). Sandham, after a period spent in painting backgrounds for William Notman's photographs, settled in Boston as an illustrator. His mural *The Dawn of Liberty* for the town hall of Lexington, Massachusetts, appears rather an unusual commission for a Canadian to undertake. He too painted in the West for the Canadian Pacific.

One of the artists who appeared in Canada from the south was Alfred Boisseau (1823–1901), an itinerant French genre painter who had worked in New Orleans, New York and Cleveland before arriving in Montreal. An animated scene of

28. Marius BARBEAU, *Louis Jobin, statuaire* (Montreal, 1968), 30 (repr. 144), 33, 78, 84, 85, 87, 96.

29. See R. H. HUBBARD, *Rideau Hall, an Illustrated History of Government House, Ottawa* (Ottawa, 1967), Chs. 2, 3.

30. George Monro GRANT, *Picturesque Canada*, 2 vol. (Toronto, 1882).

31. William Cullen BRYANT, *Picturesque America*, 2 vol. (New York, 1872–1874).



FIGURE 17. Lucius Richard O'Brien, *Sunrise on the Saguenay*, 1880. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, Royal Canadian Academy Diploma Collection.

tobogganing (Fig. 18), may inspire a search for his Canadian subjects.<sup>32</sup>

Canada's two leading native painters at the end of the century had American connections. Homer Watson (1855–1936) came in contact with George Inness during an early visit to New York. One of his Adirondacks landscapes (Fig. 19) bears the same title as Inness's *Coming Storm* of 1878 (Fig. 20) and reflects the American artists' intimate naturalism of the period. Watson continued for a few years in this vein, painting a series of unaffected Ontario landscapes. But when, in 1883, the visiting Oscar Wilde dubbed him the "Canadian Constable", he was tempted into a grand symphonic style that lay beyond his capacities. Horatio Walker (1858–1938) was a parallel case. The modesty of his early Quebec landscapes gave way after his move to New York to the grandiose and

poetic in art. In his many pictures of the farm life of the Ile d'Orléans he shamelessly "Barbizonized" his subject-matter to satisfy the rich tastes of his American clients.

Of the great American painters of the period only Winslow Homer (1836–1910) spent any time in Canada. It was towards the end of his life that he discovered the fishing on the Saguenay and there found pictorial subjects to his liking. What influence if any these limpid water-colours and austere oils (Fig. 21) had on Canadians has yet to be determined.

#### IV

The opening years of the twentieth century saw the belated flowering of Canadian art. In view of this it would be natural to expect some waning of American influence. But once again the American impact only became stronger, especially in architecture and design. Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) had already laid out Mount Royal Park in Montreal when, in 1904, the New York firm of McKim, Mead & White rebuilt the Bank of Montreal, thereby introducing the Beaux-Arts style

32. Others include Henri Perré (1828–1890) an eccentric Frenchman who settled in Toronto after a period in the United States, and Wyatt Eaton (1849–1896) a follower of the Barbizon painters and of Whistler, who was active in both Canada and the United States.

into Canada. A few years later Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson designed All Saints' Cathedral in Halifax and St. Mary's in Windsor, Ontario. Ralph Adams Cram's (1863–1942) principle of developing the

Gothic from the point where it was interrupted by the Renaissance struck responsive chords in Canada. Henry Sproatt (1866–1934), architect of Hart House, University of Toronto, was the Cana-

