



Archives

F. M. BELL SMITH R.C.A

Suggested citation:

UNSPECIFIED F. M. BELL SMITH R.C.A. Documentation. OCAD University. (Unpublished) Available at <https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/4582/>

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F. M. BELL SMITH

R. C. A.

In the passing of F. M. Bell Smith, R.C.A., the art world has lost a distinguished figure and one of the pioneer Canadian Painters. To make a list of such painters would be difficult, but between 1810 and 1850 were born, mostly in the old land, the score or so of painters who might be called the pioneers. Educated in their art more or less in the country of their birth, they came to Canada, for the most part, to live by their painting, but some to take up other occupations.

F. M. Bell Smith, whose father was a portrait painter, might be counted as one of the younger pioneers, as his father was the first President of a Society of Canadian Artists in Montreal in 1867, after having been a member of various Art Societies in London and Secretary of the Institute of Fine Arts.

The young Bell Smith was first much engaged with photography, but his training in London and under his father with great natural facility soon placed him among the leading artists. He was progressive and many years later he went to Paris to study and profited much in his style and outlook. His mastery of perspective both linear and aerial shows in his street scenes in London, and other works. One of the most notable of his large works in oil is the "Lights of a City Street", which shows the corner of King and Yonge Streets, Toronto, as it was about 1894. This shows his power in figure work. A very important side of Bell's other work was his depicting of the Rocky Mountains, and his water color paintings of the great Canadian wilderness will live for their veracity and strength. In the artistic life of Canada he was always a hard and conscientious worker and was a charter member of the Society of Canadian Artists in Montreal in 1867, a founder member of the O.S.A. in 1872 and President of that Society from 1905 to 1908. When the Royal Canadian Academy was founded in 1880, being regarded as one of the younger painters, he was made an associate member and was elected a full academician in 1886. Besides his constant and unflagging zeal in his profession, Mr. Bell Smith had a keen appreciation of character

and humor in its various aspects. He was an ardent admirer and student of the works of Dickens, was President of the Dickens Fellowship, and took leading parts in many dramatic productions. He was much in demand as a reciter, principally of the Drummond habitant poems.