

EVAN MACDONALD 1905-1972

Evan Macdonald, born in Guelph, was a well-known painter and illustrator in Ontario. Early in life, his passion for drawing and painting was evident, and his mother encouraged his artistic talent by teaching him to carve with soap, wax and wood. Before he was age ten, he announced that he was going to be an artist. He attended Guelph Collegiate-Vocational Institute between 1919 and 1923. There, he received support and encouragement from his art teachers, Fred Dixon and Helen Carscadden, who recognized his talent.

In the fall of 1923 he enrolled at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, and while there he etched, *Limekilns Near Milton*. It was later published in the GCVI 1930 yearbook, *Acta Nostra*. In the spring of 1925, Macdonald won the drawing prize scholarship, and after a further year of study in 1924-25, he went to England where he was enrolled in the Chelsea Polytechnic School to specialize in drawing, painting, and theatrical design. In March 1928, he was accepted into the Royal Academy School of Painting. There, he studied under Walter Russell and was specifically learning to be a professional portrait painter. Among the public figures he commemorated through formal portraiture were former GCVI principals Mr. F.A. Hamilton and Mr. P.G. Reid. These portraits hang outside the main office of GCVI. He returned to Canada in 1931, and worked as a commercial artist and illustrator in Toronto for eight years.

In August 1942, Macdonald enlisted in the army and was sent to the Point Grey Army Base in Vancouver as a camouflage artist. During his occasional weekend passes, he took trips along the coast on ferries and supply boats to paint the scenery. One of the paintings hanging in the GCVI library was created on one of those trips.

After his discharge from the army in 1945, Macdonald continued to paint landscapes, which became his passion. During the summers between 1955 and 1966, he and his family travelled across Ontario for annual holidays and he took every opportunity to paint the lush scenery. In addition, he painted many pieces of Guelph architecture that were being demolished at the time. Since then, he has been recognized as a recorder of history. Verne Harrison, Art Gallery of Ontario co-ordinator, believes that, “[Evan] is part of the whole history, not only culture but the physical history of Guelph.”

In the last eight years of his life, in spite of health issues, Macdonald still managed to practice his art, even while he was in the hospital. Evan Macdonald died on January 22, 1972 after living a memorable and fulfilling life of art. His legacy rests within art galleries throughout Ontario and with his two children, Flora and Bill Macdonald.

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