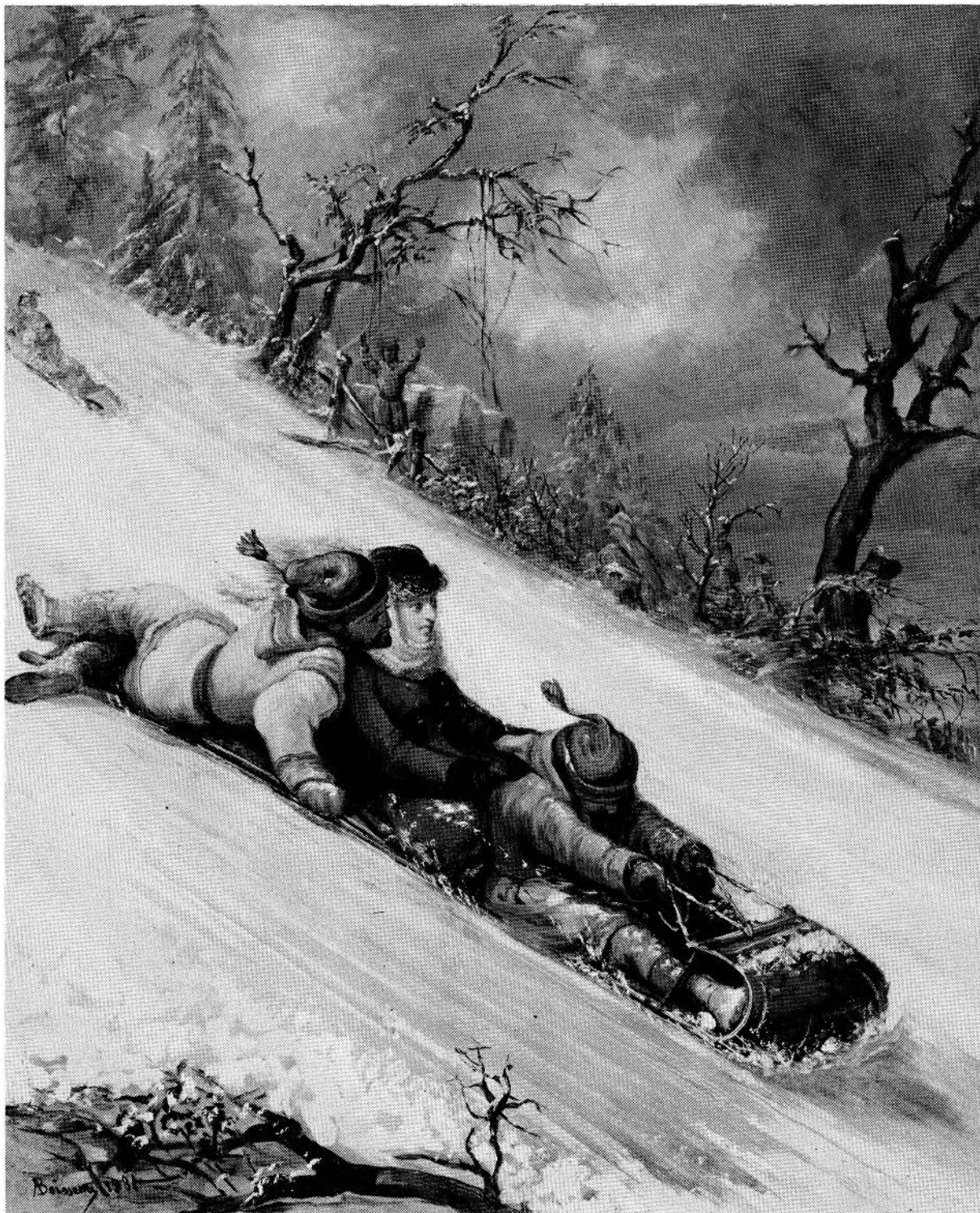


FIGURE 18. Alfred Boisseau, *Tobogganing*, 1881. Montreal, Maurice Corbeil collection.



FIGURE 19. Homer Watson, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879. Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts.

dian who handled the Modern Gothic with the greatest virtuosity. But the really vital American influence of the period was barren of results in Canada. Frank Lloyd Wright became involved in several Canadian projects through an Ottawa pupil, Francis Sullivan (1882–1929). The Recreation Building (1913) in Banff National Park,<sup>33</sup> though ideally designed in relation to its place and purpose, had no influence on Canadians before its demolition in 1939. Nor did Francis Sullivan's few "prairie" houses, which were like fish out of water in the Ottawa of his day (Fig. 22).

Of the sculptors, only R. Tait McKenzie (1867–1938)<sup>34</sup> had any career in both countries.

