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Reid, G. A.

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THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART

A HISTORICAL NOTE BY THE PRINCIPAL

This being Vol. I, No. I of the Ontario College of Art Magazine, it is fitting that some form of historical account of the College should be given, and as the connection of the present foundation with several other foundations is so close that it appears as a direct succession, it seems to be necessary, if a true account is made, to include a short record of the Schools of Art which preceded the establishment of the College. As no authentic records exist other than a few dates, with very meager references in scattered form, it remains to the present writer to make much of the record from memory based on an almost continuous connection with the original Ontario School of Art founded in 1876, first as a student from 1879 to 1883, then as Instructor in Painting from 1890 to 1912, being Principal of the Staff from 1909 to 1912 when the Ontario College of Art was incorporated, and since that time Principal of the College. The responsibility of making such a record is very heavy, and is fully appreciated, and to those who are interested enough to read this note and who have any information to add or corrections to make, ~~these~~ will be thankfully received and added to this general account for future use.

The earliest effort to establish a School of Art for the Province appears to have been during the period when Dr. Ryerson was Minister of Education, 1846 to 1876. The Toronto Normal School was built with the intention of including a Museum and School of Art and Design, A bill introduced in the Legislature in 1849 intended for the improvement of common schools in Upper Canada contained a clause providing for this Museum and School. The Museum was established with a varied collection, an important part of which was a large number of copies of paintings by old masters and an excellent collection

of plaster casts from antique statues, etc. Although an attempt was made to secure a qualified art master, the proposal for an Art School fell through and the story of Art Education in the Province from that time till the foundation of the Ontario School of Art by the Ontario Society of Artists in 1876 is merely one of drawing masters in some schools and private teaching of an indifferent sort.

The Ontario Society of Artists was founded in 1872, and its charter stated, as one of its objects, the carrying on of a School of Art. This School, called the Ontario School of Art established a few years later, was under the care of the Society until 1883, when it was taken over by the Education Department, and housed in the Normal School for some years. Certain difficulties arose with this connection which resulted in the School being moved to a building on Queen Street near Yonge Street, where it existed precariously for a short time. The Society of Artists took up the matter at this juncture, and the Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design was the name given to the reconstituted School, and the work of the School was resumed in the Princess Theatre building in 1890. The Ontario Society of Artists Galleries had been opened in this building a short time previously.

The School was carried on there until 1910, when, because of alterations to the Theatre, it became necessary to move, and for a year the School was housed in a building on the south west corner of College and Yonge Streets. The Art Gallery, having come into occupancy of the Grange House, gave the upper rooms to the School where it was for a year, and it was there that the School was reorganized as the Ontario College of Art.

Until that time the School had been struggling for mere existence with meager resources. An annual grant of \$400.00 from the Department of Education and about \$300.00 from the City was the extent of the income outside fees from students which made a total budget of \$3,377.00, with about 100 students registered in 1911, the year of the transfer to the Ontario College of Art.

It is but right that the principal friends of the School at that time who were the friends of long standing and who helped to bring about the reorganization should be mentioned here. They were R. Y. Ellis, R. F. Gagen, G. A. Howell, J. P. Murray and Thomas Roden. The principal instructors during this period were William Cruikshank, R. Holmes, C. M. Manly and G. A. Reid, the latter having been Chairman of the Staff and for a time the Principal. George C. Downes was for many years the Secretary who gave excellent service in the management.

During the thirty five years of hard struggles for existence when the members of the Council had often to seek for donors to cover deficits. It is hard to believe that it was possible for a high standard of teaching and work to be maintained, but the results are to be found in the large number of distinguished Canadian artists who were given their training during that time. The following are a few of these,--

W. E. Atkinson,  
J. W. Beatty,  
J. W. Bengough,  
F. H. Brigden,  
F. S. Challener,  
F. V. C. Ede,  
Harriet Ford,  
W. W. Gregg.

T. G. Greene,  
F. S. Haines,  
E. Hahn,  
F. Halliday,  
R. Holmes,  
Minnie Kallmeyer,  
Estelle Kerr,  
F. M. Knowles,

*Collman*  
*Francis*  
*Shaw*  
*Challener*  
*Laughton*  
*Jeffries*  
*Challener*

J. D. Kelly,

W. A. Langton,

Marion Long,

J. E. H. MacDonald,

Florence McGillivray,

~~H. W. McRea,~~

A. Mickel,

T. W. Mitchell,

Herbert Palmer,

J. C. Pinkey,

G. A. Reid,

Thompson Seaton,

D. F. Thompson,

S. S. Tully,

Frank Wickson,

Mary E. Wrinch.