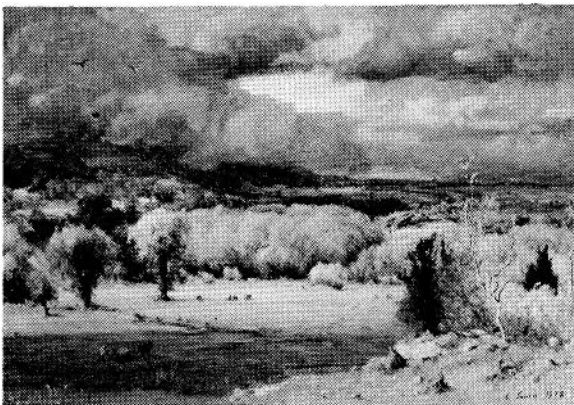


FIGURE 20. George Inness, *The Coming Storm*, 1878. Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

33. An architectural drawing for this building is reproduced in Martin BIRKHANS, "Francis C. Sullivan, Architect", *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, XXXIX (1962), 35-36.

34. Christopher HUSSEY, *Tait McKenzie, Sculptor of Youth*, (London, 1929), 49, 104.

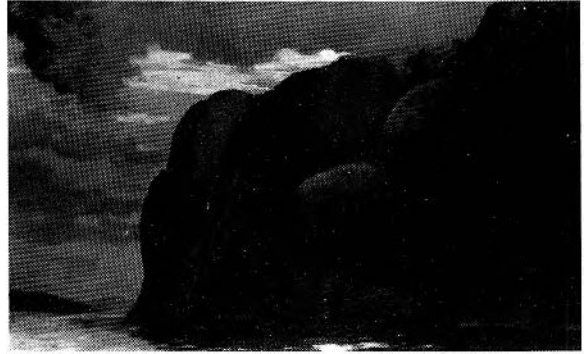


FIGURE 21. Winslow Homer, *Cape Trinity*, 1904. New York, Alastair Bradley Martin collection.

Having turned to sculpture whilst teaching anatomy at McGill, he developed his characteristic style after moving to the University of Pennsylvania in 1904 as an authority on physical education. His classical bronzes of athletes (Fig. 23) and the medals he designed for several American universities qualify him for a revival of interest.

In the early twentieth century, as in previous periods, the Americans working in Canada were few. John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) painted in the Rocky Mountains for a matter of months in 1916. Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) spent some little time in Newfoundland in 1914-1915 in preparation for his years in Greenlands (Fig. 24). Marsden Hartley (1877–1943) worked briefly on the Atlantic coast of Canada in 1927-1928. But only Henry Rosenberg (1858–1947), a friend of Whistler and Arthur B. Davies, settled in Canada for good. Though he taught several generations of Canadians in Halifax after 1897, his own works remains largely unknown (Fig. 25).

Meanwhile the "art drain"<sup>35</sup> to the United States was on the increase. Though Canada can hardly claim Maurice Prendergast (1861–1924) as her own on the strength of his birth in Newfoundland, she regards Ernest Lawson (1873–1939) as a Canadian painter. Not only did he paint

35. The pointillist William Henry Clapp (1879–1954) who emigrated from Montreal to California is due for a reassessment. Several well known American graphic artists were born in Canada: Jay Hambidge of "dynamic symmetry" fame, Ernest Thompson Seton, the animal illustrator, and Palmer Cox, inventor of "Brownies". Several Canadian illustrators spent a part of their careers in the United States: Frederick Jopling (1860–1946) the Toronto etcher, Charles W. Jefferys (1869–1954) the historical illustrator, and Walter J. Phillips (1884–1963) the authority on colour woodcut.



FIGURE 22. *House in Huron Avenue*, Ottawa, 1915. Francis C. Sullivan, Architect.

in his native Nova Scotia but continued to exhibit in Toronto after his move to New York. His “jewelled palette” had its influence on young Canadians at the time when the Group of Seven was emerging.

Tom Thomson (1877–1917)<sup>36</sup> is regarded as the prime example of the Canadian painter whose career evolved at home. Yet it was probably in Seattle, where he worked at commercial art for a few years at the turn of the century, that he first discovered Art Nouveau (Fig. 26). The introduction of this ingredient in the Group of Seven style is usually credited to J. E. H. MacDonald after his return from London in 1907, but Thom-

son’s fascination with the tendrils of foliage (Fig. 27) probably began a little earlier.

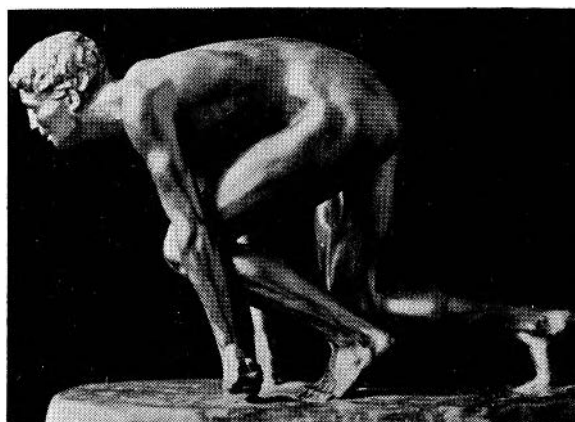


FIGURE 23. R. Tait McKensie, *The Sprinter*, bronze, 1902. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.

36. Joan MURRAY, *The Art of Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1971), 9–20.





FIGURE 24. Rockwell Kent, *The Trapper*, 1921. New York. Whitney Museum of American Art.

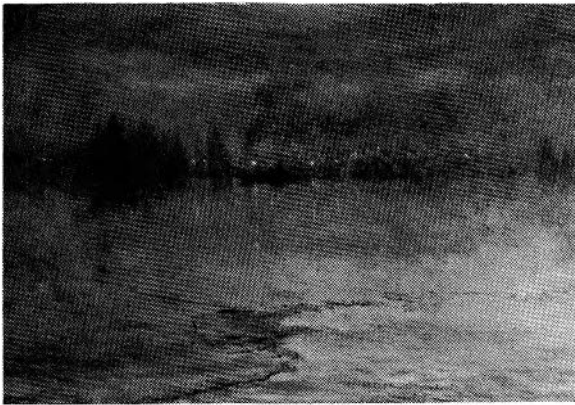


FIGURE 25. Henry Rosenberg, *Morning Mist. Halifax Harbour*, 1914. Halifax (Donald C. Mackay), Collection of Mrs. William Currie.

Of the original members of the Group of Seven<sup>37</sup> — Thomson was dead by the time the name was adopted in 1920 — only Lawren Harris (1885–1969) had strong American ties. In spite of an early stint as illustrator for *Harper's Monthly* and of his association with the Société Anonyme in New York, and of his awareness of Georgia O'Keeffe (Fig. 28), these connections date from his mature period. After the years of his *Lake Superior* (Fig. 29) and Arctic subjects he began to reduce the familiar Group of Seven tree-shore-and-water formula to its bare essentials. In 1936 family troubles

37. Dennis REID, *The Group of Seven* (Ottawa, 1970).

38. Bertram Brooker (1888–1955), a friend of Harris, was probably the pioneer of *avant-garde* painting in Canada. On his frequent trips to New York in his early period he saw the work of Kandinsky, Mondrian and Man Ray; his own use of dynamic forms dates from the later 1920s (cf. Dennis REID, *Bertram Brooker* (Ottawa, 1973).

obliged him to leave Toronto for New Hampshire; and it was at this point that he crossed the artistic boundary into abstraction.<sup>38</sup> He spent the years 1938–1940 in New Mexico in close touch with the Transcendental Group, and after his return to Canada continued in the non-figurative mode until his death.

The work of Emily Carr (1871–1945) is connected with that of Harris. She met him in 1927 at a time in middle age when she was dissatisfied with her paintings of west-coast Indian villages in her