Repeated efforts were made to have the School recognized as a central institution and to get adequate support, but the existence of a number of small schools throughout the Province prevented this. These, however, were gradually discontinued through being unable to comply with the conditions of the Act, and the system was abolished.

For some years no progress was made, although there was no cessation of effort on the part of the school management to press the claims of Art Education on the Government. In 1911 Dr. Seath published his report on "*Education for Industrial Purposes*," and in an extended review of the relation of Art and Technical Education he stated that in any system of industrial and technical training the claims of Art Education cannot be overlooked, and he recommended strongly the reorganization of the School of Art to form a special institution devoted solely to Art training in all branches of the fine arts, and especially for teachers of Art.

With the endorsement of the late Premier, Sir James Whitney, a bill which had been prepared by representatives of Educational Art, Industrial organizations, and the Directors of the School of Art, was introduced by the Minister of Education in 1912, incorporating the Ontario College of Art, carrying an annual grant of \$3,000.00 and free premises in the Normal School Building, which had been originally intended for Art Education.

This grant was later made \$5000.00, afterwards \$12000.00, and on moving into the new building in 1921 it was increased to \$25000.00.

This Act of 1912, by which the College of Art was established, provided for a council of eighteen representative members appointed by Art and Industrial bodies, who together elected five members-at-large. In 1918, when the Government decided to increase the grant, Dr. Cody, the Minister of Education, with the consent of the former council, introduced a bill in the Legislature amending the Act of incorporation, providing for the appointment by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council of a majority of the members on the council. Thus at the present time twelve members are appointed by the Government and eleven are representatives of Art and other organized bodies.

During the period of the war, the College maintained a steadily growing advance in the character of the work done, and many of the students entered upon war work of various kinds. There was some check to progress which otherwise would have been made, but there were notable gains made year by year

in the number of students. The number of students had increased from            in 1912 to            in 1920. At this time a class of returned men were being given courses, some of whom have since completed their art education in the College.

A highly important part of the work of the College from its establishment in 1912 has been the Courses for Teachers of Art in the Public and High Schools given annually for the Education Department of Ontario. This has brought the College into touch with the teachers and schools of the Province, and is a vital element in the scheme of art education for Ontario.

The charter of the College at its foundation in 1912 and as revised in 1919 stated the objects to be:

- (a) The training of students in the fine arts, including drawing, painting, design, modelling and sculpture, and in all branches of the applied arts in the more artistic trades and manufactures; and
- (b) The training of teachers in the fine and applied arts.

These are similar to the objects of the preceding Ontario School of Art, and perhaps the only essentially distinguished difference between the early school and the present College of Art is the development of the crafts in connection with design, and the training of teachers, together with a more systematic organization of the work into grades. These features have become more and more important in all modern art education the world over, and promise to place all art expression

in closer touch with the life of the people and with all forms of industrial life and manufactures. Applied Art might well be adopted as the short term to express our objective in art expression in all its phases.

Reference has been made to those who strove in the early years of the School of Art to maintain a high ideal and pass this along to their successors. One of the principal of these ideals has been the intimate connection established and maintained in the early days by the Ontario Society of Artists with their gallery and the School of Art in close association. When there was a prospect of a large Public Gallery, the Society was its first advocate, and the School of Art was one of the main objects to be included. The present situation and the way it is working out is the direct outcome of these ideals, and it is to the permanent credit of those who had the authority that the Art Gallery donated the site for the Ontario College of Art when it was found that funds would be provided for the building. The relation of the Art Gallery and the College of Art seems now to be permanently established and the two institutions are each developing in close association and with well prepared plans for future extension.

Art Education has been begging for a long time for its proper place in the scheme of Education as a whole, and is now only coming to its own. The efforts put forth in the past fifty years in Ontario to have due recognition of this side of education would make a long story itself. It was thought to be a great advance a few years ago when the Ontario College of Art was granted a very slight form of affiliation with the University of Toronto, but much remains yet to be done in that connection.

There is hope now that through making Art a subject for matriculation and eventually by creating a degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in the University that higher Art Education in Ontario may receive full recognition and go freely on its way with the development of the aesthetic side of our life.