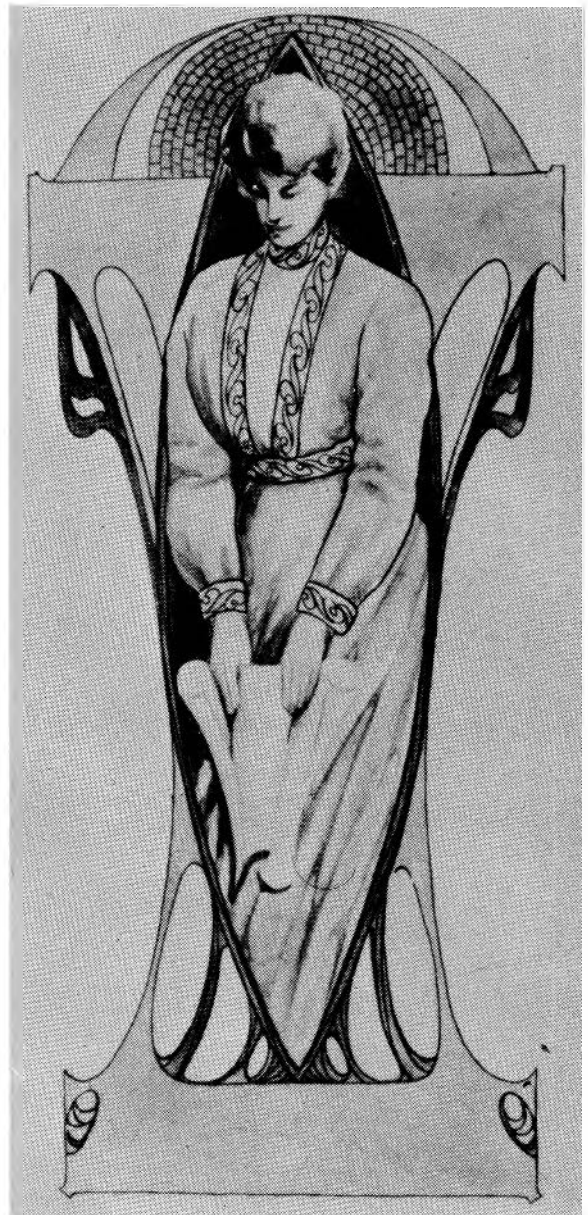


FIGURE 26. Tom Thomson, *Design for a Window at Havergal College, Toronto*, c. 1908. Art Gallery of Ontario, Private collection.

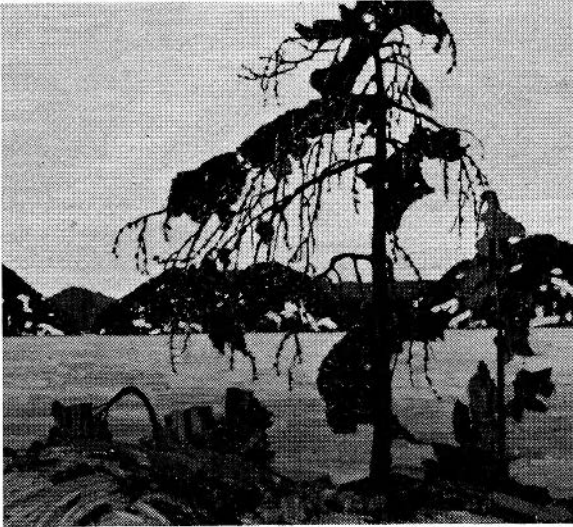


FIGURE 27. Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916–1917. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

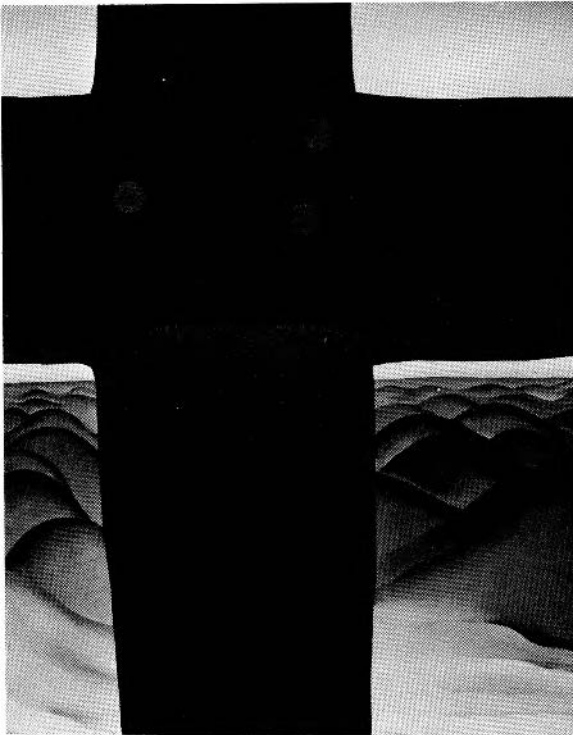


FIGURE 28. Georgia O'Keefe, *Black Cross*, New Mexico, 1929. Chicago, Art Institute.

early Fauve style. It was Harris who inspired her monumental canvases after 1928. But in that same year she also met the American painter Mark Tobey (1890– ). His influence, though acknowledged by her,<sup>39</sup> has never been fully investigated. Tobey at the time he visited Victoria was in his period of “personal cubism” (Fig. 30), and this style undoubtedly helped to precipitate

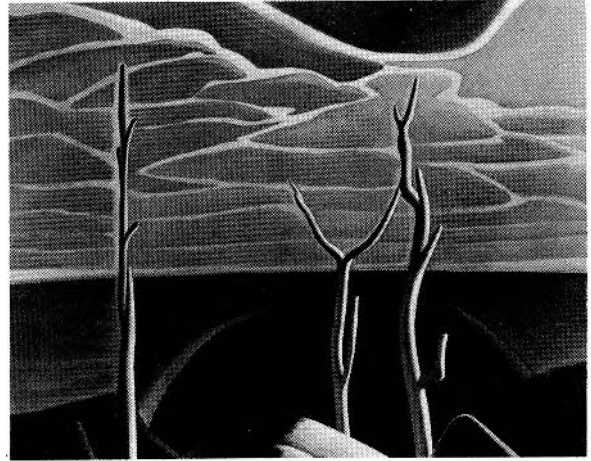


FIGURE 29. Lawren Harris, *Lake Superior*, c. 1924. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario.

such Emily Carr's canvases as *Blunden Harbour* (Fig. 31), if not the whole of her upsurge of creativity that lasted from that time until her death.

David Milne (1882–1953) was the only Canadian (not counting Prendergast and Lawson) to exhibit in the Armory Show in New York in 1913. He was also the last artist whose work fully exhibited the overlappings of Canadian and American art. Shortly after arriving in New York in 1904 he was attracted to Prendergast's mosaic-like treatment of colour. On this basis, whilst living in the Berkshires and Adirondacks, he evolved a decorative and highly sensitive manner (Fig. 32) of his own. Though this style, after his return to Canada in 1928, was modified by influences from Chinese painting and from the Canadian landscape itself, it provided the continuous thread that ran through all his work.

The last flare-up of Canadian colour on the American art scene occurred in the early 1950s.<sup>40</sup> In 1953 Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), leader of

39. “Mr. Tobey, an american artist came over from the states for three weeks. He was on his way to Chicago where he is to give an exhibition of his paintings. He is a man that interests me very much. Very modern and very keen. He was over in Europe last year and made good use of his time. He has been teaching at the ‘Cornish school’ in Seattle. I think he is one of the best teachers I know of. He gave a short course of classes here in my studio, and I felt I got a tremendous lot of help from his criticisms. He was very keen on my summers work. And his crits I feel will be very useful in the working out of many problems connected with my summers work, which I hope to do this summer.” (Emily Carr to Eric Brown, 1 Oct. 1928, NGC Archives)

40. By the 1930s, however, several Canadian painters had settled permanently in New York. Though having little impact on American art Lillian Freiman's Degas-like studies of musicians and Pegi Nicol MacLeod's Rouault-like street scenes were regularly exhibited in Canada.

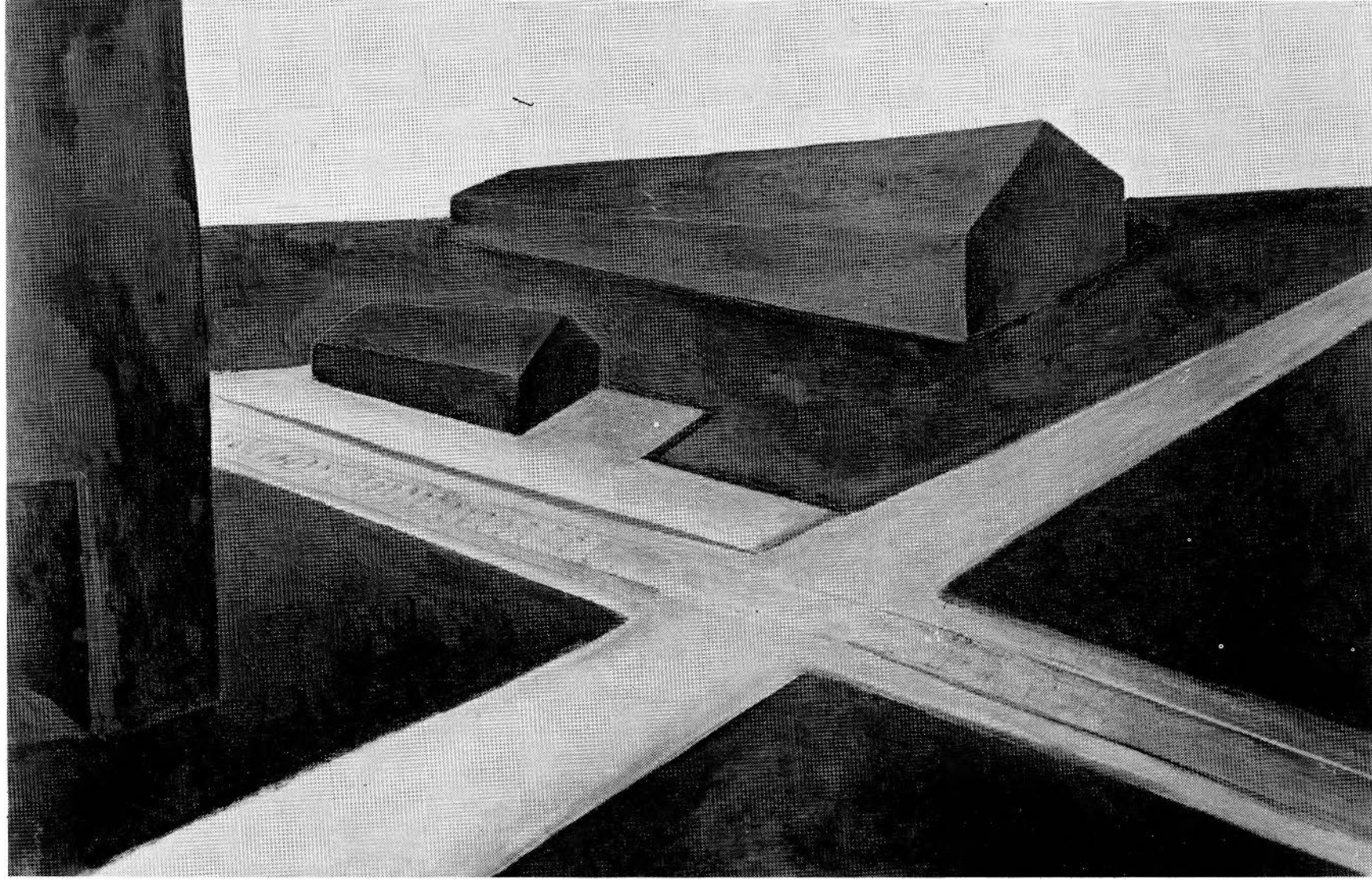


FIGURE 30. Mark Tobey, *Middle West*, 1929. Seattle, Art Museum.

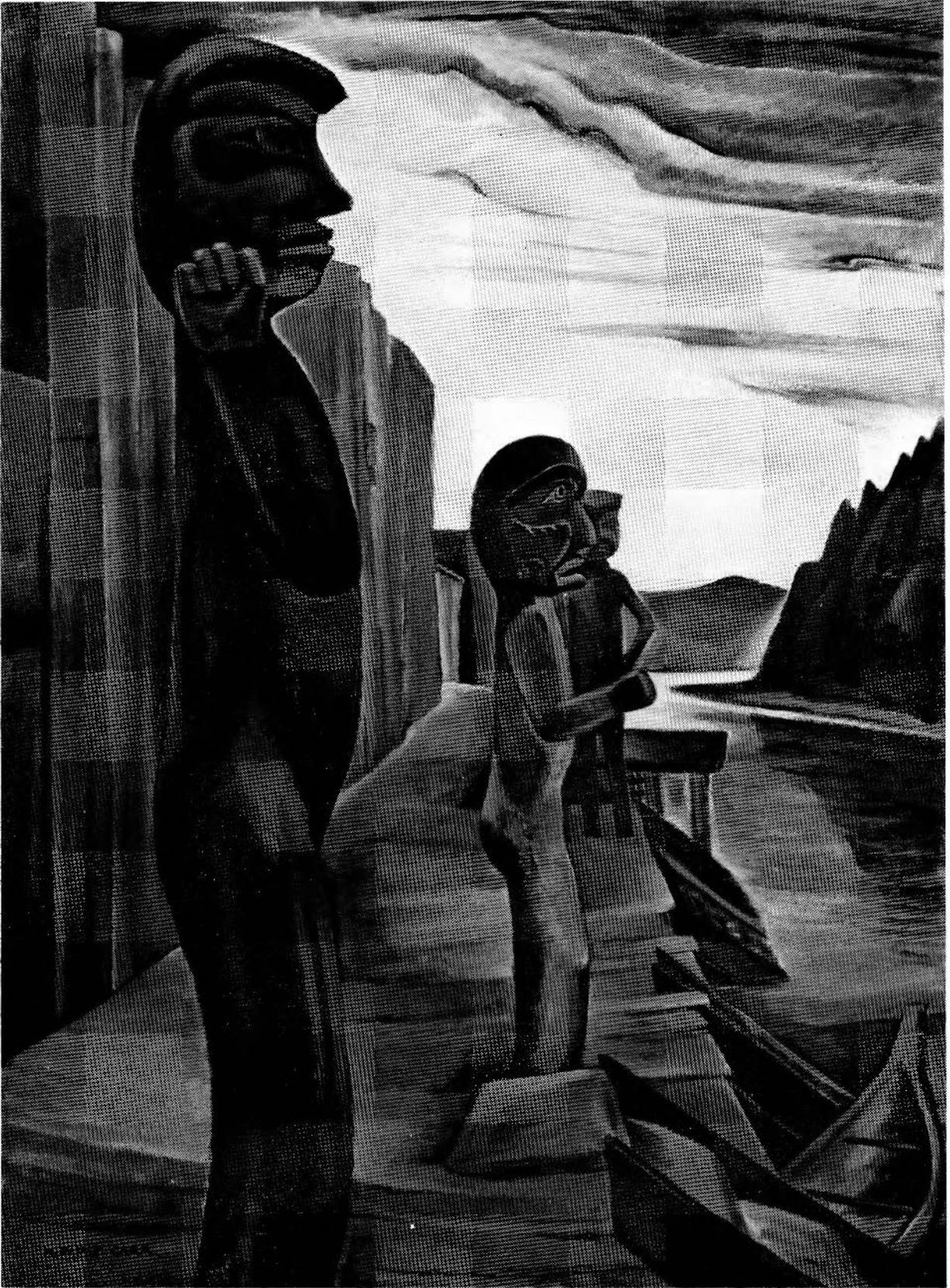


FIGURE 31. Emily Carr, *Blunden Harbour*, c. 1929. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

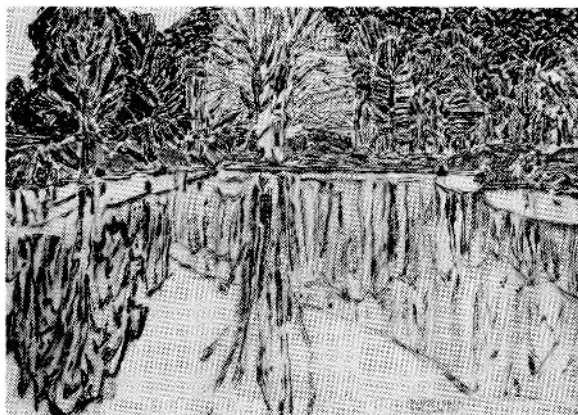


FIGURE 32. David Milne, *Pink Reflections, Bishop's Pond*, water-colour, 1920. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

the Montreal Automatives, escaped from the then oppressive climate of his native province into the exhilarating atmosphere of New York. His stay there was short in duration, difficult for a francophone, but crucial to his development. Contacts with the Abstract Expressionists lightened his palette and aerated his forms, so that the paintings of this period (1953-1954) (Fig. 33) contrast sharply with those of the Montreal period with their murky convolutions (Fig. 34). They were, however, but a



FIGURE 34. Paul-Émile Borduas, *Sous le vent de l'île*, c. 1948. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

stepping-stone to the ultimate simplicity of his black-and-white period in Paris. With him Canadian-American overlappings ceased, having been engulfed in the internationalism of today. It is in this state that we all find ourselves for better or for worse.

Robert H. HUBBARD  
*Rideau Hall*  
*Ottawa.*



FIGURE 33. Paul-Émile Borduas, *Les signes s'envolent*, 1953. Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts.