



# HOMER WATSON

Life & Work

by Brian Foss

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# BIOGRAPHY

Homer Ransford Watson (1855–1936) has been characterized as someone who, in the nineteenth century, first portrayed the surrounding landscape as specifically Canadian, rather than as a pastiche of European influences. Although Watson had almost no formal training, by his mid-twenties he was well known and admired by Canadian collectors and critics, his rural landscape paintings making him one of the central figures in Canadian art from the 1880s until the First World War. His art documents the centrality of the pioneer legacy to Ontario's sense of historical identity and crucially emphasizes the importance of environmentalist approaches to the landscape.



### EARLY YEARS AND ARTISTIC BEGINNINGS

Watson was born on January 14, 1855, in Doon, today a suburb of Kitchener but then a separate village on the Grand River in southern Ontario's Waterloo County. Doon had been founded just twenty-one years before his birth and when he was in his mid-teens had a population of about 150.<sup>1</sup> The second of five children of Ransford and Susan Mohr Watson, Homer was related through his mother to the Mennonite German settlers who had arrived in the area in the early nineteenth century. His paternal grandfather had emigrated from New York State soon thereafter. Throughout his life Watson remained conscious of being a descendant of pioneers.<sup>2</sup>

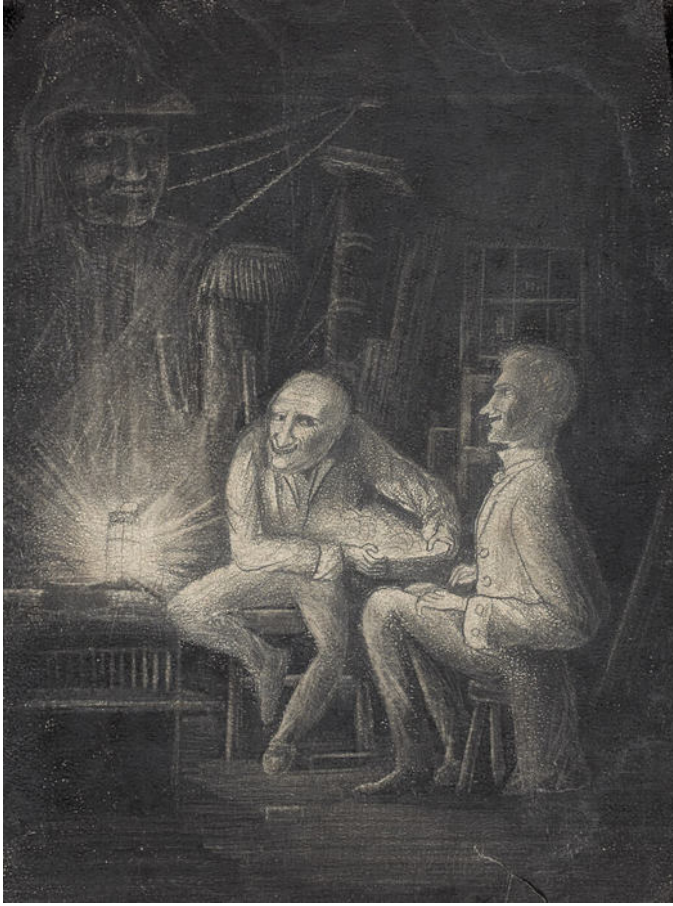


Homer Watson's birthplace, built c.1844 by his grandfather James Watson, one of the first settlers in the area. Photograph taken in 1866, photographer unknown.

When Watson's father died in 1861, he left a widow and four (soon to be five) young children, including six-year-old Homer. A short-lived attempt by an uncle to maintain the family sawmill and woollen mill came to naught, and the household was forced to rely largely on Susan Watson's work as a seamstress. In 1867 Homer's older brother, Jude, was killed while working at a local brickyard—an accident that twelve-year-old Homer witnessed. It is usually thought that Watson abandoned his formal education around this time, although this is not certain.<sup>3</sup> Taken together, the deaths of Ransford in 1861 and of Jude in 1867 were crucial to Homer's transition into an early maturity.

Watson's interest in drawing was supported by gifts from family members: a set of watercolours when he was eleven years old, and his first oil paints four years later. In addition, William Biggs, a schoolteacher in the neighbouring village of Breslau, was an amateur watercolourist who, according to the artist's first biographer, "gave Watson what assistance he could."<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, Watson's most formative childhood lessons consisted of emulating the etching and woodcut illustrations in the books and journals in his family's library. These included periodicals such as *Penny Magazine* (London) and probably *The Aldine* (New York) as well as at least one book illustrated by the nineteenth-century artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883).





LEFT: Homer Watson, *Quilp and Sampson Brass in the Old Curiosity Shop*, late 1860s to early 1870s, pen and black ink, dry brush, and graphite on wove paper, 27.3 x 20.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *The Swollen Creek*, c.1870, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 70 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

Watson's earliest competent work included drawings based on novels and poetry by Charles Dickens (*Quilp and Sampson Brass in the Old Curiosity Shop*, late 1860s to early 1870s), Lord Byron, and others, along with a few portraits and figure paintings such as *The Swollen Creek*, c.1870. By the end of his teens, however, he had all but abandoned these subjects. Watson had already begun to successfully submit art for display at local fairs before he visited Toronto for the first time in 1872. There he met and was encouraged by the landscape painter Thomas Mower Martin (1838-1934). Two years later he received an advance on his inheritance and used it to return to Toronto for several months, copying paintings at the city's Normal School (an institution that trained high school graduates to be teachers) and occupying workspace at the Notman-Fraser photographic studio. There he appears to have attracted the interest of Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899), vice-president of the recently formed Ontario Society of Artists and one of Canada's pre-eminent landscape painters.

#### NEW YORK TRAVEL AND EARLY FAME

Emboldened, Watson travelled in New York State from 1875 (possibly 1876) until late in 1877. Almost nothing is known about his time there, except that he worked in the Adirondack Mountains and along the Susquehanna, Mohawk, and Hudson rivers (see, for example, *Susquehanna Valley*, c.1877), and that he received limited instruction from an unnamed painter. Various sources have identified that painter as George Inness (1825-1894), one of the most ambitious, influential, and successful American landscape artists of the second



half of the nineteenth century, although in later life Watson stated that they had not in fact met.<sup>5</sup> However, Watson's resulting work suggests that he likely saw canvases by Inness and by the Hudson River School artists, especially as his itinerary covered territory that was closely associated with the latter group.



LEFT: George Inness, *An Adirondack Pastoral*, 1869, oil on canvas, 66 x 91.4 cm, Albany Institute of History and Art. Like Homer Watson, George Inness was influenced by the rich landscapes of the Hudson River School. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Susquehanna Valley*, c.1877, oil on canvas, 22.4 x 32.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The lush richness of Inness and of the Hudson River School is recalled in Watson's penchant for vivid atmospheric effects as well as in his predilection for the visceral experience of being immersed in the landscape. *On the Mohawk River*, 1878, for example, achieves these ends by incorporating a palpable atmosphere and by employing an evocative composition that moves from a relatively dark, detailed foreground to the refreshing airiness of a distant mountain cliff. His American sojourn clearly helped Watson develop his abilities as a landscape painter, but he longed for the southern Ontario scenery in which he had grown up and which was to remain a touchstone for his art throughout his career. After many months in New York, he returned to his beloved Doon to paint "with faith, ignorance and delight."<sup>6</sup>





Homer Watson, *On the Mohawk River*, 1878, oil on canvas, 64.8 x 86.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Watson quickly began to build a reputation. He was elected an associate draftsman/designer member of the Ontario Society of Artists (OSA) in April 1878 and first exhibited with the society the following month. The *Toronto Evening Telegram* praised his paintings for “the naturalness of the details, the careful finish, and the softness of the harmony of the colours.”<sup>7</sup> Watson changed his OSA membership status from draftsman/designer to painter soon thereafter, and contributed to the society’s December 1878 and May 1879 exhibitions. Press reaction to the newcomer was again favourable, with the *Toronto Globe* remarking that he was “very rapidly coming to the front in the estimation both of the public and his fellow-artists.”<sup>8</sup> It was an auspicious beginning, especially as some of the exhibited paintings were more than a square metre in size: impressively large for an untrained novice.

Striking though Watson's first appearances at the OSA were, a pivotal moment of his early career came in Ottawa in 1880 at the inaugural exhibition of the Canadian Academy of Arts (soon renamed the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, or RCA).

Watson's entry, *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880, was purchased for \$300 by the Marquis of Lorne, Canada's governor general, as a gift for Lorne's mother-in-law, Queen Victoria. The purchase made Watson's reputation, facilitating his election to associate membership in the academy in 1880 and promotion to full academician in

April 1882. Just two months after Lorne's purchase, the Ontario government acquired Watson's *On the Susquehanna*, date and location now unknown. The artist's career had been solidly launched.



LEFT: Notman & Sandham Studio, *Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Marquis of Lorne*, 1879, McCord Museum, Montreal. RIGHT: Homer Watson, c.1880, photographer unknown, Queen's University Archives, Kingston. One of the earliest known photographs of Watson.



The founding of the Canadian Academy in 1880, and the tremendous impact that the governor general's acquisition of *The Pioneer Mill* had in kick-starting Watson's career, testified to the deeply British nature of cultural life in Canada, especially English Canada, in the decades prior to the First World War. What little art training existed (through the academy, the Ontario Society of Artists, and the Art Association of Montreal) mirrored traditional European academic techniques, just as the structure and goals of the Canadian Academy largely paralleled those of Britain's Royal Academy of Arts. The late nineteenth century saw some emerging debate about distinctively Canadian themes in art, but the cultural infrastructures that developed alongside the country's growing economy tended overwhelmingly to be grounded in conservative European prototypes—hence the great importance for Watson's career of the governor general's purchase of *The Pioneer Mill* from the 1880 Canadian Academy exhibition.





LEFT: Homer Watson, *Roxanna Bechtel Watson*, probably 1880s, graphite and watercolour on wove paper, 20 x 17.1 cm, sketchbook page 7875.90, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Roxanna "Roxa" Watson with Mary Watson and Rex the dog, Doon, 1917, photographer unknown, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

On a practical level, Watson—buoyed artistically, financially, and socially by Lorne's largesse—was able to marry his long-time fiancée, Roxanna ("Roxa" or "Roxy") Bechtel, on January 1, 1881. Their only child, a son, died at birth in 1882, but twenty-five years later, in 1907, they adopted an orphan named Mary. The young couple lived with Watson's mother and his sister, Phoebe, for a few months before moving into the upper part of a house built by Adam Ferrie, one of the most important—and the most economically successful—of Doon's founders. Watson was able to buy the entire house the following year and, except for occasional trips abroad, would live there for the rest of his long life. (The building later became the home of the Doon School of Fine Arts, 1948–66, and exists today as a museum: Homer Watson House & Gallery.) The funds for the purchase came from two more sales to the Marquis of Lorne: large landscapes from the RCA's second (1881) exhibition. Lorne gifted one painting, *The Last of the Drouth* (*The Last Day of the Drought*), 1881, again to Queen Victoria, and retained the other, *April Day*, c.1881, for himself. Watson remained friendly with Lorne for years to come. The publicity he gained from this vice-regal patronage remained a cornerstone of his reputation throughout his career.





Homer Watson, *The Last of the Drouth (The Last Day of the Drought)*, 1881, oil on canvas, 92.1 x 138.5 cm, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle, Berkshire.

### OSCAR WILDE AND "THE CANADIAN CONSTABLE"

Another public figure made a major impact on Homer Watson's career: Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). In early 1882, the twenty-seven-year-old Wilde (he had been born three months before Watson) undertook what developed into a year-long lecture tour of the United States and Canada. He addressed audiences on the subjects of Aestheticism and the importance of beauty in daily life. Wilde had yet to establish a reputation as an author, and his mannerisms and exotic clothing provoked ridicule, but the tour was a commercial success. By the time he arrived in Toronto in the spring of 1885 he was a celebrity.

Wilde did more than lecture; he also promoted North American artists and writers in whom he became interested during his tour.<sup>9</sup> On May 25, while viewing the Ontario Society of Artists annual exhibition, he was struck by Watson's painting *Flitting Shadows*, c.1881–82. (No description of *Flitting Shadows* survives, but it may have corresponded to *On the River at Doon*, 1885, in theme, atmosphere, and mood.) Drawing parallels with European landscape artists, Wilde—speaking to newspaper reporters while he stood in front of the painting—described Watson as "the Canadian Constable," referring to the English painter John Constable (1776–1837), with whose work Watson's does have similarities. Wilde repeated his praise during a lecture at Toronto's Grand Opera House that evening. For the rest of his career Watson would bear the Constable epithet,



Napoleon Sarony, *Oscar Wilde*, 1882, albumen panel card, 30.5 x 18.4 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London.



along with the subsequent Wilde quip that he was “Barbizon without ever having seen Barbizon,” referring to the French artists who had worked in and around the village of that name. Constable and the Barbizon painters were highly popular with North American and European audiences, and Wilde’s comments gave Watson’s career another boost. The two men did not meet in person until Watson’s first sojourn in Britain a few years later. In the meantime, however, spurred by his admiration of *Flitting Shadows*, Wilde commissioned Watson to make paintings for himself and for two American acquaintances.<sup>10</sup>

In later life Watson often resented Wilde’s comparisons because—as he frequently insisted—it was not until his first trip to Europe, at the end of the 1880s, that he actually saw paintings by Constable and the Barbizon artists. There was, however, justice in Wilde’s remarks. In fact, even before his visit to the OSA exhibition, the *Toronto Mail* had described *Flitting Shadows* as recalling Constable’s landscapes.<sup>11</sup>



Homer Watson, *On the River at Doon*, 1885, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



**EUROPE, 1887–90**

In 1886 five Watson paintings were included in the massive Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, which showcased a vast array of objects from across the British Empire. The exhibition included a Watson loaned by the Marquis of Lorne, *River Torrent*, early 1880s, and *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, owned by the Montreal banker George Hague. Watson won a bronze medal in this display, which marked his first inclusion in an exhibition outside Canada. That recognition may well have precipitated his decision to travel to Britain in the summer of 1887.



Canadian section at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886. Image published in *The Illustrated London News* (May 1886).

Watson and Roxa originally intended to remain there for about a year; however, they delayed their return to give Watson time to solidify a European reputation. The Toronto art dealer John Payne urged him not to return to Canada until he was known abroad because, Payne logically argued, North American buyers were interested only in artists who had reputations in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The Watsons followed Payne's advice and stayed in Britain for three years, until the summer of 1890, although their first months there were discouraging. "I do not know whether it did me any good," Watson wrote later. "But I had a feast of study into the old masters which knocked me out as it were . . . and showed me I did not know anything. While the feeling lasted I could not do any good work."<sup>13</sup>

Watson's frustration was exacerbated by the difficulty of gaining a toehold in British galleries and exhibitions. In search of success, he and Roxa settled with relatives in Maidenhead. From there they moved to London, which, although Roxa admitted that her husband "got a certain amount of good out of it," she found to be an "abominable" city: "so very dirty and foggy that [Homer] got some of it into his work."<sup>14</sup> Beginning in the autumn of 1889, in attempts to achieve a balance between affordability, the familiarity of rural life (always important to Watson), and access to art and exhibitions, the couple travelled to Scotland, setting up residence on the southeast coast in the village of Pittenweem. In Scotland they became friendly with painter James Kerr-Lawson (1862–1939), whom they had first met in Canada, and Caterina Muir (1860–1952), whose family was friendly with Kerr-Lawson. The Watsons also took advantage of their time in the U.K. to make two short trips to Paris.





LEFT: Homer Watson, *Landscape, Scotland*, 1888, oil on canvas, 86.5 x 122.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: George Clausen, *Winter Work*, 1883-84, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 92.1 cm, Tate, London.

After a shaky beginning in Britain, Watson's prospects began to improve. He finally met Wilde in person and, more important, became friendly with a number of artists, including James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), E.J. Gregory (1850-1909), and George Clausen (1852-1944). Four decades later, when asked by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa to describe his training, Watson answered that he was "[s]elf taught but for some months was associated with Clausen & Gregory in England."<sup>15</sup> Clausen, whose art and personality Watson admired, was a highly regarded portrayer of rural life and landscapes (as in *Winter Work*, 1883-84).

Clausen was also sufficiently impressed by Watson's black and white drawings that he convinced him to try translating his draftsmanship into etching. The results were prints of *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880, and five smaller landscapes, the only etchings Watson ever made. *The Pioneer Mill* etching as printed by Watson exists in three states (versions), with the third apparently produced in an edition of fifty. Even with that small total, however, sales in Toronto were disappointing, nor is there any record of copies having been sent to Montreal or elsewhere for sale. The reasons for this failure were multiple, and included the competitive availability of cheap prints imported from abroad, John Payne's inexperience as a print dealer, and a general lack of Canadian interest in supporting the international etching revival.<sup>16</sup>



Homer Watson, *Landscape*, 1889, etching in brown on heavy buff wove paper, 19 x 17.7 cm, plate: 9.8 x 15.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Watson's career breakthrough in Britain finally came in the spring of 1889, the year before he printed *The Pioneer Mill*. In that year he had work admitted to two important annual summer shows. In March *The Mill in the Ravine, 1889*,<sup>17</sup> was accepted at the recently established and decidedly upscale New Gallery in London. Roxa, with democratic disdain, described the New Gallery as having a clientele of "Lords, Dukes, Duchesses, Countesses and all the other swells that this country is rotten with."<sup>18</sup> *The Mill in the Ravine* (location unknown, but with similarities to the surviving *A Hillside Gorge, 1889*) was bought on the private view day by Alexander Young, a leading collector of Barbizon painting.<sup>19</sup> So began Watson's ongoing relationship with the New Gallery, where he exhibited again in 1890, 1895, 1897, and 1901.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1889, Watson's *The Village by the Sea, 1887-89*, was approved by the jury for the Royal Academy of Arts summer exhibition in London. Roxa had been doubtful. "There are generally about seven thousand pictures sent in," she wrote to her husband's sister and mother, "and only about two thousand hung." She also underestimated her husband's chances because she feared that his efforts to incorporate new elements into his work had "carried the gray business to extremes as you know he is likely to do when he gets a new idea."<sup>20</sup> The painting was not only accepted for exhibition but given a good position in the dense floor-to-ceiling hanging.<sup>21</sup>



Homer Watson, *A Hillside Gorge, 1889*, oil on canvas, 45.5 x 61 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

By 1890, homesick for more familiar landscapes, Watson was ready to return to Doon. "The whole of the old world is permeated with [art]," he wrote. "There is no possibility scarcely of doing anything new. . . . I have come to the conclusion that I would sooner paint at home."<sup>22</sup>

### MARKET SUCCESS

It is impossible to confirm biographers' claims about the number and dates of Watson's exhibitions during his seven trips to Britain in 1887-90, 1891, 1897, 1898-99, 1901, 1902, and 1912. However, sufficient information survives to verify his involvement in events organized by the New English Art Club (his entrée there seems to have been thanks to Oscar Wilde),<sup>23</sup> the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, the Royal Society of British Artists, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, and miscellaneous other groups and events in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Bristol, Liverpool, and elsewhere. Thanks to the intercession of the Marquis of Lorne, Watson also had work seen at the prestigious Goupil Gallery in London in 1888, a relationship that continued into the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> He moreover held a solo showing of thirty paintings at London's Dowdeswell Gallery in 1899, organized, it appears, at the behest of the British critic David Croal Thomson and of the Montrealer James Ross, Watson's most supportive Canadian patron. Finally, by 1901 Watson had arranged for E.J. van Wisselingh of the Dutch Gallery to handle his work in London, although it is unclear how long that relationship lasted.



Homer Watson, *Sunlit Village*, 1884, oil on canvas, 26.7 x 34.3 cm, private collection.

The fit between these two men was a natural one. Van Wisselingh specialized in Barbizon art as well as in the Hague School painters, whose art was indebted to that of their Barbizon counterparts. Watson esteemed van Wisselingh precisely because "[h]e is of the order that will not have about him anything he is not in sympathy with [and] so he is far removed from being a mere trader."<sup>25</sup> It may well have been through van Wisselingh, who shared his London business with Daniel Cottier, that Watson struck a professional relationship with Cottier's New York gallery, where he had shows in 1899 and 1906.



Also in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Watson participated in the Canadian sections of such extravaganzas as the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893), the Pan-American Exposition (Buffalo, 1901), the Glasgow International Exposition (1901), and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis, 1904), winning a bronze medal in St. Louis, a silver in Buffalo, and a gold in Chicago.

But Watson's career was above all in Canada. The principal subjects of his art never ceased to be the landscapes in and around Doon, although he occasionally painted in Nova Scotia (he had first done so in 1882, as his patron James Ross had a property and considerable investments on Cape Breton Island), on Île d'Orléans in Quebec (*Down in the Laurentides*, 1882; *Sunlit Village*, 1884) with Horatio Walker (1858-1938), as well as elsewhere in Canada and the United States. In 1893 he built a painting studio extension onto his house, and in 1906 added a gallery to which for the next thirty years he welcomed potential buyers.



Homer Watson, *Down in the Laurentides*, 1882, oil on canvas, 65.8 x 107 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Watson, a committed environmentalist, was the key organizer and president of the Waterloo County Grand River Park Limited, which saved Cressman's Woods (today, Homer Watson Park) near the artist's home. His environmental interests paralleled his certainty that artists who lacked a sense of living connection to the landscapes around them risked falling back on impersonal formulas. He explored this belief in a series of half-autobiographical and half-fictional drafts for manuscripts that elucidated his philosophy of landscape painting but that went unpublished until well after his death.

Watson's conviction about the importance of strong relationships between artists and landscape also coalesced with the Barbizon and Hague School sympathies of his main audience. In Montreal, beginning in the 1880s, Charles Porteous, an important collector, patron, and promoter, relied on those sympathies when he organized displays of Watson's art. As a result, Montreal—home to millionaires such as businessman James Ross, banker and financier R.B. Angus (who acquired, among other things, *Flitting Shadows*, c.1881-82, the painting so admired by Oscar Wilde), railway magnates Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona) and William Van Horne, and businessman and future senator George Drummond—was Watson's most lucrative market. When the influential *Art Journal* (London) published a four-page article on Watson in 1899, five of the seven reproductions were of paintings owned by Montreal collectors.<sup>26</sup>

Elsewhere, the market tended to be less wealthy. While Watson was in Europe from 1887 to 1890 his Toronto affairs were handled by two dealers, James Spooner and (more satisfactorily) John Payne, with Payne paying Watson a monthly allowance of fifty dollars, beginning in May 1888. The Watsons badly needed that money. However, both Spooner and Payne frequently lamented their Toronto business difficulties. "Nothing doing in art matters," moaned Spooner to Watson in 1885,<sup>27</sup> and three years later Payne informed the artist that "the people here are not buying, and do not appreciate anything that is not cheap."<sup>28</sup> Payne in particular was able to sell to such prominent Torontonians as the businessman Edmund (E.B.) Osler, but more often he spent his time advising Watson to paint smaller, less expensive landscapes, and recommended changes in colour, composition, detail, and theme to make the paintings more saleable. Like other artists, Watson saw his success hampered by Canada's—and especially Toronto's—paucity of collectors, a reality repeatedly bemoaned by John Payne. Moreover, the Art Museum of Toronto (today the Art Gallery of Ontario) was not founded until 1900, and for many years after that date relied heavily on donations of artworks. Similarly, although the Art Association of Montreal (today the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) acquired Watson's impressive early canvas *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, in 1887, it was as a gift rather than a purchase.



Homer Watson with Rex the dog in Cressman's Woods, 1925, photographer unknown, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.





Homer Watson, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, oil on canvas, 85.7 x 118.3 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

### ELDER STATESMAN

In 1907 Watson agreed to become the first president of the Canadian Art Club (CAC), a private exhibiting society founded in that year and dedicated to promoting contemporary Canadian art. Although not temperamentally inclined toward administration, Watson shared the other members' annoyance that too many Canadian collectors of recent European painting and sculpture were unwilling to invest in Canadian art and artists. In March 1907, for example, he complained to another CAC member, Edmund Morris (1871–1913), that Frank Heaton, the owner of Montreal's important W. Scott & Sons gallery, had "[h]is [money] in Dutch stuff and he will not look at our things. . . . We must show that our things are so much better than most of it that people will tire of being gulled."<sup>29</sup> Watson was referring to paintings such as *The Cowherd*, c.1879, by Anton Mauve (1838–1888). Mauve's subject matter and quiet tonality were typical of the extremely popular work of the Hague School artists.



Watson remained the club's president until 1913 and participated generously in all nine of its exhibitions. In 1907 he—like the other founding members of the CAC—had resigned from the Ontario Society of Artists (OSA), an organization the club saw as mounting uninspired annual exhibitions from which the Ontario government purchased work for the provincial art collection. Upon the dissolution of the CAC in 1915, however, Watson was delighted to learn that his OSA membership had been reinstated by a unanimous vote. "The club we formed did its work according to its lights, and died a natural death having done this," he wrote to the OSA's president. "In the meantime the Society has gone ahead with strength[,] giving way to progressive ideas as these came forward, the product of an earnest striving for larger ways of looking at and studying the truth of nature."<sup>30</sup>



Anton Mauve, *The Cowherd*, c.1879, oil on canvas, 22.9 x 38.1 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In 1918 Watson was elected president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA), where he replaced the ailing William Brymner (1855–1925). He had served as the RCA's vice-president since November 1914, and occupied the presidency until his growing deafness drove him to resign from the job in 1922. His tenure coincided with escalating tension between several of the more conservative members of the RCA and Eric Brown (1877–1939), director of the National Gallery of Canada. To the anger of several academicians and associate members, Brown actively supported modernist artists in general and, in particular, the members of what in 1920 became the Group of Seven: artists toward whose work Watson was usually ambivalent.

Things exploded soon after Watson left office. The National Gallery assumed responsibility for selecting jury members for the Canadian section of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park in London. In the past the task of organizing international exhibitions of Canadian art had fallen to the RCA, and the academy was furious about the change. In 1923 its executive and many of its other members decided to boycott the 1924 exhibition. The decision was announced in a letter published in newspapers, above the signatures of thirty-one members, including recently



LEFT: The Canadian Art section at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley Park, London, England, 1924, photographer unknown, National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives, Ottawa. RIGHT: Members of the Canadian Art Club, c.1907, photographer unknown, Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. From left: James Wilson Morrice, Edmund Morris, Homer Watson, Newton MacTavish, Curtis Williamson.



retired president Homer Watson.<sup>31</sup> He insisted, however, that he had not signed. Watson was included in the 1924 Wembley display and its successor the following year, showing *Nut Gatherers in the Forest*, 1900, in 1924 and *Flamboro Woodland* (date and location unknown) in 1925. He noted that although he felt that the artists most favoured by the National Gallery's jury tended to have only "tolerant contempt" for their usually less modernist elders, he doubted that the grievance expressed in the letter would stand up to investigation.<sup>32</sup>

The 1924 Wembley exhibition would become a defining event in Canadian art history, with British critics reserving most of their praise for the work of the modernists: Tom Thomson (1877–1917) and members of the Group of Seven, and Montreal artists such as Randolph Hewton (1888–1960), Mabel May (1877–1971), Kathleen Morris (1893–1986), and other members of the Beaver Hall Group. Watson recognized the exhibition's importance: "At any time now we of the old guard can drop out and never [be] missed," he lamented in a letter to Eric Brown.<sup>33</sup> By the mid-1920s the RCA was dominated by senior artists who continued to work in outdated nineteenth-century aesthetics and who spluttered with rage at what they took to be the incompetence of younger, avowedly modernist artists. From 1926 to 1932 the RCA and the National Gallery descended into ever more acrimonious bickering that threw the academy into a weakened position. It never recovered its former status as an exponent of progressive art in Canada.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Nut Gatherers in the Forest*, 1900, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 86.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Randolph Hewton, *Baie-Saint-Paul*, c.1927, oil on canvas, 43.5 x 48.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.

This must have been deeply saddening for Watson. Even so, he had accomplished good work as president, implementing a new constitution and putting the RCA on more stable financial footing after cutbacks during the First World War. As an artist, too, he remained active and admired, albeit by a smaller audience than he had enjoyed prior to the war. Just four years before the 1924 Wembley exhibition, where British critics lauded Canadian

modernists as the future of Canadian art, The Jenkins Art Gallery in Toronto held a hearteningly successful show and sale of Watson's work, paintings from the previous approximately thirteen years that, until then, Watson had reserved in his private Doon gallery. During that time he had moved from landscapes characterized by dark, chromatically restricted hues to views in which lighter but often puzzling reddish tonalities were increasingly present. Some one hundred paintings were shown at The Jenkins Art Gallery, and half of them found purchasers.

### LAST YEARS AND TRAVEL WEST

Watson's election to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA) presidency at the beginning of April 1918 had been a flattering testament to his stature as a senior artist who managed to stay on good terms with almost everyone. It was also an acknowledgement of his unwavering commitment to the academy; he contributed to all but two of its fifty-seven annual exhibitions from 1880 until the year of his death.

The election could not, however, console Watson following the death of his wife four months before, in January 1918. He had never been religious, but he had long-standing pantheistic beliefs about connections between nature and humanity: beliefs that underpinned his art from that time onward. As early as 1879, he had been sufficiently intrigued by ideas about the afterlife and the occult that he made the first of what appear to have been several trips from Doon to the hamlet of Lily Dale in southwestern New York State, where visitors interested in exploring spiritualism in a natural setting gathered at the recently incorporated Cassadaga Lake Free Association.



Homer Watson, *River Landscape*, 1882, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 107.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Following Roxa's death, he turned to the Bible for assurance that his wife's spiritual life continued after the death of her body. At this time he also became fascinated by seances and spirit photography, which he pursued through the Ontario Society of Psychic Research in Kitchener. Despite his newfound interest in the Bible, however, Watson's spiritualist longings continued to be expressed through his search for suggestions of the mystical within the natural environment. This interest was manifested in the intense subjectivity of his late landscape paintings, in which he increasingly sacrificed optical veracity and detail to unnatural colour and heavy brushwork. Strict faithfulness to his motifs had never been crucial to Watson. Even in his early canvases he had combined multiple on-site sketches into compositions in which visual veracity was adjusted and compromised for the sake of order, liveliness, and mood. Much of *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880, for example, is based on a Doon landscape, but the



image also includes a line of vertical cliffs that were not part of the actual locale. In his late landscapes, however, Watson increased the image's subjective weight, often by favouring scenes of dusk and darkness: transitional and mysterious times of day. All these elements came together in, for example, such powerfully moody and personal landscapes as *Moonlit Stream* and *Evening Moonrise*, both 1933.

By 1921, sustained by his sister's emotional support and housekeeping, Watson was beginning to recover from his grief and turning his attention back to making art. In that year he visited the Rocky Mountains for the first time. He made the trip at least twice more, in 1929 and 1933, during those years travelling as far as the Pacific coast. In 1919 F.M. Bell-Smith (1846–1923) had offered incitement for such a trip. "Have you ever been through the Rockies?" he asked Watson. "I would be much interested to see what you could fish out of those impossible subjects. I find it very difficult to get above facts. The facts are terribly assertive."<sup>34</sup> The subject seemed an unlikely one for an artist dedicated to the local landscapes of the Grand River, with their familiar human history. But the mountains—in *Near Twilight, B.C.*, c.1934, for example—proved highly attractive to Watson despite his general advice to artists to avoid stupendous scenery in which they would feel dominated and irrelevant.<sup>35</sup>



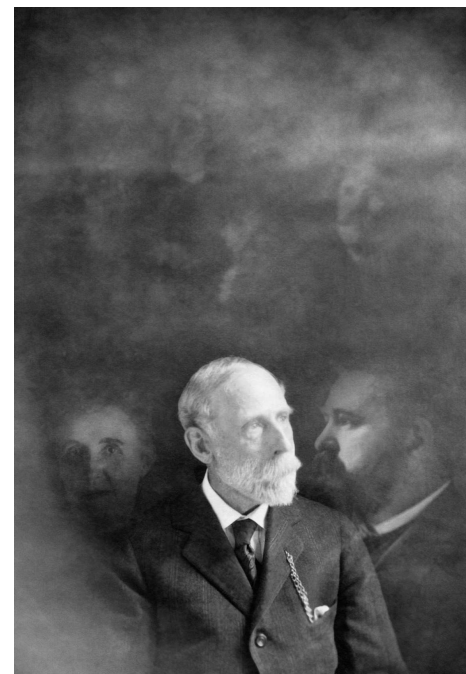
Homer Watson, *Near Twilight, B.C.*, c.1934, oil on Masonite, 86 x 112 cm, Art Gallery of Windsor.

Bolstered by his 1921 trip west, weary of the demands of arts administration, and afflicted with intensifying deafness, Watson embarked on the final years of his career. The acquisition of his first automobile in 1923 enabled Watson to carry his painting equipment with him on far-ranging painting trips. These were, however, difficult years. Beginning in 1927, several heart attacks progressively limited his ability to work. In especially poor health from 1929 onward, he wrote in 1933 that his "little grinding mill clatters to pieces with my little strains."<sup>36</sup> Health problems were compounded by financial disaster when the collapse of the stock market in October 1929 devastated the stocks and bonds in which Watson had invested his considerable earnings. He eventually saw no option but to transfer title of his current and future paintings to the Waterloo Trust and Savings Company as collateral for a monthly allowance. At the time of his death, the company possessed 460 of his pictures.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time as his savings were almost entirely wiped out, Watson experienced a substantial decline in demand for his paintings. The Depression lingered well into the 1930s, severely hindering the purchasing power of many of Watson's previous customers. Plus, most of his wealthiest patrons had died before the Depression even occurred.

In any case, by the 1920s Watson was out of step with contemporary developments in art. The modernist Group of Seven in Toronto and the Beaver Hall Group in Montreal were both founded in 1920, and the Group of Seven in particular mounted an effective campaign to establish its own brand of modernism at the heart of Canadian art. Watson recognized the changing tastes and unsuccessfully attempted to discourage a 1930 solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Sales from the exhibition were modest at best. He apparently believed that he was making a good attempt to update his style by adopting a colour scheme dominated by shades of pink and purple, employing substantial impasto, and—thanks to his automobile—shifting to *plein air* painting and very little studio work. The results, unfortunately, attracted few converts to Watson's art and alienated many of his erstwhile supporters.

The RCA reviewed Watson's grave financial situation at its council meeting on May 11, 1936. His old friend Wyly Grier (1862-1957) followed up by writing to Watson's sister, assuring her that her brother "need never fear destitution. The Academy has available bonds which have been legally declared available for helping members in difficulty and love for Homer will do the rest."<sup>38</sup> But it was too late. Watson, whose acute deafness and heart problems had transformed him into "the hermit of Doon,"<sup>39</sup> died in his native village on May 30. He was eighty-one years old. An honorary Doctor of Laws degree that the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) had intended to bestow upon him in person was instead awarded posthumously. The prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who as a boy had met Watson in 1882, and who admired the artist and shared his interest in the occult, devoted a paragraph in his diary to the death. Watson, he concluded, was "one of the noblest souls I have ever known. A man I really and truly loved, a great gentleman & a great artist."<sup>40</sup>



Homer Watson with spirits of the dead (faked photograph), 1930, photographer unknown. This portrait was perhaps made during one of Watson's visits to the Cassadaga Lake Free Association, Lily Dale, New York.





Homer Watson in the new gallery addition to his home, Doon, 1906, photographer unknown, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.





Homer Watson was above all a painter of rural landscapes, and was especially devoted to settings that he knew intimately. Landscapes were biographical manifestos and philosophical statements, an opportunity to explore nature's inner life, power, and meaning, but also to probe the delicate relationship of respect that he believed human beings should establish with the natural world. Those convictions were at the core of all his work, even while the aesthetics that informed his art changed substantially over the course of his career.



## THE DEATH OF ELAINE 1877



Homer Watson, *The Death of Elaine*, 1877

Oil on canvas, 78.1 x 106.7 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

*The Death of Elaine* is one of Watson's earliest large oils. It epitomizes his youthful interest in romantic, literary themes prior to his decision to devote all his energy to landscape painting. The story is from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's popular *Idylls of the King*, a collection of twelve poems (1859–85) that recount the lives of King Arthur and his knights and that were themselves derived from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Tennyson describes how the knight Lancelot is wounded in a tournament in which he is wearing the token of his host's smitten daughter, Elaine. He is nursed back to health by Elaine but, being in love with Queen Guinevere, he is unable to reciprocate Elaine's declaration of love. Soon after his departure she dies of a broken heart.

Watson's painting shows Elaine's body being carried down the Thames to Arthur's castle, Camelot. She holds a letter that will reveal to Lancelot the consequences of his indifference toward her. The sentiment of the subject (Elaine's chastity and her tragic death perfectly embodied Victorian values), the looming castle, and the clouds that partly obscure the rising moon all drench the painting in established symbols of Romantic excess.

It is widely agreed that Watson taught himself to draw by imitating engravings, etchings, and woodcuts in the illustrated books and journals in his family's library. Although it had long been accepted that the library included at least one book illustrated by the prolific nineteenth-century artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883), it was not until 1976 that a University of Toronto student noted the similarities between *The Death of Elaine* and Doré's engraving titled *The Dead Steer'd by the Dumb*.<sup>1</sup> The Doré image was the frontispiece of an edition of *Elaine* published in London in 1867, ten years before Watson produced his painting. There are several differences between Doré's illustration and Watson's painting, most notably: Watson's reversal of the composition, the modified angle from which we view the scene, the slightly altered architecture of Camelot, the oarsman's complicated headgear, and the decoration of the boat. The similarities between the two images are, however, too numerous and compelling to be coincidental.



Gustave Doré, *The Dead Steer'd by the Dumb*, steel engraving by James H. Baker. Published in Alfred Tennyson, *Elaine* (London: Moxon, 1867), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



## A COMING STORM IN THE ADIRONDACKS 1879



Homer Watson, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879

Oil on canvas, 85.7 x 118.3 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

*A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks* is one of the first major statements in Watson's lifelong commitment to portraying nature's power and drama. The painting contains a wealth of detail—steep cliffs, angry clouds, blasted trees, and dozens of rocks—that Watson controls by subordinating them to an omnipresent, brooding atmosphere. As in Watson's other oils from the late 1870s and early 1880s, draftsmanship informs all the objects—a trait that would be increasingly replaced by richer brush strokes as the 1880s progressed.

Watson returned home to Doon in 1877 after an extended tour of New York State, where he had painted various small landscapes, such as *Susquehanna Valley*, c.1877, that carried traces of the work of the Hudson River School of landscape painters. He later recalled of those months: "I got so impatient to rush back home and use all this knowledge that I could not stay . . . any longer."<sup>1</sup> Although he was eager to paint the familiar landscapes of Doon, Watson also took time to transfer some of his American memories onto canvas. Of these, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks* is a remarkably large and consummate painting for the young and mostly self-taught artist.

The Hudson River School's work was characterized by both an analytical precision of observation and a romanticism that could sometimes erupt into the kinds of violent effects seen in, for example, Thomas Cole's *Tornado in an American Forest*, 1831. Like Cole, Watson presents a tempestuous foreground bordered on both sides by trees and backed by a sky filled with dark, ominous clouds: a dramatic atmosphere that was probably also indebted to the work of the most prominent American landscape painter of the day, George Inness (1825-1894). Watson is highly convincing in his depiction of weather effects in *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*. However, he was less assured in painting animals, something that is evident in the slightly awkward bear in the left foreground (and something that was occasionally noted by critics and collectors).<sup>2</sup>

Overall, however, the canvas is the most impressive of Watson's American views. It was one of four Watsons shown in the 1879 annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, where a *Toronto Globe* reporter—in one of the artist's earliest favourable newspaper reviews—praised its striking appearance. "The subject is well chosen," the critic concluded, "and the treatment bold and powerful."<sup>3</sup> When *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks* was seen a year later at the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal (AAM; now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), newspapers commented on the apparent gap between Watson's lack of formal training and the clear sophistication of the canvas. The *Montreal Gazette's* observation was typical, commending the artist as a "genius comparatively unaided by culture."<sup>4</sup> The Montreal banker and art collector George Hague evidently agreed, because he purchased *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks* out of the exhibition. Seven years later he donated it to the AAM.



Thomas Cole, *Tornado in an American Forest*, 1831, oil on canvas, 117.8 x 164.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Collection, Washington, D.C.



## THE PIONEER MILL 1880



Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880  
Oil on canvas, 86 x 127.8 cm  
Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle, Berkshire

No painting was more important for Watson's career than *The Pioneer Mill*. This large canvas shows a small, dilapidated, and obviously non-functioning mill nestled within a romantic landscape of sheer cliffs and encroaching trees, the shapes and details of every object conveyed by the careful draftsmanship that characterizes Watson's early artworks. Its purchase in 1880 by Canada's governor general, the Marquis of Lorne, as a gift for Queen Victoria, remains the best-known story about Watson's journey from obscurity to international renown.

Watson's later recollections of the occasion were somewhat exaggerated. There was never, for example, a "flaming" headline in the *Toronto Globe* that read, "Country boy paints picture bought by Princess Louise" (the queen's daughter and Lorne's wife) as Watson had written.<sup>1</sup> Still, the purchase led to an ongoing relationship with Lorne, who bought subsequent work from Watson and who also used his connections to further the artist's career in Britain beginning in the second half of the 1870s. Among other things, in 1889 Lorne gave Watson access to the room in which the painting hung in Windsor Castle so that he could prepare an etching based on it.

*The Pioneer Mill*—both oil and etching—was very much of its time and place. Late nineteenth-century Ontario was fascinated with its recent history, and especially with the hardiness and independence that were widely associated with pioneers. The province's rampant industrialization during the decades around 1880 led to waves of regret about the decline of quaint water-wheel mills, symbols of a supposedly simpler but disappearing society. This theme recurs frequently in Watson's work, including in a polished drawing that he significantly titled *Life and Thought Hath Fled Away*, c.1865–69. A similar state of neglect defines *The Pioneer Mill*: the building's roof is damaged, trees are impinging, and the millrace (the current of water that turns the millwheel) largely bypasses the wheel.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, 1890, etching on paper, 33.4 x 44.5 cm, plate: 30.2 x 44.5 cm. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Life and Thought Hath Fled Away*, c.1865–69, graphite, black ink, and wash on wove paper, 17.8 x 23.4 cm, sketchbook page 7875.96, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

For Watson, all this was personal. The building in *The Pioneer Mill* recalls the sawmill that Watson's paternal grandfather had built in Doon. It was not, however, intended as an accurate representation of the mill and its surroundings. For example, the looming cliff adds a romantic touch that likely derives from the river valleys that Watson had seen a few months earlier during his travels in New York State. Watson was well aware that the downfall of his grandfather's mill (symbolized especially by the image's dead tree) was due to faceless industrialization and individual human greed. In a lengthy unpublished essay he moralized on how his grandfather's mill, by relentlessly devouring trees, created a wasteland that ultimately spelled the mill's collapse.<sup>2</sup> For Watson, *The Pioneer Mill* was as much a warning about human-engendered environmental degradation as it was a hymn to the pioneers of the Doon area.



## NEAR THE CLOSE OF A STORMY DAY 1884



Homer Watson, *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884  
 Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 142.6 cm  
 Winnipeg Art Gallery

*Near the Close of a Stormy Day* is a splendidly accomplished example of Watson's ability to paint the mood-inducing and pictorially unifying atmospheric effects that root his landscapes in the lived experience of familiar locales—a quality that brought the artist critical and popular success during much of his long career. At the same time, the painting moves away from the comparatively histrionic effects of *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, not least by transposing the setting from an awe-inspiring wilderness, complete with a bear, to a more human-scaled landscape that features, in the aftermath of a violent storm, the reassuring presence of farm animals.



LEFT: George Inness, *The Rainbow*, c.1878-79, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 114.3 cm, Indianapolis Museum of Art. RIGHT: Narcisse Díaz de la Peña, *The Storm*, 1872, oil on panel, 58.7 x 85.7 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



Like *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks* five years earlier, *Near the Close of a Stormy Day* recalls the romantic Hudson River School landscapes that Watson surely saw during his time in New York in the late 1880s. More particularly, however, its juxtaposition of a tumultuous sky and a human-scaled landscape, and its concomitant poeticizing of the landscape as if it were a metaphor for a higher meaning, suggests the influence of George Inness (1825–1894). It is unlikely that the two artists actually met, although Watson may well have seen Inness's work while in New York. In any case, Inness paintings, such as *The Rainbow*, c.1878–79, feature compositional arrangements and an emphasis on striking atmospheric effects that prefigure Watson's *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, even though the moods evoked in the two paintings are quite different.

For most viewers and critics, however, *Near the Close of a Stormy Day* appears to have been understood less in terms of contemporary American painting than of the art of the Barbizon painters who worked in France during the four decades around mid-century. Certainly those painters' presentations of familiar landscapes in poetic but unsentimentalized terms—as in *The Storm*, 1872, by Narcisse Díaz de la Peña (1807–1876)—had a strong following in North America. In Canada, a Barbizon sensibility was pursued by artists as diverse as Wyatt Eaton (1849–1896), William Brymner (1855–1925), and Horatio Walker (1858–1938), and was much admired by prominent collectors. Indeed, when Watson exhibited *Near the Close of a Stormy Day* in the 1884 Royal Canadian Academy of Arts exhibition, newspaper critics signalled their approval in phrases akin to those usually employed to praise Barbizon aesthetics. The columnist from Toronto's *The Week*, for example, described it as a “capital [specimen] of his style, strong, truthful, and with good atmospheric effects.”<sup>1</sup> It was therefore unsurprising that the painting quickly found a purchaser: the businessman, politician, and philanthropist Edmund (E.B.) Osler, one of Watson's most munificent and frequent Toronto patrons.



## STUDIO FRIEZE 1893–94



Homer Watson, studio frieze (detail), 1893–94

Oil on plaster wall, 48 x 5,000 cm (original studio) and 40 x 6,814 cm (studio addition)

Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener

Soon after their marriage in 1881, Homer and Roxa Watson rented the upper part of the solidly built house of one of Doon's founders, Adam Ferrie. Watson transformed one of the rooms into a painting studio. The couple later bought the property in its entirety and lived in it for the rest of their lives. By 1893 Watson's career was in full bloom, and he took advantage of his comfortable income to build a long-needed studio addition onto the house. He then decorated it and the adjoining original studio with a painted frieze that still runs along the full length of the walls, immediately below the ceiling.



Homer Watson, studio frieze (cropped detail of Daubigny section), 1893–94, oil on plaster wall, 48 x 5,000 cm (original studio) and 40 x 6,814 cm (studio addition), Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

The frieze is a tribute to thirteen European landscape painters who were especially admired by Watson: Claude Lorrain (c.1600–1682), John Constable (1776–1837), Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875), Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878), Narcisse Díaz de la Peña (1807–1876), Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), Meindert Hobbema (1638–1709), Jules Bastien-

Lepage (1848–1884), Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867), J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851), and Jacob van Ruisdael (1628–1682).<sup>1</sup> All the artists' names are painted in capital letters. Superimposed over each name are one or (more rarely) two small landscapes conceived by Watson in that artist's style. A decision to focus the mural on European artists perhaps explains the otherwise puzzling absence of any American landscapists, including, most significantly, George Inness (1825–1894).

Watson believed that all worthwhile art was grounded in tradition. His studio frieze offers visual confirmation of that conviction by paying homage to the European painters he—and the majority of other Canadian landscape painters—most admired. Similarities between his work and that of Constable and the Barbizon artists (Corot, Daubigny, Díaz de la Peña, Millet, and Rousseau) had been a core part of Watson's reputation ever since Oscar Wilde had publicly drawn attention to them in 1882. In addition, Watson sometimes borrowed compositional motifs from other artists. For example, van Ruisdael is echoed in Watson's *The Old Mill*, 1886.<sup>2</sup> The studio frieze is thus as much a personal nod to artists who enriched Watson's own work as it is a recognition of landscape painting's rich history.



Homer Watson, studio frieze (cropped detail of Gainsborough section), 1893–94, oil on plaster wall, 48 x 5,000 cm (original studio) and 40 x 6,814 cm (studio addition), Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.



## LOG-CUTTING IN THE WOODS 1894



Homer Watson, *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894

Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 61 cm

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

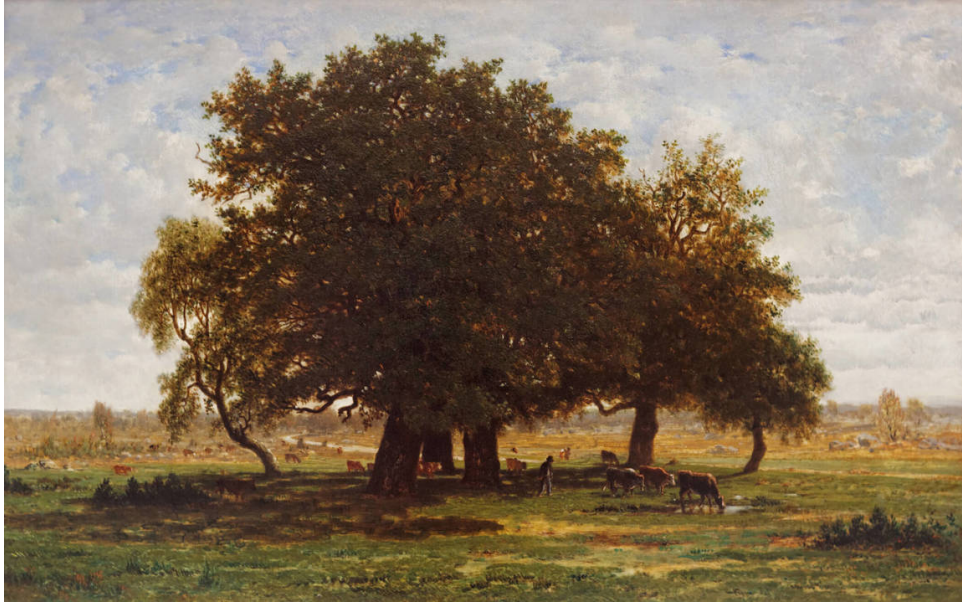
*Log-cutting in the Woods* depicts two loggers who are dwarfed and surrounded by trees whose branches and leaves spread over more than half of the canvas. The labour of the two men, set within a rich landscape, exemplifies Watson's belief in the ideal relationship between human beings and nature: one of respectful interdependence. In this painting, inspired by landscapes with which Watson was familiar and dealing with a theme commonly associated with rural life, the men harvest timber from the forest, but do so without endangering the ongoing health of the natural world.

Watson painted *Log-cutting in the Woods* with the fluid brush strokes that by 1894 had come to dominate his work. It was one of eleven landscapes that he showed at the 1894 Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal (AAM; now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), where it won the \$100 prize for the best seascape or landscape in the show. "Perhaps no one has been so uniformly successful this year as Mr. Homer Watson, R.C.A.," stated the *Montreal Gazette's* critic. "His work is thoroughly conscientious, and there is no striving after easily gained effects."<sup>1</sup>



The Montreal *Metropolitan* critic was equally impressed, claiming that “the quality of his landscapes is unsurpassed by anything in the exhibition. His work is distinctly original, and the color and composition charming. He may fairly be called the Canadian ‘Rousseau.’”<sup>2</sup> It’s not clear how much the anonymous *Metropolitan* critic knew about Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867) beyond the fact that he was one of the Barbizon artists with whom, by this date, Watson was routinely linked in newspapers and periodicals.

Like Watson, Rousseau had an intense affinity for local landscapes and the people who lived and worked in them, as well as for the expressive rendering of trees (for example, *Oak Grove, Apremont*, 1850–52). The two artists also shared a rich approach to paint application, a quality fully on display in *Log-cutting in the Woods* and that embodied Watson’s 1890s shift away from highly detailed views rendered with relatively flat paint application to canvases in which paint as a sensuous substance increasingly blurs naturalistic detail.



Théodore Rousseau, *Oak Grove, Apremont*, 1850–52, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 99.5 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

At the time of its 1894 exhibition, *Log-cutting in the Woods* was already the property of Donald Smith, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal. Smith was one of Watson’s spectacularly wealthy patrons and one of the most enthusiastic and thoughtful art collectors in Canada. Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, president of the Bank of Montreal, co-founder of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Member of Parliament, he epitomized the kind of moneyed and educated Montrealers who were at the forefront of the demand for Watson’s art. Montreal owed its enviable visual arts infrastructure at that time to three principal factors: the city’s status as the financial centre of Canada; the AAM’s cultivation of a discriminating public by means of its frequent major exhibitions of Canadian and European historical and contemporary art; and the presence of the W. Scott & Sons art gallery, the best-connected and most influential commercial gallery anywhere in the country.



## THE FLOOD GATE C.1900–1



Homer Watson, *The Flood Gate*, c.1900–1  
Oil on canvas, mounted on plywood, 86.9 x 121.8 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*The Flood Gate* is a completely unified painting. Its pervasive dark colours, its rich brushwork (significantly thicker than in *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894), and its forceful sense of internal movement bind together the human figure, the trees, the sky, and the choppy water, underscoring Watson's favourite theme of nature's power and majesty. That theme is touchingly accentuated by the smallness of the man and the cows within the turmoil of the rest of the image.

The scene—Watson's last major treatment of a mill theme—is of a man taking pressure off a dam by opening its floodgate during a storm. This action would preserve both the dam and the millpond that it had been built to create. A niece of the artist claimed that the origins of the painting could be traced back to Watson's childhood, when he had witnessed the catastrophic consequences of a burst dam.<sup>1</sup>

Critics at the time and later saw *The Flood Gate* as a high point in the evolution of Watson's style; the artist himself described it in 1908 as his best painting thus far.<sup>2</sup> By that date he had exhibited it at the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto (1903), at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis (1904; the painting won a bronze medal), and in the annual exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1908). A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974) reportedly told Watson that the canvas belonged in the Louvre,<sup>3</sup> and Jackson's fellow Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) characterized it in the 1930s as "an old master" painting: Canada's finest depiction of a rural landscape.<sup>4</sup>

Watson conceived *The Flood Gate* in relation to the markedly different painting *The Lock*, 1824, by John Constable (1776-1837), although he is more likely to have seen the 1834 mezzotint of that painting, by David Lucas (1802-1881), rather than the canvas itself. The differences between *The Flood Gate* and *The Lock* were intentional, a reflection of Watson's wariness of being characterized as a mere follower or, worse, imitator of the more famous artist:

I said, "Hang it, I will paint a subject Constable would have delighted to paint," and that is my grandfather's 'Mill Pond.' ... Just some fun for me in a way for calling me a follower of Constable. I thought let 'em have it, for I felt in my head I need follow no man.<sup>5</sup>

In any case a reviewer of the 1908 RCA exhibition saw enough of a resemblance between Constable's art and *The Flood Gate* to describe the Watson painting as being "after the Constable school of treatment."<sup>6</sup>

Despite its strong reputation, *The Flood Gate* had a checkered history. Eric Brown (1877-1939) of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa reported that, during a 1919 American tour, the weight of the thick paint had torn the canvas away from its stretcher, resulting in significant cracking of the paint.<sup>7</sup> Several years earlier the work had been acquired from Watson by the Montreal collector and banker J. Reid Wilson, who then discovered that the lighting in his house was not strong enough to show the dark painting to advantage. Wilson loaned it to Montreal's Mount Royal Club, but the lighting there was no better, and so he exchanged *The Flood Gate* for another Watson with brighter colouring. It was still on the market in 1908 when the National Gallery declined to buy it, much to the indignation of the critic Newton MacTavish: "I . . . cannot think what was the matter with the commissioners when they failed to properly appreciate it."<sup>8</sup> *The Flood Gate* was eventually acquired by the National Gallery in 1925.



David Lucas (after John Constable), *The Lock and Dedham Vale*, 1834, mezzotint, 73.7 x 59.5 cm, private collection.



## THE RIVER DRIVERS 1914, 1925



Homer Watson, *The River Drivers*, 1914, 1925

Oil on canvas, 87 x 121.9 cm

MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina

*The River Drivers* is one of a small number of seascapes in Watson's oeuvre. The painting shows a team of lumbermen driving freshly cut logs downriver between steep cliffs and hills, under a strange and ominous sky. It bears a strong compositional similarity to the earlier *Smugglers' Cove, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia*, 1909, a painting inspired by a boat trip around Cape Breton Island that Watson made with his Montreal patron James Ross.<sup>1</sup> (Ross owned property and had financial interests on the island.) Looking back over his career in 1922, Watson evaluated *The River Drivers* as ranking among his best paintings.<sup>2</sup> Yet in 1914, when he completed the first version of it, he had felt "blue about my inability to master the theme in the way it is seen in the vision."<sup>3</sup>

Norman MacKenzie—a Saskatchewan lawyer and a member of the National Gallery of Canada’s board—harboured no such doubts. MacKenzie was an aficionado of Watson’s “heavy style” and of his “natural austerity,” both of which are evident in *The River Drivers*. He happily paid the purchase fee of \$500. Before delivering the painting, Watson gave it exposure by showing it at the Canadian National Exhibition, the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal, and the Canadian Art Club (all in 1914), as well as at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. *The River Drivers*’s success in those exhibitions banished Watson’s doubts about its quality. “I thought I was not getting it,” he wrote,

but since it is here [in the Canadian Art Club’s exhibition] and placed in the centre of the wall on the right hand of the gallery—place of honor—I see I builded better than I knew. All my brother artists say it is one of the best things ever done by me. . . . I wish I could have been satisfied with it earlier.<sup>4</sup>

While waiting for the painting to arrive, MacKenzie contented himself with an oil-on-cardboard sketch for the larger version. That study is a rarity in Watson’s work, and adds to the painting’s interest; few other small-scale oil sketches for larger paintings have been identified. When the finished painting finally reached MacKenzie, he was delighted with it. Eleven years later, Watson opted to retouch parts of *The River Drivers* with lighter colouring, in keeping with his changing palette in the early 1920s, the effect of which was to make details more readily visible. MacKenzie enthusiastically confirmed that he thought the revised image was even more effective than the 1914 original had been: “I agree with you that it is at least one of the best things you have ever done.”<sup>5</sup>



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Smugglers’ Cove, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia*, 1909, oil on Masonite, 86.4 x 121.9 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. RIGHT: Homer Watson, study for *The River Drivers*, c.1913, oil on cardboard, 25.4 x 35.6 cm, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

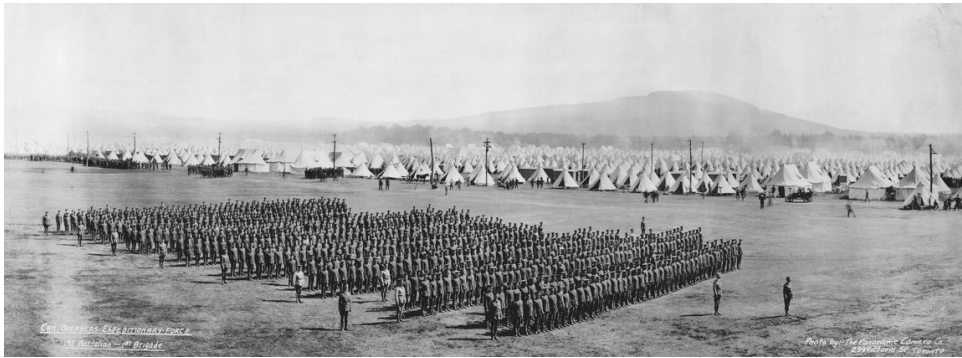


**THE RANGES (CAMP AT SUNRISE) 1915**

Homer Watson, *The Ranges (Camp at Sunrise)*, 1915  
Oil on canvas, 152 x 181 cm  
Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

The painting today known as *Camp at Sunrise* was originally exhibited as *The Ranges*, one of only a handful of military-themed canvases that Watson painted during and immediately after the First World War. More than half of the painting shows a cloud-filled sky. Below that, another quarter of the canvas's height consists of the colourfully painted Laurentians. These dominate a row of tiny human figures lying on the ground during rifle-firing practice, overseen by about a dozen officers.

Unlike several other Canadian artists—A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), Frederick Varley (1881–1969), and David Milne (1881–1953), for example—who were commissioned to record military subjects in Europe, Watson (who was fifty-nine years old when the war began) did not leave Canada. Instead, in 1914 General Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia, requested that Watson undertake paintings documenting the recruitment and training of the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Camp Valcartier in Quebec.<sup>1</sup> Watson was doubtful, but allowed himself to be persuaded that Valcartier offered a compelling landscape subject. By September 1915, after almost a year of work, he had produced three canvases, all set in the camp and all much larger than anything he had done before.



The 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion training at Valcartier, Quebec, 1914, photographer unknown, George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.

Some reviewers simply ignored the three paintings when they were seen at the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and at the Canadian Art Club in 1915. Others were overtly critical. Samuel Morgan-Powell, for example, dismissed them as showing inherently inartistic subjects more suited to General Hughes's office hallways than to an art gallery.<sup>2</sup> The reviewer for the *Montreal Herald* was more positive, but recognized that Watson had been rather an odd choice for the commission:

To a landscape painter, the straightness of line and mathematical precision in every detail so dear to the heart of the military commander do not commend themselves. . . . So Mr. Watson was obliged to compromise. He has painted the Valcartier of nature first, and the Valcartier of history secondly.<sup>3</sup>

The *Herald's* reviewer was right. *The Ranges* was clearly the work of someone who was at home with landscape painting but who had never before included more than six or seven people in a single image and who did not usually make human activity the dominant element in his art. As the *Herald* put it, Watson had depicted "temporary events in a permanent setting." This was probably not exactly what Hughes, whose priority was to highlight the scale and interest of troop activities, had envisioned.



Homer Watson, *Passage to the Unknown*, 1918–20, oil on canvas, 140 x 204 cm, location unknown, reproduction of a black and white image appearing in *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 14, no. 2 (1987).



Toward the end of the war Watson accepted another military-themed commission, this one from Commander J.K.L. Ross, the son of his greatest patron, James Ross. On that occasion, though, he ventured into symbolism, possibly reflecting his growing interest in spiritualism following his wife's death in 1918.<sup>4</sup> One of the paintings, *Passage to the Unknown*, 1918-20, deals with the beginning of the war: a road transforms into a sky bridge over which soldiers could pass on their way to serving in Europe. In the other painting, *Out of the Pit*, 1919, Watson suggests hope for the future at the end of the war by juxtaposing a burning castle, a rainbow, and a bright background. Whereas *The Ranges* had its defenders, *Passage to the Unknown* seems to have pleased almost no one, and was possibly destroyed by Ross himself.

## MOONLIGHT, WANING WINTER 1924



Homer Watson, *Moonlight, Waning Winter*, 1924  
Oil on beaverboard screwed to framework, 86.6 x 121.9 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*Moonlight, Waning Winter* shows a prominent tree and a few oddly proportioned houses in a late-winter landscape, the raised furrows of the fields partially covered by melting snow. The painting exemplifies technical and stylistic changes that Watson's painting underwent during the 1920s. Prior to that time his larger oils had been conceived in the studio, using on-the-spot drawings. Watson combined and modified the drawings to create complex compositions in which he attempted to communicate profound truths about the natural world and his reactions to it.

Watson's 1923 acquisition of a car changed his techniques and style. He could now carry bulky equipment—including, for the first time, sturdy wood-pulp boards on which to paint outdoors. The subject of *Moonlight, Waning Winter* was not subsequently worked up in oil on canvas in his studio. He does, though, appear to have continued to work on it during the days and weeks following his initial painting trip. Some other oil-on-panel paintings from the early 1920s onward seem to have received little or no additional work in the studio.



The subject of this painting indicates yet another change in Watson's art during the 1920s and 1930s. Previously he had favoured spring, summer, and autumn scenes and often evoked atmospheric effects by painting cloudy landscapes at dusk or shortly before or after rainstorms.

*Moonlight, Waning Winter* and other paintings from the later years of his career retain his earlier curiosity about transitory atmospheric and light effects, but they focus it on transitional moments between the seasons, especially between autumn and winter (as in *Early Winter*, c.1930) and between winter and spring. "The ploughed field emerging through the snow in March is peculiar to Canada in its pastoral regions," Watson wrote when he was bringing *Moonlight, Waning Winter* to completion. "I always felt the line and rhythm of forms of earth thus disclosed, and I hope to get others to see it, too."<sup>1</sup>

Like many of Watson's paintings from the 1920s and 1930s, the work reveals the artist using a less sombre palette than he had employed during the previous quarter century in canvases such as *Country Road*, *Stormy Day*, c.1895, and *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1. In several places the paint—largely shades of white, pink, and purple—is applied with substantial body and in multiple levels. "Sometimes I allow myself a little fling," Watson wrote, apparently with the innovations of *Moonlight, Waning Winter* in mind,

although my friends, my patrons I mean, think and say I am on the straight road to perdition if I continue this crime. . . . Years ago any flings of this sort for me at least had to be relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. There was and still is the idiotic insistence in keeping a painter harping on the string of which they liked the tune, but I find nature full of variety.<sup>2</sup>



Homer Watson, *Early Winter*, c.1930, oil on cardboard, 31.7 x 41.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



## MOONLIT STREAM 1933



Homer Watson, *Moonlit Stream*, 1933

Oil on canvas, 31.8 x 41.9 cm

Library and Archives Canada, on loan to Laurier House, Ottawa

In 1933 William Lyon Mackenzie King, the three-time prime minister of Canada between 1921 and 1948, acquired two paintings from Watson: *Evening Moonrise* and *Moonlit Stream*, both 1933. The latter, a dark, heavily painted night view of a river reflecting the unnatural colours of clouds in a moonlit sky, was a purchase. At the same time, Watson gave King *Evening Moonrise* as a gift. Both canvases seem to have been entirely studio projects, rather than beginning life on one of the painting trips that had led to, for example, *Moonlight*, *Waning Winter* in 1924.

King had been born and had grown up near Doon, in Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario, and as an adult had become friends with Watson. Their rapport was strengthened by their shared interest in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, as well as in spiritualism and the occult. Watson was intrigued by spiritualism throughout his life and, although his writings on the subject are vague, he seems to have adhered to a pantheistic approach that sought out transcendent meaning in natural phenomena. "All nature up to the horizon uttered the



sombre chord that would be in unison with the refrain of the lost and the caverns of the forest vibrated in their mystic depth," he reminisced in an undated description of experiencing a landscape at night. "[Everything] seemed connected together by invisible ties and the limits of earth seemed to mount in the air and be linked with the spirits of other worlds."<sup>1</sup>

*Moonlit Stream* may be interpreted as supporting these ideas by means of its evocative darkness, the unnatural colours in the sky and water, the blurring of worldly detail, and the prominent inclusion of a moon that lights up the surrounding darkness. For his part, King's understanding of the painting steered closer to religion than to the pantheistic interpretation preferred by Watson. In one letter King described *Moonlit Stream* as being "[a]bove all ... a sort of presence, reminding me always of the life beyond the veil, and of art finding its perfection there,"<sup>2</sup> while in another he waxed poetic about the painting's light being "like the answer to the prayer 'Lighten our darkness we beseech thee, O Lord.' It has caught the Divine light."<sup>3</sup> However, King also confessed that he had difficulty understanding the unusual colours in the skies of both *Moonlit Stream* and *Evening Moonrise*.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, the tonalities in *Moonlit Stream*'s sky have little in common with those used by other Canadian artists, whether traditional or modern.

Its small size was due principally to the several health crises that had hampered the seventy-eight-year-old Watson's ability to work on a larger scale. And although the thickness with which it was painted, the corresponding loss of naturalistic detail, the darkness of the landscape, and the startling colours in the sky and river were not innovations at this point in Watson's career, they are brought together here with a new degree of intensity. *Moonlit Stream* thus exists as a highly personal end-of-career statement by an artist who had been disconnected for some fifteen years from developments elsewhere in Canadian art. Indeed, 1933, the year in which Watson created *Moonlit Stream*, was also the year that saw the birth of the Canadian Group of Painters: a group in which most of the twenty-eight founding members were exponents of various strands of Canadian modernist art. *Moonlit Stream* bears no similarity to the work of any of them.



Homer Watson, *Evening Moonrise*, 1933, oil on panel, 31.8 x 41.9 cm, Library and Archives Canada, on loan to Laurier House, Ottawa.



A painting of a dirt road in a rural landscape. The road is light-colored and stretches from the foreground into the distance. On the right side of the road, three cows are walking away from the viewer. The left side of the road is bordered by a low stone wall and some trees. In the background, there are rolling green hills and a small cluster of houses. The sky is dark and stormy, with heavy clouds. The overall mood is somber and atmospheric.

# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Homer Watson's letters, his unpublished manuscripts, and his paintings, drawings, and prints document the issues that most interested him as an artist. Of his concerns, the commemoration of southern Ontario's pioneers and early settlers and the visual expression of Canadian regional and national identities locate Watson firmly within the milieu of many of his fellow artists of the time. In addition to these priorities, his dedication to safeguarding the natural environment was exceptional and far-sighted.



### ONTARIO'S PIONEER MEMORY

Homer Watson was a grandson of German and British settlers of Ontario's Waterloo County, something of which he was very proud. He occasionally dealt explicitly with pioneer subjects, in canvases such as *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880, and *Pioneers Crossing the River*, 1896, and in preparatory drawings such as a detailed study for a canvas titled *A Land of Thrift*,



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Pioneers Crossing the River*, 1896, oil on canvas, 86 x 122 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Homer Watson, drawing for *A Land of Thrift*, c.1883, ink over graphite on paper, 56.5 x 71.8 cm (framed), Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

c.1883. Images such as *November among the Oaks*, c.1920, depict the results of early nineteenth-century settlement by portraying nature harmoniously coexisting with the human presence. That presence could take many forms—people, farm animals, fences, crops, mills, and other buildings—but it was almost always there. Watson's paintings are in many ways Canadian art's most consistent and loving visual documentation of the pioneer legacy in Ontario's historical sense of identity. Yet beneath their reassuring and often bucolic surfaces, Watson's landscapes raise difficult questions about the history of European settlement in Canada.

In recent years pioneers and settlers have become subjects of debate. Indigenous groups around the world demand that the descendants of pioneers recognize their status as members of privileged collectives. Settler societies tend to replicate their histories and beliefs in their new communities, often at the expense of Indigenous populations that substantially predate the arrival of non-Indigenous pioneers. The Anishnaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples had been living in the Grand River area (including what later became Waterloo County) for centuries. Before the early nineteenth-century arrival there of the first pioneers, the British government formally granted the land extending six miles on either side of the full length of the river to the Haudenosaunee, in the Haldimand Proclamation of 1784; but First Nations title to the land continues to be disputed to this day.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *November among the Oaks*, c.1920, oil on canvas, 57 x 78 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Six Nations Confederacy Council (the self-governing council of the Six Nations of the Grand River), Ohsweken, c.1910, photographer unknown, Six Nations Public Library, Ohsweken.

During Watson's lifetime Europeans regarded pioneers and settlers as highly admirable people who homesteaded what was considered an empty wilderness. Rather than being viewed through a critical lens, pioneers were characterized almost entirely as having traits such as resilience, resourcefulness, an immense capacity for work, and an aversion to complaining about hardships. They stood for ideals of stability and human control. This was especially the case during the decades from the 1850s to the 1880s, when transportation networks were expanding, cities were growing, and traditional family-run businesses were giving way to impersonal, large-scale operations. The extent of change in Waterloo County may be gauged by the fact that during the 1890s the population of the federal electoral district of Waterloo South was 47 per cent rural and 53 per cent urban. Just a short time earlier it had been overwhelmingly rural.<sup>1</sup>

It was precisely because pioneers represented solidity and independence that the Toronto Industrial Exhibition yearly featured a walk-through "pioneers" display with a log cabin built on site, using pioneer methods. Similarly, the large painting *Logging*, 1888, by George Agnew Reid (1860-1947), though painted in Paris, was set in pioneer-era Ontario. Reid also planned a mural cycle, for the Toronto Municipal Buildings: *Hail to the Pioneers, Their Names and Deeds Remembered and Forgotten, We Honour Here*. (Only two of the murals were completed: *The Arrival of the Pioneers*, 1899, and *Staking a Pioneer Farm*, 1899.)<sup>2</sup>



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 61 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. RIGHT: George Agnew Reid, *Logging*, 1888, oil on canvas, 107.4 x 194 x 2.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

## REGIONAL IMAGERY AND CANADIAN ART

In his catalogue essay for the 1963 Watson retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, J. Russell Harper contended that Watson was "as it were, the man who first saw Canada as Canada."<sup>3</sup> Landscape was a preoccupation for Canadian artists during the second half of the nineteenth century, and questions about the Canadian-ness of their work were timely. Public interest in the country's varied geography was encouraged by the proliferation of outdoor sketching clubs; by illustrations in publications such as *Picturesque Canada* (beginning in 1882), *Canadian Illustrated News* (1869-83), and *L'Opinion publique* (1870-83); and by rapid railway construction from



coast to coast. Visual artists responded to that popularity, with landscape quickly establishing itself as a central theme in art exhibitions during the last four decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Watson had many landscape artist peers—including Lucius O’Brien (1832–1899), Marmaduke Matthews (1837–1913), John Arthur Fraser (1838–1898), Allan Edson (1846–1888), and Otto Jacobi (1812–1901)—who portrayed Canadian scenery with varying degrees of naturalism, idealism, and romanticism. Examples ranged from *Lake, North of Lake Superior*, 1870, by Frederick Verner (1836–1928) to *Mount Rundle, Canadian National Park, Banff*, 1892, an albumen photograph of the Rocky Mountains by Alexander Henderson (1831–1913). Few, however, could equal Watson’s penetrating engagement with a particular geography—in his case the area in and around Doon, in Waterloo County—in an effort to understand it as deeply as possible.



LEFT: Alexander Henderson, *Mount Rundle, Canadian National Park, Banff*, 1892, albumen print, 20 x 25 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal.  
RIGHT: Frederick Verner, *Lake, North of Lake Superior*, 1870, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 127 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Although he often made art in places other than the Grand River Valley (*The River Drivers*, 1914 and 1925, for example, is set not on the Grand River but on the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia), the vast majority of Watson’s paintings are based to a significant extent on landscapes that he knew intimately. This was the case whether he was documenting the everyday reality of agricultural labour (*Haymaking, Last Load*, c.1880); commenting on the changing relationship between landscape and industry (*The Pioneer Mill*, 1880); evoking the grand sweep of the rolling landscape around Doon (*A Cornfield*, 1883); capturing the comfortable interaction between village inhabitants and the terrain in which they spent their lives (*Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894; *Nut Gatherers in the Forest*, 1900); investing the local landscape with subjective mystery (*Moonlit Stream*, 1933); or in his later years painting in the open air (*Moonlight, Waning Winter*, 1924).



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Haymaking, Last Load*, c.1880, oil on canvas, 53.2 x 80.1 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *A Cornfield*, 1883, oil on canvas, 80.1 x 114.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

It is therefore unsurprising to read Watson's many analyses of the relationship between a country's artists and its landscapes. In his view, significant art was premised on its maker's sense of "having roots in his native land and being a product of its soil."<sup>5</sup> Explaining his decision to return to Canada in 1890 after three years in Europe, he observed that as a Canadian artist in England he constantly risked unintentionally imitating English artists' depictions of a landscape that was native to them but that was mere scenery to him. The English artist "goes along a smooth road, [whereas] here [in Canada] we are building roads, and that is more exciting."<sup>6</sup> *Log-cutting in the Woods* and *The River Drivers*, for example, were seen as quintessentially Canadian subjects. Although Watson rarely wrote about the work of other Canadian landscape painters, it is probable—based on his comments about his own art—that he would have expected them to portray their own environments with the kind of familiarity and understanding that he poured into such Grand River Valley images as *The Pioneer Mill*, and *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884.

### THE PARADOX OF REPRESENTING NATURE

Watson's evocation of breadth of effect and mood produced a seeming paradox for his working method. Although he was conversant with—and sincerely devoted to—landscapes along the Grand River, his paintings were not faithful depictions of topographical reality. "I never make an exact copy from nature," he told interviewers throughout his career.

When I want to paint a picture I make a number of studies of things I wish to put in the composition, and when I have these done, I sit down in my studio and paint as suits my fancy, using the sketches where I feel they suit. A picture . . . should be the sum-total of one's experience.<sup>7</sup>



He makes the same point in his unpublished essay “The Idealist versus the Realist,” in which he advocates for the need to recognize and balance two equally important phenomena: the underlying ideal of nature’s omnipresent power, and faithfulness to nature’s physical appearance.<sup>8</sup>

This was true even in the late 1870s and the early 1880s, at the beginning of Watson’s career. Although canvases such as *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879; *Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881; and *Haymaking, Last Load*, c.1880, are alive with detail, they are composite images rather than geographically precise records. As a University of Toronto professor, James Mavor, phrased it in an 1899 article about Watson:

When one who knows a landscape very thoroughly, finds himself observing it under a particular set of conditions, he will have present in his mind not only what he happens to have in his eye at the moment, but what he has seen before, and therefore a habit of close observation is necessarily linked to the habit of generalization.

The results were landscapes that Mavor described as having “more absolute truth to nature” than could be achieved from working only in the open air, “when changing moods and tones confuse the painter.”<sup>9</sup>



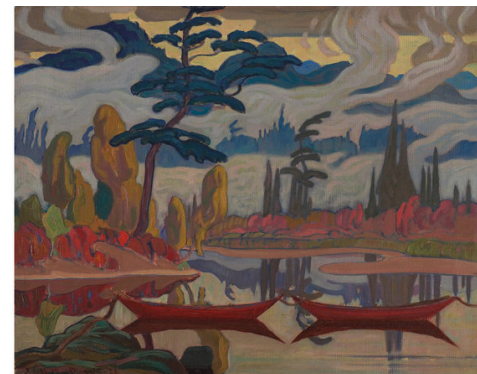
Homer Watson, *Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 91.5 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

## RESPONSE TO THE GROUP OF SEVEN

Watson had complicated reactions to Tom Thomson (1877–1917) and the artists who in 1920 formed the Group of Seven. He admired the seriousness that they brought to making art, but he had two significant concerns. One was stylistic. He viewed with skepticism the group’s brilliant colours and strongly design-based compositions: characteristics on full display in, for example, *Sunset*,



LEFT: Lawren Harris, *Sunset, Kempenfelt Bay*, 1921, oil on board, 81.3 x 101.6 cm, collection of the Power Corporation of Canada. RIGHT: J.E.H. MacDonald, *Mist Fantasy, Northland*, 1922, oil on canvas, 53.7 x 66.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



*Kempenfelt Bay*, 1921, by Lawren Harris (1885–1970) and *Mist Fantasy, Northland*, 1922, by J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1972). He interpreted their style as too artificial, as being more grounded in design and borrowed style rather than being based in the artists’ personal connections to their subjects, and thus too detached from nature itself. “Lines, patterns, symbols are all very well,” he

fretted in 1933. "They are necessary in a big design, but of themselves are useless or meaningless unless clothed with the authority a study and love of nature only can give."<sup>10</sup>

Beyond his worries about stylistic modernism, Watson resented suggestions that Thomson and the group produced art that was profoundly Canadian—but that he did not do the same. During the 1920s the group successfully promoted, to institutional and private collectors alike, a nationalist form of modernism that located the unique promise of Canada in the rugged, sparsely populated Precambrian Shield rather than in Watson's familiar and settled landscapes.

Watson felt that his rural imagery was being ignored not only because it did not employ the stylistic traits of the Algonquin Park and Algoma artists, but also because it had, as its subject, landscapes that displayed the productive relationship between a location and the people who lived there. "I won't be made to think that all of Canada is north country. Canada to me is where man lives . . . and advances his country by refining influences."<sup>11</sup> Thomson's *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17, might be iconic, but for Watson pine trees were "no more Canadian than our elms, oaks or maple," the deciduous trees that—as in *Grand River Valley*, c.1880—he spent his career painting with such devotion.<sup>12</sup>



LEFT: Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17, oil on canvas, 127.9 x 139.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Grand River Valley*, c.1880, oil on board, 30 x 45 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

The Group of Seven spoke directly to evolving attitudes during the early twentieth century. Canada's exploits during the First World War, and its promising future as an independent nation with vast natural resources and an expanding population, bolstered a belief that the country was coming into maturity at home and internationally. The group's insistence on the uniqueness of the Canadian landscape fed an intensifying interest in articulating a specifically Canadian identity: one that could be expressed visually through physically challenging landscapes portrayed in dynamic modernist languages.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, Watson clung to the local landscapes that he loved: a trait that endeared him to the likes of Hector Charlesworth (a conservative critic hostile to the brashness of the group), but that marked him as being out of touch with more forward-looking moods.<sup>14</sup> And whereas the group's bright



palettes and decorative compositions offered visual drama, Watson's forays into thick paint application and unusual and often muddy tones seemed more eccentric and isolated than modern.



Homer Watson, *The Old Mill*, 1886, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 147.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

In addition, the National Gallery of Canada's Eric Brown (1877-1939) and Harry McCurry (1889-1964) offered vital support to the modernist members of the Group of Seven and the Beaver Hall Group, while showing dwindling interest in the twentieth-century work of Watson and the more and more conservative Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. After the First World War, Watson was thus outflanked by the group both thematically and optically in presenting a contemporary vision of twentieth-century Canada. The scope of his appeal contracted accordingly.

## ENVIRONMENTALISM

It cannot be claimed that Watson's visual aesthetics have been influential for other artists working over most of the past century. His pre-twentieth-century work fitted neatly into nineteenth-century approaches to landscape painting, but those ceased to be influential well before his death in 1936. The art that Watson made after about 1916 was idiosyncratic and tangential to the parameters of visual modernism and it exerted minimal influence on his contemporaries or on later artists. His lifelong commitment to environmentalism and to the sanctity of nature, however, echo strongly in twenty-first-century cultural attitudes.

Watson believed in the importance of people maintaining sustainable relationships with nature, a perspective that owed much to his self-identification as a grandson of pioneers. Yet he was also aware that those pioneers had not always respected natural resources and processes. He seems to have arrived at this knowledge principally by observing southern Ontario's fast-changing landscapes, although his observations may have been supported by his extensive but poorly documented reading. Watson's many drawings and paintings of rotting mills (including

*The Old Mill and Stream*, 1879; *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880; and *The Old Mill*, 1886) can be read in part as nostalgic homages to displaced technologies. But they can also be understood as displaying the consequences of upsetting the balance between human needs and nature's capacity to regenerate itself.

The narrator of one of Watson's unpublished manuscripts recounts taking shelter in an abandoned mill that, like the structure in *The Pioneer Mill*, Watson based on his grandfather's defunct sawmill in Doon. The speaker realizes that by the end of its heyday the mill had devoured all the trees in its vicinity. Starved of timber, the mill was then damaged by floods that previously would have been absorbed by the forest. Both the mill and the forest that once surrounded it died of human-inflicted wounds.<sup>15</sup>

Environmental preservation was Watson's justification when in 1913 he was instrumental in creating the Waterloo County Grand River Park Limited. He then served as president of the company, whose purpose was to buy and save a forty-acre stand of trees (Cressman's Woods) near Doon. Cressman's Woods as a site for human recreation and rejuvenation was a favourite theme in Watson's art, and it appears as such in, for example, *Woods in June*, c.1910. In 1920 the tract's mortgage holder demanded full payment, and Watson again came to the fore, raising the money needed to save the trees from logging. Cressman's Woods continues to exist, and in 1944 it was renamed Homer Watson Park. As Watson wrote in a 1934 letter, "[Trees] have a hard time. I must save some to show what a beast man is sometimes."<sup>16</sup>



Homer Watson, *The Old Mill and Stream*, 1879, oil on canvas, 60 x 88 cm, Castle Kilbride Collection and Museum, Baden, Ontario.





Homer Watson, *Woods in June*, c.1910, oil on canvas, 70.1 x 98.1 cm, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

That beastliness continues. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner reflected in 2010 that whereas a healthy ecosystem requires a minimum of 30 per cent forest cover (other experts prefer 40 to 50 per cent), the province's southern forest cover averaged just 22 per cent overall and as low as 5 per cent in some areas. In addition, urban sprawl continues to devour farmland at an alarming rate. Approximately 18 per cent of Ontario's Class I farmland (most of which is located in the south of the province) was lost in the twenty years from 1976 to 1996. Homer Watson's environmental concerns have never been more relevant.





# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Homer Watson's early canvases emphasize draftsmanship and detail. From there he quickly adopted a modified approach that relied upon rich brushwork and increasingly limited tonalities. To appeal to audiences and especially to convey his deeply personal reactions to his subject matter, he attempted to update his style—particularly his use of colour—but with mixed results. What never changed was his determination to convey nature's power and intensity, an approach that grew from a deep respect for the natural world, and from a desire to emulate it in art and ensure its preservation.



### SUBJECT MATTER AND MEDIA

Homer Watson was a prolific artist. His many hundreds of oil paintings range in size from small to very large. *Moonlit Stream*, 1933, for example, measures about 32 x 42 centimetres, whereas *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, is almost 86 x 119 centimetres, comparable in size to other major canvases from Watson's early years as a professional artist. He also filled multiple sketchbooks with drawings, and in 1889-90 completed etchings of six subjects.

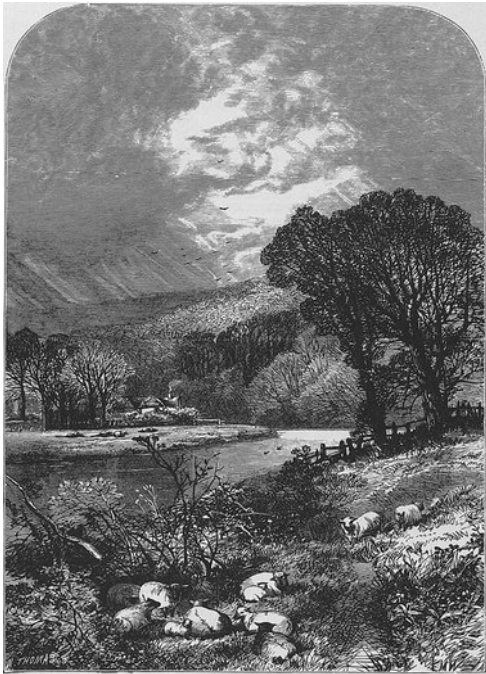
His earliest work consists largely of Romantic narrative drawings and paintings, often on literary themes. The best-known and most accomplished of these is *The Death of Elaine*, 1877, based on the *Idylls of the King* cycle of poems by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (published 1859-85). After his early twenties, he devoted himself almost exclusively to landscapes. The overwhelming majority of these depict scenery in and around his hometown of Doon, Ontario, where—except for one extended and six shorter stays in Great Britain, and brief trips to various other parts of Canada as well as the United States and France—he spent his entire life.

Watson had a strong interest in nature's power and drama. This fascination probably derived, at least in part, from woodcuts and engravings in the illustrated books and periodicals, such as the American journal *The Aldine*, that his family owned when he was a boy. These media often exploit sharp contrasts between dark and light areas of the image, contrasts that seem to be reflected in Watson's predilection for the dramatic cloud formations associated with stormy weather.<sup>1</sup> Turbulent skies, with their contrasts of light and dark, appear frequently in the early years of Watson's career, in his sketchbooks and in such canvases as *River Landscape*, 1882; *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884; *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1; and *The River Drivers*, 1914 and 1925.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Landscape with Road*, c.1889, etching on wove paper, 9.6 x 14 cm, plate: 6.5 x 10.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Homer Watson, landscape drawings and a preliminary outline of a building, early 1880s, pen and ink on paper, 35.5 x 27.5 cm, sketchbook page 7875.92r, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



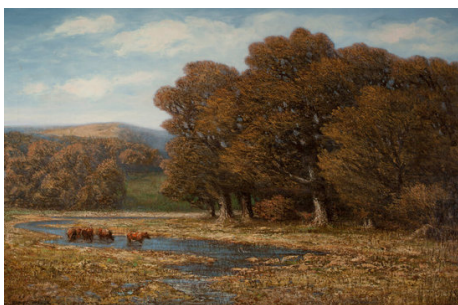


LEFT: A page from *The Aldine* 6, no. 5 (May 1873). RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Morning at Lakeview, Ontario*, 1890, oil on cardboard, 25.4 x 35.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

But above all, Watson's psychological and emotional attachment to nature was premised on the harmonious relationship between landscapes and humanity. *Morning at Lakeview, Ontario*, 1890, with its three tiny figures arranged in a landscape that is protective rather than threatening, is typical of his bringing together the human and natural worlds. So is the bucolic *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894. "We cannot think of any form of nature that will be complete apart from man," Watson wrote, "nor is it pleasant to think of man apart from his relation to the soil."<sup>2</sup>

### JOHN CONSTABLE AND BARBIZON PAINTING

Given Watson's preoccupation with local landscapes and with human-nature interaction, it is unsurprising that the artists with whom his work was most often associated were the English landscape painter John Constable (1776-1837) and such French Barbizon artists as Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), Narcisse Díaz de la Peña (1807-1876), Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), Constant Troyon (1810-1865), and Jules Dupré (1811-1889). In the 1893-94 frieze that he painted on the walls of his studio, Watson included the names and invented landscape paintings of five of those artists: Constable, Millet, Daubigny, Díaz de la Peña, and Rousseau.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *In Valley Flats near Doon*, c.1910, oil on canvas, 66 x 101.5 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Two Cows in a Stream*, c.1885, oil on canvas, 33.5 x 54 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

The thematic, formal, and psychological similarities between Watson, Constable, and the Barbizon artists were strong. All were emotionally and psychologically devoted to landscapes with whose topography and inhabitants



they were closely familiar—seen, in Watson’s case, in images such as *Two Cows in a Stream*, c.1885; *In Valley Flats near Doon*, c.1910; and *The Flood Gate*, c.1900–1, among many others. Watson repeatedly argued that any landscape painter’s richest and most meaningful work is done where “every familiar scene is hallowed with a glamour which gives a charm the attractions of a strange land can never give, and he paints it with a soul.”<sup>3</sup>

However, when similarities between his art and that of Constable and the Barbizon artists were first proposed (in 1882, most famously by Oscar Wilde), Watson had never seen original work by any of those artists. While he acknowledged the points of comparison, he was also at pains to proclaim that he was painting independently of the Europeans, even if his work seemed to run along parallel lines.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *The Stone Road*, 1881, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 129.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *A Grey Day at the Ford*, 1885, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 cm, collection of the Hamilton Club.

Watson and the European artists’ commitment to rural landscapes to which they had personal connections was only one of their similarities. Equally important was their mutual attempt to express the importance of nature not through precise detail—as Watson had done in his earliest paintings, influenced by the Hudson River School’s prioritizing of optical veracity (*The Pioneer Mill*, 1880, and *The Stone Road*, 1881, for example)—but through the use of broad pictorial effects whose sweep and power suggest pervasive moods that convey nature’s underlying vitality and significance (as with *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884, and many others). In the United States this style reached its apogee in the work of George Inness (1825–1894), whose highly personal and poetic approach to landscape painting was undoubtedly important to Watson. Although the foreground of an early work such as *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, relies on precise draftsmanship to bring out a wealth of detail in the rocks and trees, it is the sky—with its broadly brushed clouds and its generally dark tonality—that points toward the blurred outlines, the suppressed detail, and the unifying atmospherics of later canvases such as *Country Road*, *Stormy Day*, c.1895, and the magisterially moody *The Flood Gate*, c.1900–1. Hence, too, Watson’s partiality to “grey” days, as in *A Grey Day at the Ford*, 1885, and to the times just before or just after rainstorms, when (as in *Before the Storm*, 1887, or *After the Rain*, 1883) the air has a physicality that unites diverse details into a shimmering unity.



Homer Watson, *Before the Storm*, 1887, oil on canvas, 61.4 x 91.5 cm, Art Gallery of Windsor.

All great artists, Watson stated, followed a similar trajectory, beginning their careers by concentrating on the analysis of detail but progressing from there to the submerging of individual objects through the massing of form and the synthesizing effects of light, colour, and atmosphere. Thus Constable, in Watson's evaluation, reached maturity by adopting (in paintings such as *The Hay Wain*, 1821) unifying colour schemes that treated "the moods of nature . . . in a . . . broad manner." Similarly, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875; *The Oak in the Valley*, 1871)—one of the Barbizon artists most admired by Watson—"does not insult the intelligence" of viewers

by telling them a lot [of] trivial small matters. . . . He felt[,] as he doubtless expected you should feel when you are enwrapped with a sentiment or love of nature's beauty at the close of day, that in the mystery of the light at that hour you are filled with a fine thought of the spirit of the scene, that you have implanted in you then an idea of the law of nature's general harmony.<sup>4</sup>





LEFT: John Constable, *The Hay Wain*, 1821, oil on canvas, 130.2 x 185.4 cm, National Gallery, London. RIGHT: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *The Oak in the Valley*, 1871, oil on canvas, 39.8 x 52.8 cm, National Gallery, London.

The British critic R.A.M. Stevenson was one of many viewers who identified a commitment to broad and evocative pictorial effects as a crucial point of contact between Watson and the Barbizon artists. At the same time, though, he commented on the Canadian artist's occasionally "rude" and "uncultured" approaches to picture making. This was not entirely a criticism. Stevenson attributed Watson's "rudeness" in part to a lack of experience. But he also suggested that the largely self-trained Watson's sometimes unsophisticated expressive strength, which resulted in occasional faults in his depiction of individual objects, opened the door to the creation of unifying effects—something that Stevenson saw as Watson's forte.

Thus, the artist's loose brushwork and broadly delineated forms in such canvases as *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894, and especially *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1, conveyed a satisfyingly Barbizon-like sense of nature's internal consistency, poetry, and harmony. These were qualities intended by Watson and admired by Stevenson, both of whom were skeptical about landscape paintings that looked cobbled together out of separate elements and weighed down with unnecessary detail.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in 1896 the Canadian artist and critic Harriet Ford (1859-1938) praised Watson's "desire to express with breadth the large things of nature, the mystery and charm, the dignity of things, which live close to life."<sup>6</sup>



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Cattle Fording River in Moonlight*, 1898, oil on board, 86.4 x 122.4 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Sheep and Shepherd*, c.1900, oil on canvas, 55.9 x 76.8 cm, private collection.



### PAINT APPLICATION AND TONALITY

Watson employed two means to achieve his broad effects: heaviness of paint application and subdued tonalities. The first of these, paint application, began to change in the early 1880s. Prior to that point, in canvases such as *The Castellated Cliff* and *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, both from 1879, he often treated the brush as if it were a pencil: a tool for drawing. By the early 1880s, however, he was producing canvases such as *After the Rain*, 1883, in which draftsmanship is much less evident in the forms and details. That tendency intensified around the time of his first visit to Europe, from 1887 to 1890. It would increase even more throughout much of the nearly half century remaining in his working life, achieving some of its strongest statements in such canvases as the impasto-laden *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *The Castellated Cliff*, 1879, oil on canvas, 87.6 x 126.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *After the Rain*, 1883, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 125.1 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

Feeling that he was better equipped by temperament and personal history to paint Canadian rather than British landscapes, Watson maintained that nature in Canada consisted of "strong forces" that called for sturdy paint application in order to reveal their "vital truth."<sup>77</sup> For example, in *The Hillside Gorge*, 1889, he exploited the brush to apply paint in broad strokes that convey a sense of a bracing wind. Later, with *The River Drivers*, 1914 and 1925, he combines an austere landscape with a sky exploding with light and motion.

In conjunction with his increasingly rich paint application, Watson limited his palette to a generally narrow and cool tonality with a few muted highlights, a development that had begun during his first visit to Britain and that led to such canvases as *Country Road, Stormy Day*, c.1895. The Toronto art dealer John Payne, for example, wrote in 1888 of his admiration of Watson's British canvases, which he



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Country Road, Stormy Day*, 1895 or 1900, oil on board, 60 x 75 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Below the Mill*, 1901, oil on canvas, 79.4 x 129.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

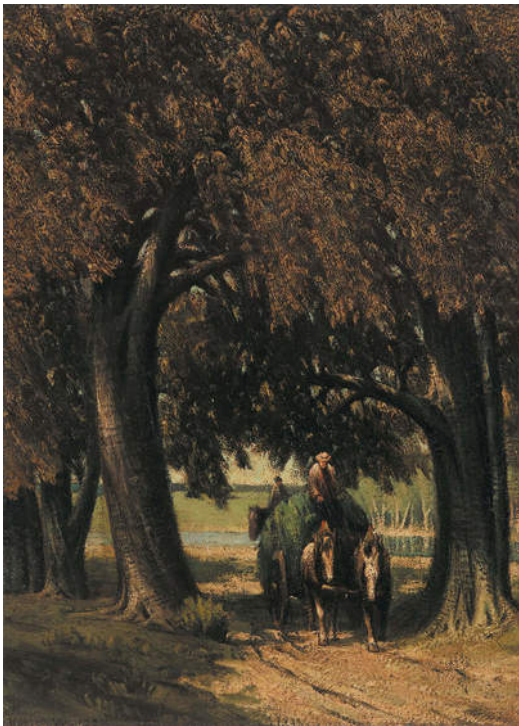
nicknamed "the browneys."<sup>8</sup> "One of the vices of Canadian colouring," in the view of an 1887 observer, "is its warmth not to say loudness, and Mr. Watson's work has been a protest against this fault."<sup>9</sup> Twenty-six years later, in 1913, a newspaper reviewer accurately described Watson's favourite colours—seen in,



for example, *Below the Mill*, 1901—as “deep rich browns and siennas balanced with touches of bright greens and dull reds.”<sup>10</sup>

At his best, as in *Summer Storm*, c.1890, Watson used tonality as one tool for the creation of a powerful sense of place, atmosphere, and mood. As his choices of colours became more restricted, however, some commentators complained that he was becoming monochromatic but without establishing the kind of powerful mood that he had produced in, for example, *River Landscape*, 1882; *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884; or *Country Road, Stormy Day*, c.1895. As early as the mid-1890s he was occasionally being criticized for what the traditional academic artist Wyly Grier (1862–1957)

described as a preoccupation with style and technique for their own sake.<sup>11</sup> In 1904 a Montreal reviewer protested that “the tone of some of [Watson’s paintings] recalls strangely some of the old mezzo-tints,” and that this—combined with the “whacking on [of] plenty of pigment and varnish”—resulted in a “hopelessly artificial style.”<sup>12</sup> Four years earlier another reviewer had lauded the “force and individuality” that made Watson “without a doubt one of the best landscape painters we have.” That writer nonetheless worried that the work could become “too heavy and gloomy and pigmental, and that to see too many of his canvases at a time gives one a sense of depression.”<sup>13</sup>



LEFT: Homer Watson, *The Load of Grass*, 1898, oil on board, 76.2 x 56 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Summer Storm*, c.1890, oil on board, 33 x 45 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

The artist, however, was as unrepentant about his sombre and restricted colour schemes as he was about his heavy paint application. For Watson, canvases such as *The Load of Grass*, 1898, among others, had nothing to do with the sense of oppressiveness that increasing numbers of critics found in them. Instead, he expressed concern that the Impressionists had made a fetish of pure, highly saturated colours, and contended that their paintings were exercises in working through technical problems rather than being vehicles for conveying the magnificence of nature itself.<sup>14</sup> As Watson’s tonalities became darker, strength of lighting became an important consideration in the hanging

of his work. The most frustrating example of this occurred early in the twentieth century, when *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1, was returned to him because the lighting in its first purchaser's home, as well as in another venue to which the painting was loaned, was too low for such a dark canvas.

### POST-1920 PAINTINGS

Soon after the end of the First World War, Watson began experimenting with colours that were often brighter and more diverse than those he had generally favoured during the previous two decades. For example, *Emerald Lake, Banff*, painted after 1920, sets up a striking contrast between light and dark. In works such as this Watson was perhaps paying more attention to the chromatic palettes of Impressionism, although there is little in his writings to confirm that he had any significant understanding of, or engagement with, the Impressionists or, indeed, of other modernists, almost all of whom preferred brighter, purer colours than he used. The chromatic scheme of *Moonlight, Waning Winter*, 1924, is made up largely of variations of white, along with light pinks and purples. Purple also became more pervasive in Watson's depictions of clouds and skies during these years. Other paintings feature rich foliage presented in comparatively muddy shades of orange or rusty red—for example, *The Valley of the Ridge*, 1922.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *Emerald Lake, Banff*, c.1925, oil on board, 73.5 x 85 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *The Valley of the Ridge*, 1922, oil on Masonite, 135.9 x 201.8 cm, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

Besides their use of new and often unnatural colours, Watson's late paintings broke new ground for him in their relatively tight focus. During the 1880s and 1890s especially, but also during the first two decades of the twentieth century, his more ambitious paintings had been studio constructions: expansive views that he built by modifying and combining *plein air* drawings of individual motifs. After the early 1920s, however, close-up landscape views, rather than the broader composite scenes of his earlier years, came to dominate his work.



In part this was because of the artist's declining health, which made it difficult for him to undertake large, complex canvases. A second factor, however, was his 1923 acquisition of an automobile. That purchase enabled Watson to make painting trips that would otherwise have been too physically demanding. Now, unencumbered by the need to minimize the amount and weight of his equipment, he was able to paint directly onto sturdy panel supports in the immediate presence of his open-air subjects. Moreover, he often did not repaint the resulting views onto canvas, or even do further work on them, once he was back in his studio. This seems to have been the case with, for example, *Storm Drift*, 1934, which he painted directly onto board without later transferring it to canvas. Watson's paintings from these years thus tended to be produced more quickly than in the past, and the relationship between the finished images and the natural scenes that had inspired them became less mediated. In many cases, too, the paint was applied with a new degree of liveliness, thickness, and energy.



Homer Watson, *Storm Drift*, 1934, oil on paperboard, 86.5 x 121.8 cm, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.



Watson's career-long resolve to convey the immediacy and power of nature thus remained unchanged during his final years. The thick impasto and dynamic brushwork of his late paintings—*Moonlit Stream*, 1933, and *High Water, Pine Bend*, c.1935, for example—continued what had always been his determination to seek out the forces that drove the natural world. What was paramount, during the 1920s and 1930s, was the degree to which those forces were implied in the immediacy and the gestural violence of oils such as *Speed River Flats near Preston*, c.1930. These late works in effect mimicked, in their rough physicality, the forces and the grandeur that Watson had always believed existed just beneath nature's surface.



LEFT: Homer Watson, *High Water, Pine Bend*, c.1935, oil on board, 86 x 121 cm, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. RIGHT: Homer Watson, *Speed River Flats near Preston*, c.1930, oil on board, 30 x 40 cm, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.





# WHERE TO SEE

Homer Watson's works can be found in numerous public and private collections across Canada, as well as in the Royal Collection Trust in the United Kingdom. The most significant public collections of his work are at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, the works may not always be on view.

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## ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

123 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-527-6610  
artgalleryofhamilton.com



**Homer Watson, *Haymaking, Last Load*, c.1880**

Oil on canvas  
53.2 x 80.1 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA

1723 Hollis Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
902-424-5280  
artgalleryofnovascotia.ca



**Homer Watson, *Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881**

Oil on canvas  
55.5 x 91.5 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-979-6648  
ago.ca



**Homer Watson,**  
*Susquehanna Valley,*  
**c.1877**  
Oil on canvas  
22.4 x 32.5 cm

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**Homer Watson, *The Death of Elaine*, 1877**  
Oil on canvas  
78.1 x 106.7 cm

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**Homer Watson, *On the Mohawk River*, 1878**  
Oil on canvas  
64.8 x 86.4 cm

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**Homer Watson, *The Old Mill*, 1886**  
Oil on canvas  
96.5 x 147.3 cm

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**Homer Watson,**  
*Morning at Lakeview,*  
**Ontario, 1890**  
Oil on cardboard  
25.4 x 35.6 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF WINDSOR

401 Riverside Drive West  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
519-977-0013  
agw.ca



**Homer Watson, *Before the Storm*, 1887**  
Oil on canvas  
61.4 x 91.5 cm



**Homer Watson, *Near Twilight*, B.C., c.1934**  
Oil on Masonite  
86 x 112 cm

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## BEAVERBROOK ART GALLERY

703 Queen Street  
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada  
506-458-2028  
[beaverbrookartgallery.org](http://beaverbrookartgallery.org)



**Homer Watson, *Smuggler's Cove*,  
*Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia*,  
1909**

Oil on Masonite  
86.4 x 121.9 cm



**Homer Watson, *After the Rain*,  
1883**

Oil on canvas  
81.3 x 125.1 cm

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## CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

1 Vimy Place  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
819-776-7000  
[warmuseum.ca](http://warmuseum.ca)



**Homer Watson, *The Ranges*  
(*Camp at Sunrise*), 1915**

Oil on canvas  
152 x 181 cm

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## CASTLE KILBRIDE COLLECTION AND MUSEUM

60 Snyder's Road West  
Baden, Ontario, Canada  
519-634-8444  
[wilmot.ca/en/Castle-Kilbride-Museum.aspx](http://wilmot.ca/en/Castle-Kilbride-Museum.aspx)



**Homer Watson, *The Old Mill and Stream*, 1879**

Oil on canvas  
60 x 88 cm

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## HOMER WATSON HOUSE & GALLERY

1754 Old Mill Road  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada  
519-748-4377  
[homerwatson.on.ca](http://homerwatson.on.ca)



**Homer Watson, *The Swollen Creek*, c.1870**

Oil on canvas  
82.5 x 70 cm



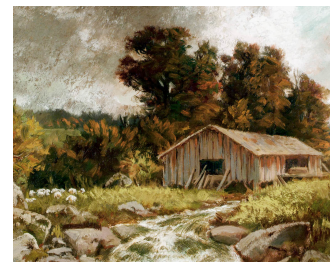
**Homer Watson, *Grand River Valley*, c.1880**

Oil on board  
30 x 45 cm



**Homer Watson, *Two Cows in a Stream*, c.1885**

Oil on canvas  
33.5 x 54 cm



**Homer Watson, *Summer Storm*, c.1890**

Oil on board  
33 x 45 cm

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**Homer Watson, studio frieze, 1893-94**

Oil on plaster wall  
48 x 5,000 cm (original studio) and  
40 x 6,814 cm (studio addition)



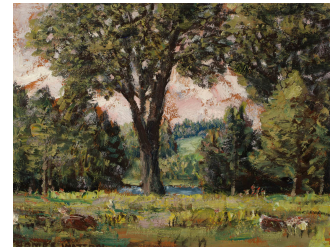
**Homer Watson, *In Valley Flats Near Doon*, c.1910**

Oil on canvas  
66 x 101.5 cm



**Homer Watson, *Emerald Lake, Banff*, c.1925**

Oil on board  
73.5 x 85 cm



**Homer Watson, *Speed River Flats Near Preston*, c.1930**

Oil on board  
30 x 40 cm

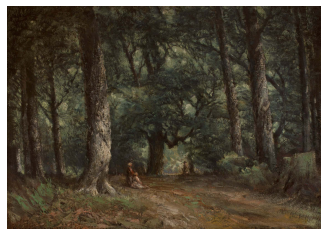
## KITCHENER-WATERLOO ART GALLERY

101 Queen Street North  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada  
519-579-5860  
kwag.ca



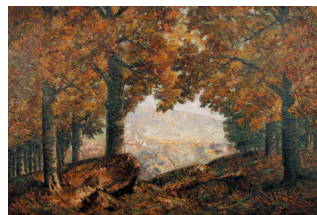
**Homer Watson, drawing for *A Land of Thrift*, c.1883**

Ink over graphite on paper  
56.5 x 71.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *Woods in June*, c.1910**

Oil on canvas  
70.1 x 98.1 cm



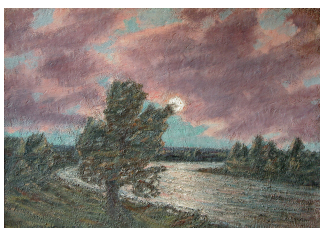
**Homer Watson, *The Valley of the Ridge*, 1922**

Oil on Masonite  
135.9 x 201.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *Storm Drift*, 1934**

Oil on paperboard  
86.5 x 121.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *High Water, Pine Bend*, c.1935**

Oil on board  
86 x 121 cm



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## LAURIER HOUSE

335 Laurier Avenue East  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-992-8142  
[pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/on/laurier](http://pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/on/laurier)



**Homer Watson, *Evening Moonrise*, 1933**

Oil on panel  
31.8 x 41.9 cm



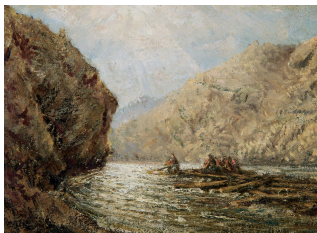
**Homer Watson, *Moonlit Stream*, 1933**

Oil on panel  
31.8 x 41.9 cm

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## MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

University of Regina  
3475 Albert Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada  
306-584-4250  
[mackenzieartgallery.ca](http://mackenzieartgallery.ca)



**Homer Watson, study for *The River Drivers*, c.1913**

Oil on cardboard  
25.4 x 35.6 cm



**Homer Watson, *The River Drivers*, 1914, 1925**

Oil on canvas  
87 x 121.9 cm

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## MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West  
Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-285-2000  
mbam.qc.ca



**Homer Watson, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879**

Oil on canvas  
85.7 x 118.3 cm



**Homer Watson, *Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894**

Oil on canvas  
45.7 x 61 cm



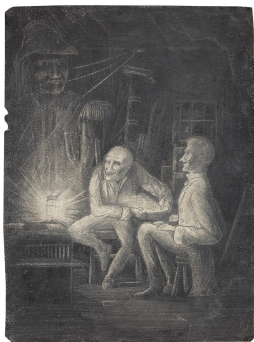
**Homer Watson, *Below the Mill*, 1901**

Oil on canvas  
79.4 x 129.5 cm

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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
gallery.ca



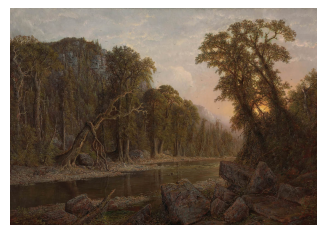
**Homer Watson, *Quilp and Sampson Brass in the Old Curiosity Shop*, late 1860s to early 1870s**

Pen and black ink, dry brush, and graphite on wove paper  
27.3 x 20.3 cm



**Homer Watson, *Life and Thought Hath Fled Away*, c.1865-69**

Graphite, black ink, and wash on wove paper  
17.8 x 23.4 cm  
(sketchbook page 7875.96)



**Homer Watson, *The Castellated Cliff*, 1879**

Oil on canvas  
87.6 x 126.2 cm



**Homer Watson, *Roxanna Bechtel Watson*, probably 1880s**

Graphite and watercolour on wove paper  
20 x 17.1 cm  
(sketchbook page 7875.90)

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**Homer Watson, *The Stone Road*, 1881**

Oil on canvas  
91.5 x 129.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *Down in the Laurentides*, 1882**

Oil on canvas  
65.8 x 107 cm



**Homer Watson, *A Cornfield*, 1883**

Oil on canvas  
80.1 x 114.4 cm



**Homer Watson, *On the River at Doon*, 1885**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 91.6 cm



**Homer Watson, *Landscape, Scotland*, 1888**

Oil on canvas  
86.5 x 122.3 cm



**Homer Watson, *Landscape with Road*, c.1889**

Etching on wove paper  
9.6 x 14 cm; plate:  
6.5 x 10.1 cm



**Homer Watson, *A Hillside Gorge*, 1889**

Oil on canvas  
45.5 x 61 cm



**Homer Watson, *Landscape*, 1889**

Etching in brown ink on  
heavy buff wove paper  
19 x 17.7 cm, plate:  
9.8 x 15.1 cm



**Homer Watson, *landscape drawings and a preliminary outline of a building*, c.1895-96**

Pen and ink on paper  
35.5 x 27.5 cm  
(sketchbook page  
7875.92r)



**Homer Watson, *Nut Gatherers in the Forest*, 1900**

Oil on canvas  
121.9 x 86.5 cm



**Homer Watson, *The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1**

Oil on canvas  
86.9 x 121.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *Moonlight, Waning Winter*, 1924**

Oil on beaverboard screwed to framework  
86.6 x 121.9 cm



**Homer Watson, *Early Winter*, c.1930**

Oil on cardboard  
31.7 x 41.6 cm

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## ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST, WINDSOR CASTLE

Windsor Castle  
Windsor, Berkshire, United Kingdom  
303-123-7324  
[royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle](http://royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle)



**Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880**

Oil on canvas  
86 x 127.8 cm



**Homer Watson, *The Last of the Drouth (The Last Day of the Drought)*, 1881**

Oil on canvas  
92.1 x 138.5 cm

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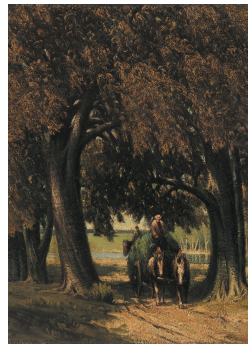
## VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-662-4719  
vanartgallery.bc.ca



**Homer Watson, *River Landscape*, 1882**

Oil on canvas  
66.5 x 107.5 cm



**Homer Watson, *The Load of Grass*, 1898**

Oil on board  
76.2 x 56 cm



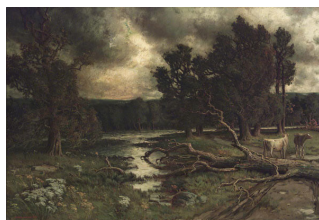
**Homer Watson, *November among the Oaks*, c.1920**

Oil on canvas  
57 x 78 cm

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## WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
204-786-6641  
wag.ca



**Homer Watson, *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884**

Oil on canvas  
96.5 x 142.6 cm

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## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. Elizabeth Bloomfield, *Waterloo Township through Two Centuries* (Kitchener: Waterloo Historical Society, 1995), 201.
2. See, for example: Letter from Watson to Mrs. F.J. Martin, February 28, 1922, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives. Unless otherwise noted, all archival correspondence is drawn from this fonds.
3. Jennifer C. Watson, "Homer Watson in the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery," *RACAR (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review)* 14, no. 2 (1987): 144n5.
4. Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938), 11.
5. Miller, *Homer Watson*, 17. Miller most likely received the information from Watson or his sister, Phoebe. For counterclaims that Watson did meet Inness, however briefly, see: "G. Horne Russell, President of RCA," *Montreal Gazette*, November 18, 1922, and J. Russell Harper, *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), 8.
6. Letter from Watson to John M. Lyle, February 15, 1933.
7. "Art in Toronto," *Toronto Evening Telegram*, May 20, 1878, 7.
8. "Ontario Society of Artists: Seventh Annual Exhibition—Second Day," *Toronto Globe*, May 17, 1879, 8.
9. Kevin O'Brien, "Oscar Wilde and Canadian Artists," *Antigonish Review* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 11–28.
10. Watson, in text dictated to Myrtle Bean and reprinted in Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 48.
11. "Canadian Art," *Toronto Mail*, May 19, 1882, 8.
12. Letter from John Payne to Watson, February 28, 1889.
13. Letter from Watson to Mrs. F.J. Martin, February 28, 1922.
14. Letter from Roxa Watson to Phoebe and Susan Mohr Watson, autumn 1888.
15. "Information Form for the Purpose of Making a Record of Canadian Artists and Their Work," Doc C/A—Homer Watson, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.



16. See Rosemarie L. Tovell, "Homer Watson's *The Pioneer Mill*: The Making and Marketing of a Print in the Canadian Etching Revival," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 31, no. 2 (2010): 28-31.
17. Reproduced in "The Pictures at the New Gallery," *Pall Mall Gazette "Extra,"* May 6, 1889, 76.
18. Letter from Roxa Watson to Phoebe Watson, May 2, 1897, Homer Watson Fonds, Queen's University Archives.
19. Charles Dumas, "Art Dealers and Collectors," in Ronald de Leeux, John Sillevs, and Charles Dumas, *The Hague School: Dutch Masters of the 19th Century* (Paris: Grand Palais, with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1983), 126.
20. Letter from Roxa Watson to Phoebe and Susan Mohr Watson, April 8, 1889.
21. Letter from Roxa Watson to Phoebe and Susan Mohr Watson, May 5, 1889.
22. Letter from Watson to Phoebe and Susan Mohr Watson, 1890.
23. O'Brien, "Oscar Wilde and Canadian Artists," 23.
24. Letter from Roxa Watson to Phoebe and Susan Mohr Watson, July 12, 1888.
25. Letter from Watson to Charles Porteous, May 28, [1901?], Charles Porteous Papers, Volume 9, File "T,U,V,W," Library and Archives Canada.
26. James Mavor, "The Art of Mr. Homer Watson," *Art Journal* (July 1899): 208-11.
27. Letter from James Spooner to Watson, August 25, 1885.
28. Letter from John Payne to Watson, April 14, 1888.
29. Letter from Watson to Edmund Morris, March 31, 1907, Canadian Art Club papers, Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.
30. Letter from Watson to Robert Gagen, n.d., Ontario Society of Artists papers, Archives of Ontario.
31. For example: "Canadian Pictures at Wembley: Inadequate Character of the Display Proven by Documentary Evidence," *Saturday Night* 39, no. 28 (May 31, 1924): 3. The newspapers included Watson's name, but that may have been an error. The original letter no longer exists, so it is impossible to know whether Watson wrote his signature on it.

32. Draft of a letter from Watson to Eric Brown, February 16, 1924/1925. In the past, the National Gallery had been allowed to add from its own collection to RCA-juried international exhibitions, and *Nut Gatherers in the Forest* had entered the gallery's collection in 1909.

33. Draft of a letter from Watson to Eric Brown, February 16, 1924/1925.

34. Letter from F.M. Bell-Smith to Watson, February 7, 1919.

35. Watson, "The Methods of Some Great Landscape Painters" (lecture given at the University of Toronto on February 3, 1900), in Gerald Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada: Homer Watson's Spiritual Landscape* (Waterloo: mlr editions canada, 1997), 269.

36. Watson, quoted in Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988), 114.

37. Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada*, 194.

38. Letter from Wyly Grier to Phoebe Watson, May 11, 1936.

39. R.C. Reade, "Hermits of Art," *Toronto Star Weekly* (May 4, 1939): 3.

40. William Lyon Mackenzie King, diary entry for May 30, 1936, Library and Archives Canada.

#### KEY WORKS: THE DEATH OF ELAINE

1. Ian Paterson, "Arthurian Legend, Tennyson, and Homer Watson's *Death of Elaine*," unpublished student essay, 1976, Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.

#### KEY WORKS: A COMING STORM IN THE ADIRONDACKS

1. Quoted in Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 47. Watson had received some lessons from an unidentified American artist during his travels in New York.

2. For example: Letter from the Marquis of Lorne to Watson, January 14, 1888, and letter from John Payne to Watson, May 17, 1888, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.

3. "Ontario Society of Artists: Seventh Annual Exhibition—Second Day," *Toronto Globe*, May 17, 1879, 8.

4. "Art Association of Montreal: Exhibition of Works by Canadian Artists," *Montreal Gazette*, April 14, 1880, 4.

#### KEY WORKS: THE PIONEER MILL

1. Watson to John M. Lyle, February 15, 1933, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.



2. Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 53. See also Brian Foss, "Homer Watson and *The Pioneer Mill*," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 46–84.

#### KEY WORKS: NEAR THE CLOSE OF A STORMY DAY

1. "Notes on the Montreal Art Exhibition," *The Week*, May 1, 1884, 344.

#### KEY WORKS: STUDIO FRIEZE

1. In "The Methods of Some Great Landscape Painters," a 1900 lecture he gave at the University of Toronto, Watson elaborated on his interest in most of these artists, omitting only Gainsborough and Bastien-Lepage. The text is published in Gerald Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada: Homer Watson's Spiritual Landscapes* (Waterloo: mlr editions canada, 1997), 248–69.

2. J. Russell Harper, *Homer Watson, R.C.A. 1855–1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), 16.

#### KEY WORKS: LOG-CUTTING IN THE WOODS

1. "The Spring Exhibition," *Montreal Gazette*, May 5, 1894, 6.

2. "Art Gallery Jottings: The Different Pictures Ably Criticised—An Improvement on Former Years," *Montreal Metropolitan*, May 5, 1894, 9.

#### KEY WORKS: THE FLOOD GATE

1. Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 31–32.

2. Watson to Newton MacTavish, May 5, 1908, Newton MacTavish Fonds, North York Public Library.

3. Phoebe Watson to M.E. Becker, May 20, 1921, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.

4. Arthur Lismer, *The Flood Gate by Homer Watson* (Outline for Picture Study, series 1, no. 8) (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, [1932?]).

5. Watson to Arthur Lismer, n.d.

6. "Royal Canadian Academy Exhibition," *Toronto Globe*, April 24, 1908, 5.

7. Today, the causes of the damage are considered uncertain, but they were likely more complex than Brown had suggested.

8. MacTavish to Watson, May 4, 1908, Newton MacTavish Fonds, North York Public Library.

#### KEY WORKS: THE RIVER DRIVERS

1. J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 206–7.

2. Watson to Mrs. F.J. Martin, February 28, 1922, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.

3. Watson to Norman MacKenzie, April 30, 1914, MacKenzie Art Gallery papers, Regina.

4. Watson to MacKenzie, April 30, 1914.

5. MacKenzie to Watson, July 20, 1925.

#### **KEY WORKS: THE RANGES (CAMP AT SUNRISE)**

1. Hughes had created the Valcartier facility *ex nihilo* in the days immediately following Canada's entry into the war on August 4.

2. Samuel Morgan-Powell, "Exhibition Is Here for Month," *Montreal Star*, November 22, 1915, 2.

3. "Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Opens Galleries," *Montreal Herald*, November 19, 1915, 5.

4. Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988), 95.

#### **KEY WORKS: MOONLIGHT, WANING WINTER**

1. Watson, quoted in Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988), 105.

2. Watson, quoted in Miller, *Homer Watson*, 105.

#### **KEY WORKS: MOONLIT STREAM**

1. Homer Watson, "A Return to the Village," in Gerald Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada: Homer Watson's Spiritual Landscape* (Waterloo: mlr editions canada, 1997), 330. George Inness, too, had intended his landscapes to be material references to a non-material world, although it is not at all clear whether or how fully Watson was aware of this. Inness's touchstones in this regard were the theories of the eighteenth-century mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg.

2. W.L. Mackenzie King to Watson, June 22, 1933, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives.

3. King to Watson, October 1, 1933.

4. King to Watson, October 1, 1933.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES**

1. Geoffrey Hayes, *Waterloo County: An Illustrated History* (Kitchener: Waterloo Historical Society, 1997), 82.



2. Watson and the pioneer theme are discussed in Brian Foss, "Homer Watson and *The Pioneer Mill*," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 46-84.
3. J. Russell Harper, *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), 20.
4. See especially Dennis Reid, "*Our Own Country Canada*," being an Account of the National Aspirations of the Principal Landscape Artists in Montreal and Toronto, 1860-1890 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada / National Museums of Canada, 1979).
5. Watson, "The Methods of Some Great Landscape Painters," published in Gerald Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada: Homer Watson's Spiritual Landscape* (Waterloo: mlr editions canada, 1997), 267-68.
6. Watson, quoted in Frank Page, *Homer Watson, Artist and Man* (Kitchener: Commercial Printing Company, 1939), 16-17.
7. R.M. Fleming, "Homer Watson, Painter of Canadian Pictures," *Ottawa Evening Journal*, November 15, 1913, 11.
8. Watson, "The Idealist versus the Realist," published in Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada*, 288-305.
9. James Mavor, "The Art of Mr. Homer Watson," *Art Journal* (July 1899): 209-10.
10. Letter from Watson to John Lyle, February 15, 1933, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives. Unless otherwise noted, all archival correspondence is drawn from this fonds.
11. Letter from Watson to Wyly Grier, n.d. [after October 19, 1923].
12. Letter from Watson to Eric Brown, January 24, [1926].
13. See, for example: Mary Vipond, "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 7, no. 1 (1980): 32-52; and Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).
14. Paul Walton, "Beauty My Mistress: Hector Charlesworth as Art Critic," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 15, no. 1 (1982): 84-106.
15. Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 61-62.
16. Letter from Watson to Eric Brown, April 13, 1934.

**STYLE & TECHNIQUE**

1. J. Russell Harper, *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), 6.
2. Watson, quoted in Jane VanEvery, *With Faith, Ignorance and Delight: Homer Watson* (Doon, ON: Homer Watson Trust, 1967), 53.
3. Watson, "The Methods of Some Great Landscape Painters," in Gerald Noonan, *Refining the Real Canada: Homer Watson's Spiritual Landscape* (Waterloo: mlr editions canada, 1997), 268-69.
4. Watson, "The Methods," 260, 262.
5. R.A.M.S. [R.A.M. Stevenson], "Mr. Homer Watson," *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 22, 1899, 3.
6. Harriet Ford, "Canadian Pictures," *Mail and Empire*, March 17, 1896, 3.
7. Letter from Watson to Mrs. F.J. Martin, 1922, Homer Watson Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives. Unless otherwise noted, all archival correspondence is drawn from this fonds.
8. Letter from John Payne to Watson, June 13, 1888.
9. "In the Art Rooms," *Toronto Daily Mail*, June 20, 1887, 5.
10. "Homer Watson, Painter of Canadian Pictures," *Ottawa Evening Journal*, November 15, 1913, 11.
11. Wyly Grier, "Art Notes," *The Week*, February 8, 1895, 258-59.
12. "Art Exhibition," *Montreal Witness*, March 26, 1904, 6.
13. "Spring Exhibition—Second Notice," *Montreal Witness*, March 22, 1900, 4.
14. Letter from Watson to Arthur Lismer, n.d.



## GLOSSARY

### **academic tradition**

Associated with the royal academies of art established in France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, the academic tradition emphasized drawing, painting, and sculpture in a style highly influenced by ancient classical art. Subject matter for painting was hierarchically ranked, with history painting of religious, mythological, allegorical, and historical figures holding the position of greatest importance, followed, in order, by genre painting, portraiture, still lifes, and landscapes.

### **Anishinaabe/Anishnabe**

A collective term that means “the people” or “original people” and refers to a number of interconnected communities such as the Ojibway/Ojibwa/Ojibwé, Odawa, Chippewa, Saulteaux, Mississauga, Potawatomi, and others. In Canada, the Anishinaabe/Anishnabe region includes areas of Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

### **Art Association of Montreal (AAM)**

Founded in 1860 as an offshoot of the Montreal Society of Artists (itself dating to 1847), the Art Association of Montreal became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1947. The MMFA is now a major international museum, with more than 760,000 visitors annually.

### **Barbizon**

A village on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau near Paris and, from the 1830s to the 1870s, a gathering place for French landscape painters who rejected the academic style in favour of realism. This informal group, later known as the Barbizon school, emphasized painting *en plein air*, in and directly from nature, setting the path for Impressionism. Major artists of the group include Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot.

### **Bastien-Lepage, Jules (French, 1848–1884)**

A leading French Naturalist painter, Bastien-Lepage was especially known for his rural scenes and portraits of famous performers. He studied with Alexandre Cabanel at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris 1867 and was awarded the prestigious Legion of Honour in 1879 for his *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt*.

### **Beaver Hall Group**

A group of approximately twenty-nine Montreal-based artists (1920–23), named after its headquarters on Montreal’s Beaver Hall Hill. Half of the group’s members and associates were women. Like the Group of Seven (founded just weeks earlier), it promoted modernist art, but the Beaver Hall Group went beyond landscapes to concentrate on urban and rural scenes, portraiture, and the human figure. Prominent adherents included Emily Coonan, Adrien and Henri Hébert, Prudence Heward, Edwin Holgate, Mabel May, Sarah Robertson, Albert Robinson, and Anne Savage.

**Bell-Smith, F.M. (British/Canadian, 1846–1923)**

A prolific watercolour and oil painter best known today for his landscapes and especially for his views of the Rocky and Selkirk mountain ranges. The English-born Bell-Smith studied art in London before immigrating in 1867 to Canada, where he worked and taught in Montreal, Hamilton, Toronto, and elsewhere in southern Ontario. He made his first visit to British Columbia in 1887 on free passes supplied by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and his intense engagement with the mountains would draw him back several times over the next three decades.

**British Empire Exhibition**

The British Empire Exhibition was a celebration of colonial industry, natural resources, and culture held in 1924 and 1925 at Wembley Park in London, England. Featuring gardens, pavilions, a stadium, and an amusement park, the grand exhibition was intended to enhance trade and economic connections between Britain's various territories, fifty-six of which were participants. Canada's pavilion highlighted not only the dominion's dairy, mining, forestry, and rail industries, but also recent and contemporary Canadian art.

**Brown, Eric (British/Canadian, 1877–1939)**

As the first director of the National Gallery of Canada, Brown held the position from 1912 until his death. Earlier, he had been curator of the gallery's collection, at the invitation of Sir Edmund Walker, a banker and major patron of the arts. Brown was a passionate builder of the gallery's collections, both international and Canadian, and travelled often to Europe to make contacts with artists and dealers.

**Brymner, William (Scottish/Canadian, 1855–1925)**

A painter and influential teacher who contributed greatly to the development of painting in Canada, Brymner instructed at the Art Association of Montreal. Several of his students, including A.Y. Jackson, Edwin Holgate, and Prudence Heward, became prominent figures in Canadian art.

**Canadian Art Club**

Active from 1907 to 1915, the Toronto-based Canadian Art Club was spearheaded by the painters Edmund Morris and Curtis Williamson as a departure from what they viewed as the low standards of the Ontario Society of Artists. The invitation-only club included prominent Canadian painters and sculptors influenced by international developments, including recent Dutch and French painting. One of its goals was to entice expatriates, most notably James Wilson Morrice and Clarence Gagnon, to exhibit in Canada. Homer Watson served as the Canadian Art Club's first president.



**Canadian Group of Painters**

Founded in 1933 after the disbanding of the Group of Seven by former members and their associates, the Canadian Group of Painters championed modernist painting styles against the entrenched traditionalism of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. It provided a platform for artists across Canada who were pursuing a variety of new concerns, from the formal experimentation of Bertram Brooker to the modern-figure subjects of Prudence Heward and Pegi Nicol MacLeod and the expressive landscapes of Emily Carr.

**Clausen, George (British, 1852–1944)**

A painter of rural landscapes and peasant life, Clausen was a proponent of British Impressionism and a co-founder of the New English Art Club in 1886. He believed in bringing reform to the stiff traditional style of the Royal Academy of Arts, where he taught from 1904 to 1906. He served as a war artist during the First World War and was knighted in 1927.

**Constable, John (British, 1776–1837)**

Viewed today, along with J.M.W. Turner, as one of the greatest British landscape and sky painters of the nineteenth century. Constable painted mostly in his native region of Suffolk and the surrounding areas. He took a more expressive approach to his paintings than many of his predecessors and contemporaries.

**Corot, Jean-Baptiste-Camille (French, 1796–1875)**

Although known today as a landscape painter—among the most influential of the nineteenth century—and the leading member of the Barbizon school of French nature painters, Corot rose to prominence in his own time for the Romantic tableaux he exhibited regularly at the Paris Salon.

**Daubigny, Charles-François (French, 1817–1878)**

Daubigny was a naturalistic landscape painter and one of the earliest promoters in France of *plein air* painting. Although closely associated with the Barbizon school, a group of artists who lived and painted outdoors in the forest of Fontainebleau, he was more dedicated to river scenery than to forest interiors. His interest in the depiction of light and its reflections made him a precursor of Impressionism. He was also an important supporter of Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.

**Doré, Gustave (French, 1832–1883)**

Doré worked in various media, including painting and sculpture, but was best known as a popular caricaturist, illustrator, and printmaker. He produced large numbers of wood engravings for many publications, including literary works by authors such as Dante Alighieri, John Milton, Cervantes, Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Technically brilliant, his illustrations and prints were often characterized by their exploitation of fantasy, excess, and the sublime.

**Dowdeswell Gallery**

A gallery opened in about 1878 by art dealer Charles William Dowdeswell in London, England. The Dowdeswell Gallery supported rising English artists from 1878 to the early 1920s, exhibiting their paintings and publishing their prints. Among the artists promoted by the gallery were James McNeill Whistler, Myles Birket Foster, and Byam Shaw.

**Dupré, Jules (French, 1811–1889)**

A landscape and marine painter and a leading member of the Barbizon school, although he seldom took the forest of Fontainebleau as a subject. As a young artist, Dupré had been influenced by the work of the English Romantic landscape painter John Constable. Throughout his career he was less interested than most of his Barbizon colleagues in exploring the shifting effects of light than he was in transmuting the landscape into emotionally evocative visual statements.

**Dutch Gallery**

The Dutch Gallery was opened in 1892 as the London, England, branch of the Amsterdam-based E.J. van Wisselingh & Co. art dealership. Operating until the First World War, the gallery exhibited especially Barbizon and Hague School landscapes and genre scenes. The Dutch Gallery was renamed E.J. van Wisselingh's Gallery in 1906.

**Díaz de la Peña, Narcisse (French, 1807–1876)**

A landscape painter who, beginning in the early 1830s, established friendships with artists with whom he later formed the Barbizon school. Like most of those artists, he worked extensively in the forest of Fontainebleau, where he often spent his summers. He had a particularly close relationship with fellow Barbizon painter Théodore Rousseau. Díaz de la Peña's landscapes tend to be more richly painted and to rely on more dramatic lighting effects than do the generally more meditative views of his colleagues.

**Eaton, Wyatt (Canadian/American, 1849–1896)**

A landscape, genre, and portrait painter as well as an illustrator, Eaton was born in Quebec's Eastern Townships, but moved to New York City in 1867 before spending four years, 1872–1876, working and studying in London and Paris. Following his first trip to France he was inspired by the work of Jean-François Millet and other artists of the Barbizon school. Eaton taught at The Cooper Union art school in New York, and was a founding member of the Society of Canadian Artists, as well as of both the American Art Association and its successor, the Society of American Artists.



**Edson, Aaron Allan (Canadian, 1846–1888)**

A leading landscape painter of his day, Edson spent time living and studying in England, Scotland, and France at various points in his life, but otherwise centred his career in Montreal and in Quebec's Eastern Townships. His early interest in vivid detail was augmented by his rich and sophisticated sense of colour, and by his poetic experiments with the depiction of light. Edson was a founding member of the Society of Canadian Artists (1867). His death at the age of forty-one cut short one of the most accomplished artistic careers of his day in Canada.

**engraving**

The name applied to both a type of print and the process used in its production. Engravings are made by cutting into a metal, wood, or plastic plate with specialized tools and then inking the incised lines. The ink is transferred to paper under the immense pressure of a printing press.

***en plein air***

French for "in the open air," used to describe the practice of painting or sketching outdoors to observe nature, and in particular the changing effects of weather, atmosphere, and light.

**Ford, Harriet (Canadian, 1859–1938)**

A painter, muralist, writer, and jewellery maker, Ford studied at the Central Ontario School of Art in Toronto in 1881, then travelled to England and France to continue her art education at the Royal Academy of Arts and Académie Colarossi. She was a founding member of the Society of Mural Decorators. Ford co-edited the magazine *Tarot* (1896), which was dedicated to the Arts and Crafts Movement.

**Fraser, John Arthur (British/Canadian, 1838–1898)**

A painter, photographer, illustrator, and art teacher born in England. Upon immigrating to Canada around 1860, Fraser began painting studio backdrops for the photographer William Notman, becoming a partner in Notman's Toronto firm in 1867.

**Gainsborough, Thomas (British, 1727–1788)**

A leading British portrait painter of the second half of the eighteenth century, Gainsborough was known for the feathery quality of his brushwork. He had a well-known rivalry with the portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds. In 1768, Gainsborough was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

**Goupil Gallery**

The London, England, branch of renowned Paris-based art dealership Goupil & Cie., the Goupil Gallery was established by Ernest Gambart in 1857 as a prints and drawings shop. In the mid-1870s it became increasingly important as an exhibiting venue for such prominent late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British and French artists as James McNeill Whistler and the Barbizon school painters. The gallery was destroyed during the Second World War.

**Gregory, E.J. (British, 1850–1909)**

Edward John (E.J.) Gregory was a watercolour and oil painter and, from 1871 to 1875, illustrator for the weekly newspaper *The Graphic*. He was best known for portraits and scenes of daily life. Gregory was also much admired for his technical skill and his sophisticated draftsmanship, qualities that helped him win gold medals at international exhibitions during the late nineteenth century.

**Grier, E. Wyly (Australian/Canadian, 1862–1957)**

A portrait painter who depicted influential Canadian businessmen, politicians, and others. Following studies at the Slade School of Art in London, the Scuola Libera del Nudo in Rome, and the Académie Julian in Paris, he returned to Canada in 1891 and established a portrait studio in Toronto. Grier served as president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts from 1929 to 1939, and in 1935 became the first Canadian to be knighted for his work as an artist.

**Group of Seven**

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

**Hague School**

A group of Dutch Realist painters active in The Hague, on the northwest coast of the Netherlands, from around 1860 to 1890. They were influenced by France's Barbizon school, which also reacted against the idealization of nature in academic art. The Hague School style is characterized by sombre tones used to depict everyday scenes of fishermen, farmers, windmills, and seascapes. The group led to the formation of the Amsterdam Impressionists, and included Jozef Israëls and Jacob Maris.

**Harris, Lawren (Canadian, 1885–1970)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1920, Harris was widely considered its unofficial leader. Unlike other members of the group, Harris moved away from painting representational landscapes, first to abstracted landscapes and then to pure abstraction. The Group of Seven broke up in 1933, and when the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1933, Harris was elected its first president.

**Haudenosaunee**

The Haudenosaunee, or People of the Longhouse, form a democratic confederacy of five Iroquois nations consisting of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. In 1722, the Tuscarora nation joined the confederacy, which became known as Six Nations to English speakers. Each nation has its own language and traditional territory, spread throughout New York and parts of Quebec and eastern Ontario. The Six Nations of the Grand River reserve, where all nations are represented, is located near Brantford, Ontario, on the still-disputed Haldimand Tract land.



**Henderson, Alexander (Canadian, 1831–1913)**

A landscape and portrait photographer, whose images of nature and wilderness were prized in his day. An important figure in the early history of Canadian photography, Henderson was appointed chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway's new photography department in 1892.

**Hewton, Randolph (Canadian, 1888–1960)**

A founding member of the Beaver Hall Group and the Canadian Group of Painters, Hewton painted landscapes, figures, and portraits. He was one of William Brymner's many students at the school of the Art Association of Montreal, and later studied at the Académie Julien in Paris. From 1921 to 1924 he was the director of the school of the AAM, where he encouraged his students to experiment with the bright, assertive colours and decorative compositions that he favoured in his own art.

**Hobbema, Meindert (Dutch, 1638–1709)**

A landscape painter of wooded scenes, gently winding rural roads, and forest entrances dappled with light. As a teenager, Hobbema trained in the studio of eminent Dutch Golden Age painter Jacob van Ruisdael. Hobbema was not well known during his lifetime and died a pauper, but he gained recognition from the eighteenth century onward, especially for later paintings such as *Avenue of Trees in Middelharnis*, 1689.

**Hudson River School**

A nationalistic and Romantic school of landscape painting that arose informally in the mid-nineteenth century when increasing industry threatened to change the natural environment of the United States. The majority of Hudson River School painters were based in New York, often depicting the Catskill and Adirondack mountains. These painters embedded a sense of drama, the sublime, and the monumental into their portrayals of nature, transforming landscape into a symbol of the intangible sense of God's creation. Thomas Cole and Asher Durand were among the school's leading members.

**impasto**

Paint applied so thickly that it stands out in relief and retains the marks of the brush or palette knife.

**Impressionism**

A highly influential art movement that originated in France in the 1860s and is associated with the emergence of modern urban European society. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and other Impressionists rejected the subjects and formal rigours of academic art in favour of scenes of nature and daily life and the careful rendering of atmospheric effects. They often painted outdoors.

**Inness, George (American, 1825–1894)**

A largely self-taught landscape painter whose influences included both the Hudson River School and Barbizon painting. Inness's aesthetics and philosophy were heavily indebted to the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, with whom he shared a belief in the close connection between the natural and spiritual worlds. He was widely recognized during his lifetime as a major figure in American art: someone whose landscapes excelled in evoking atmosphere, emotion, and spiritual suggestiveness.

**International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers**

A professional artists' union that existed from 1898 to 1925, dedicated to exhibiting and promoting what it termed "the finest art of the day." The union became known as simply The International, with James McNeill Whistler serving as its first president, followed first by French sculptor Auguste Rodin and then by Irish painter William Orpen. The majority of The International's public and private exhibitions were held in London, England, with the first American exhibition held in 1904 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Membership was by invitation only.

**Jackson, A.Y. (Canadian, 1882–1974)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven and an important voice in the formation of a distinctively Canadian artistic tradition. A Montreal native, Jackson studied painting in Paris before moving to Toronto in 1913; his northern landscapes are characterized by the bold brush strokes and vivid colours of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences.

**Jacobi, Otto (German/Canadian, 1812–1901)**

Primarily a landscape painter, Jacobi immigrated to Canada from Germany in 1860. He was associated with the Düsseldorf school of landscape painting, with its emphasis on visually detailed scenes, often with narrative content. Upon settling in Montreal he dedicated himself to the portrayal of Canada's topography, his early Canadian work occasionally using photographs by William Notman as source material. He served as president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts from 1890 to 1893.

**Kerr-Lawson, James (Scottish/Canadian, 1862–1939)**

Both a skilled lithographer and a painter of landscapes and urban scenes, Kerr-Lawson immigrated to Canada as a child. He studied first at the Ontario School of Art, and later in France and Italy. He returned to Canada in 1885, but after a brief stay he moved to Europe, establishing himself in Glasgow and London. In 1908 Kerr-Lawson became a founding member of the Senefelder Club to promote interest in lithography. He also exhibited with the Canadian Art Club from 1912 to 1915.



**Lisner, Arthur (British/Canadian, 1885–1969)**

A landscape painter and founding member of the Group of Seven, Lisner immigrated to Canada from England in 1911. He was also an influential educator of adults and children, and he created children's art schools at both the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (1933) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1946).

**Lorrain, Claude (French, c. 1604–1682)**

A painter, printmaker, draftsman, and master of the landscape—a genre that did not exist as such in his day. Lorrain employed a limited palette of colours to achieve remarkable atmospheric effects, and his study of light falling on natural environments, evident in both his paintings and prints, was unique for his time.

**MacDonald, J.E.H. (British/Canadian, 1873–1932)**

A painter, printmaker, calligrapher, teacher, poet, and designer, and a founding member of the Group of Seven. His sensitive treatment of the Canadian landscape was influenced by Walt Whitman's poetry and Henry David Thoreau's views on nature.

**Martin, Thomas Mower (British/Canadian, 1838–1934)**

Martin was principally a landscape painter. He immigrated to Canada from England in 1862. He soon established himself as a professional artist in Toronto, becoming a founding member of both the Ontario Society of Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He produced landscapes in eastern Canada as well as in the United States, but is perhaps best known for the mountain landscapes he painted and exhibited after the Canadian Pacific Railway gave him and other artists free passes to travel west.

**Matthews, Marmaduke (British/Canadian, 1837–1913)**

An oil and watercolour painter who immigrated to Toronto from England in 1860. He used free passes issued to artists by the Canadian Pacific Railway to make trips to western Canada in the 1880s and 1890s, producing several views of the mountains there. Matthews was also a founding member of the Ontario Society of Artists, later becoming president, and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

**Mauve, Anton (Dutch, 1838–1888)**

A prominent figure of the Hague School of landscape painters, Mauve was a skilled colourist who specialized in rural scenes of cattle and sheep, and of peasants at work. As a teenager, he apprenticed with Pieter Frederik van Os, and later drew on the influences of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and the Barbizon school. He had a profound early impact on Vincent van Gogh, whom he taught and to whom he was related by marriage.

**May, (Henrietta) Mabel (Canadian, 1877–1971)**

A modernist painter of landscapes, urban scenes, and portraits and figure paintings of women. May studied under William Brymner at the Art Association of Montreal, before spending time in Britain and France in 1912–13. After her return to Canada she was commissioned by the Canadian War Memorials Fund to depict women workers in munitions factories. May was an active member of Montreal's Beaver Hall Group in the early 1920s and a founder of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933.

**McCurry, H.O. (Canadian, 1889–1964)**

An avid collector and advocate for the arts and art education in Canada, H.O. McCurry was patron to artist Tom Thomson and close with members of the Group of Seven. He was the assistant director of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, from 1919 to 1939, and succeeded Eric Brown as director from 1939 to 1955.

**mezzotint**

An engraving technique whereby a metal plate is systematically pricked with numerous tiny holes to produce a print with subtle gradations of dark and light, used often from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries for reproducing paintings.

**Millet, Jean-François (French, 1814–1875)**

Born into a peasant family, Millet was one of the founders of the Barbizon school, a group known for painting *en plein air* and favouring landscapes as subject matter. He is prominently recognized for empathetic depictions of rural labourers and peasants created just as the Industrial Revolution was causing mass migrations from the countryside to urban centres such as Paris. Millet was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1868 and was an inspiration for Vincent van Gogh.

**Milne, David (Canadian, 1881–1953)**

A painter, printmaker, and illustrator whose work—principally landscapes—displays the tonal brilliance and concern with process of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences. Milne lived in New York early in his career, where he trained at the Art Students League and participated in the Armory Show in 1913.

**modernism**

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society.

Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.



**Morris, Edmund Montague (Canadian, 1871–1913)**

A painter best known for his portraits of Indigenous leaders during Canada's post-Confederation treaty negotiations, especially of the early twentieth century, although he was also an admired landscape painter. In 1906 Morris, on commission, accompanied the James Bay expedition for the negotiation of Treaty 9 with Cree and Ojibway peoples. He often used pastel in detailed, close-up portraits of Indigenous chiefs. With fellow painter Curtis Williamson, Morris instigated the creation of the Canadian Art Club in 1907, of which he was a key member.

**Morris, Kathleen (Canadian, 1893–1986)**

A painter especially noted for her urban and rural subjects. Morris studied at the Art Association of Montreal under William Brymner and Maurice Cullen. Although she does not appear to have exhibited with the Beaver Hall Group in the early 1920s, she is closely associated with the group. Her paintings of scenery in Montreal and Quebec City, as well as her depictions of the ByWard Market in Ottawa, exemplify the interest that she and her contemporaries had in chronicling modern city life.

**Muir, Catherine Adah (1860–1952)**

Usually called Caterina or Cassy, Muir married the artist James Kerr-Lawson in 1889 and was an ardent promoter of his work. She was born in Scarborough, Ontario, but relocated to Europe with her mother and stepfather in 1887. She and Kerr-Lawson travelled and lived in England, Scotland, France, Spain, Italy, and Morocco. During the First World War she volunteered at Queen Mary's Hospital for Nurses, in London.

**National Gallery of Canada**

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the Governor General the Marquis of Lorne, the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988 the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

**Neutral (Attawandaron)**

The Neutral Confederacy existed prior to the mid-seventeenth century as a political and cultural union of several Indigenous nations spanning southwestern Ontario, across the Niagara River to New York. The Neutral, a name used by Samuel Champlain, or Attawandaron, a name used by the Huron-Wendat, were eventually dispersed by the Seneca and absorbed into Haudenosaunee communities.

**New English Art Club**

Formed in London, England, in 1886 as a rejection of the conservative style of the Royal Academy of Arts. The New English Art Club was composed of a group of artists influenced by Impressionism, with early members including James McNeill Whistler, Walter Sickert, Philip Wilson Steer, and John Singer Sargent. The club still exists today to promote painting from the direct observation of nature and the human figure.

**Notman-Fraser photographic studio**

A highly successful studio opened by photographer and entrepreneur William Notman at 120 King Street East in Toronto in 1868, the third of his studio operations in Canada, which would eventually be part of the largest photographic business in North America. The Toronto studio was managed by Notman's business partner John Arthur Fraser, a painter, photographer, and illustrator. The studio closed in 1880 when it was sold by Fraser.

**Ontario Society of Artists (OSA)**

Canada's oldest extant professional artists' association, formed in 1872 by seven artists from various disciplines. Its first annual exhibition was held in 1873. The OSA eventually played an important role in the founding of OCAD University and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

**O'Brien, Lucius Richard (Canadian, 1832–1899)**

A prominent oil and watercolour painter of Canadian landscapes, vice-president of the Ontario Society of Artists (1874–80), and the founding president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1880–90). He travelled extensively in Canada, reaching as far as the west coast. For the serial publication *Picturesque Canada* (1882–84) he supervised the commissioning of illustrations, himself producing the vast majority of images upon which the engraved illustrations were based.

**Reid, George Agnew (Canadian, 1860–1947)**

A painter of portraits, figure studies, and genre and historical scenes. With his training in the academic tradition, and his roles as president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1906–9) and principal of the Ontario College of Art, Reid became a key figure in Ontario's art scene. Inspired by the mural revivals in Europe and the United States, he promoted mural art in Canada—an activity that was part of his larger concern with using the visual arts to beautify urban life and encourage civic virtues.

**Romantic tradition**

A multi-faceted movement that affected most areas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western culture, including art, literature, and philosophy. Romanticism privileged the emotional and the subjective; it arose in opposition to Enlightenment-era rationalism.



**Rosa, Salvator (Italian, 1615–1673)**

A Baroque painter, poet, satirist, and composer adopted by artists of the Romantic movement as an unorthodox and rebellious figure. Rosa famously refused to work on commission and insisted on choosing his subject matter, yet found financial success in receiving the patronage of Cardinal Giovanni Carlo de' Medici. He portrayed sweeping views of religious and historical subjects in rugged and wild landscapes.

**Ross, James (Canadian/Scottish, 1848–1913)**

An engineer, businessman, and philanthropist known for his involvement in the construction of several Canadian railways and support of hospitals and other institutions. Ross served as the president of several business ventures, including the Dominion Bridge Company, the Mexican Light and Power Company, and the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company. He was also the president of the Art Association of Montreal, to which he made considerable donations. He held one of the finest art collections in Canada, including European Old Masters, and was Canadian artist Homer Watson's most supportive patron.

**Rousseau, Théodore (French, 1812–1867)**

A leading figure of French nineteenth-century landscape painting in general and of the Barbizon school in particular. Rousseau's early emphasis on painting from the direct observation of nature challenged the calm, idealistic landscapes of his Neoclassical teachers. His works embraced nature as a wild and undisciplined force with power that outshone the human industries of modern life.

**Royal Academy of Arts**

Established in 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts in London was a central art institution that, along with the Paris Salon, could exert tremendous influence on an artist's career. By the mid-nineteenth century, European avant-garde movements such as Impressionism began to diminish the power held by the Royal Academy and similar institutions.

**Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)**

An organization of professional artists and architects modelled after national academies long present in Europe, such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. (founded in 1768) and the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris (founded in 1648).

**Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts**

The Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts was founded in 1861 to exhibit and promote the work of contemporary artists. In 1891 it became the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts. It supported many prominent nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century figures, including William Holman Hunt, Frances and Margaret MacDonald, George Frederic Watts, and James McNeill Whistler. Currently the institute organizes the largest annual art exhibition in Scotland.

**Royal Institute of Oil Painters**

Founded in 1882, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters remains the only major British society to exclusively promote works completed in oil. The institute is one of nine member groups of the Federation of British Artists.

**Royal Society of British Artists**

Established in 1823 by a group of artists as an alternative to the Royal Academy in London. The society's membership consists of sculptors, painters, architects, and printmakers. Its first gallery was designed by John Nash and built on Suffolk Street, London. Prominent past members include James McNeill Whistler, Frank Brangwyn, and Walter Richard Sickert.

**The Jenkins Art Gallery**

A Toronto-based gallery operated by the art dealer Thomas Jenkins on Grenville Street in the early decades of the twentieth century. It exhibited both Canadian and international artists. In 1920 it held a major exhibition and sale of paintings by Homer Watson.

**Thomson, Tom (Canadian, 1877–1917)**

A seminal figure in the creation of a national school of painting, whose bold vision of Algonquin Park—aligned stylistically with Post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau—has come to symbolize both the Canadian landscape and Canadian landscape painting. Thomson and the members of what would in 1920 become the Group of Seven profoundly influenced one another's work. (See *Tom Thomson: Life & Work* by David P. Silcox.)

**Troyon, Constant (French, 1810–1865)**

A landscape painter of the Barbizon school who gained more recognition for his turn toward animal painting after 1846, especially his scenes of cattle in rural and forest settings. Troyon won first-class medals at the Paris Salon in 1846 and 1848, and was elected to the Legion of Honour in 1849.

**Turner, J.M.W. (British, 1775–1851)**

Widely considered the foremost British landscape painter of the nineteenth century, Turner imbued his paintings with an expressive romanticism. His subject matter ranged from local landscapes to otherworldly natural events. He has been heralded as a precursor to both Impressionism and modernist abstract art.

**van Ruisdael, Jacob (Dutch, 1628–1682)**

The leading landscape painter of the Dutch Golden Age. Van Ruisdael had a long career during which he emphasized the lively, romantic character of his subjects by using panoramic views, expansive skies, billowing clouds, stormy weather, rushing water, traces of a human presence, and a technique that combines detail with thick impasto.



**Varley, F.H. (Frederick Horsman) (British/Canadian, 1881–1969)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven, known for his contributions to Canadian portraiture as well as landscape painting. Originally from Sheffield, England, Varley moved to Toronto in 1912 at the encouragement of his friend Arthur Lismer. From 1926 to 1936 he taught at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

**Verner, Frederick Arthur (Canadian, 1836–1928)**

A landscape painter known for calm and idyllic depictions of Canadian scenery, especially the Prairies. He studied in London, but returned in 1862 to Canada, where he initially worked in photography. Verner was intrigued by the art of Paul Kane, and soon began depicting his own Indigenous subjects. He also gained fame for his many depictions of buffalo. Although he moved permanently to London in 1880, he continued to exhibit in Canada, and became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1893.

**Walker, Horatio (Canadian, 1858–1938)**

Although born and raised in rural Ontario, Walker specialized in paintings of French rural life, especially on Île d'Orléans, Quebec, where he lived for many years and where he took up permanent residence in 1928. His widely admired art drew upon Jean-François Millet's depictions of the rural poor in France and the naturalism of the Barbizon school. Walker was a founding member of the Canadian Art Club in 1907, serving as the club's president in 1915.

**Whistler, James McNeill (American/British, 1834–1903)**

Whistler, a painter and printmaker, was a leading promoter of "art for art's sake": the doctrine that an artist should create evocative visual experiences based principally on the subtle harmonization of colour, not on sentiment or moral lessons. Believing that painting and music had much in common, he used music references in the titles of many of his paintings, including *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* (1871; better known as *Whistler's Mother*). In 1877 the art critic John Ruskin accused him of "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face" when Whistler exhibited *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*. Whistler sued Ruskin, but was awarded damages of only one farthing.

**Wilde, Oscar (Irish, 1854–1900)**

A popular and controversial playwright and poet, known for works such as *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Wilde had an international reputation for his brilliant wit, sparkling prose, flamboyant clothing, advocacy of the Aesthetic Movement, and insistence on the importance of beauty in daily life and the autonomy of art. His imprisonment from 1895 to 1897 for gross indecency remains a touchstone in LGBTQ2+ history.

**woodcut**

A relief method of printing that involves carving a design into a block of wood, which is then inked and printed, using either a press or simple hand pressure. This technique was invented in China and spread to the West in the thirteenth century.



# SOURCES & RESOURCES

Homer Watson has been the subject of one major retrospective exhibition and catalogue. Books about him range from reminiscences by family members to more detailed, analytical studies. In addition, Watson wrote a few essays that were not published during his lifetime. Voluminous correspondence is held in the Homer Watson Fonds in the National Gallery of Canada Library & Archives in Ottawa, and additional correspondence can be found at the Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; North York



Public Library; University of Toronto Archives; Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; MacKenzie Art Gallery Archives, Regina; Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; and the Homer Ransford Watson Fonds in the Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

#### KEY EXHIBITIONS



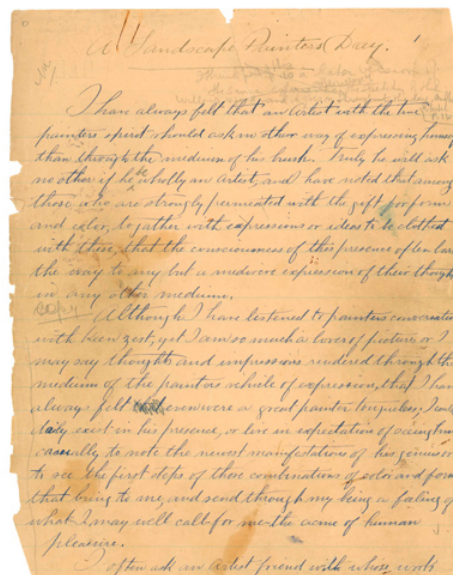
LEFT: Installation view of *Bringing Heritage Home* at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener, 2012, photograph by Robert McNair.  
RIGHT: Installation view of *Bringing Heritage Home* at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener, 2012, photograph by Robert McNair.

<b>1878</b>	Ontario Society of Artists Annual Exhibition, Toronto.
<b>1880</b>	Canadian Academy of Arts Annual Exhibition, Ottawa.
<b>1886</b>	Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London.
<b>1893</b>	World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago.
<b>1899</b>	Dowdeswell Gallery, London.  Cottier Gallery, New York.
<b>1901</b>	Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo.
<b>1904</b>	Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis.
<b>1906</b>	Cottier Gallery, New York.
<b>1920</b>	<i>Masterpieces of Canadian Art by Homer Watson</i> , The Jenkins Art Gallery, Toronto.
<b>1930</b>	<i>Exhibition of Paintings by Homer Watson, R.C.A., O.S.A.</i> , Art Gallery of Toronto.
<b>1936</b>	<i>Homer Watson, R.C.A., LL.D.: Memorial Exhibition of Selected Works</i> , Mellors Galleries, Toronto.

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- 1963** *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855–1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 
- 1975** *Nature Seen through a Temperament: Homer Watson, 1855–1936*, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.
- 
- 1991** Homer Watson Annual Exhibition, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. This series of annual exhibitions has continued to the present day.
- 
- 2005–6** *Homer Watson: Not Your Average Pastoral Picnic: Selections from the Permanent Collection*, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.
- 
- 2012** *Bringing Heritage Home*, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.
- 
- 2015** *Parallel Destinies: Homer Watson and Carl Ahrens*, Dundas Museum and Archives.
- 

## WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST

Watson's writings principally comprise essays that combine autobiographical reminiscence and fictionalization to advance his views about landscape painting as a genre, the need for human beings to establish respectful relationships with their geographical environments, and the ways in which painters transpose the natural landscape into the artificiality of art. None of those essays was published during his lifetime, and all exist in varying degrees of incompleteness. They are, though, essential for any reader hoping to grasp the complexity of Watson's thinking about issues that were important to him.



LEFT: Homer Watson, "A Landscape Painter's Day," first page from a prose manuscript, n.d., Queen's University Archives, Kingston. RIGHT: Homer Watson picnicking in New Dundee, Ontario, 1939, photographer unknown, Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

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Installation view of *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1963, photographer unknown.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### BRIAN FOSS

Brian Foss has been the director of Carleton University's School for Studies in Art and Culture since 2009. Prior to that he was professor of art history at Concordia University (1988–2009), and he has also been the Craig Dobbin Visiting Chair of Canadian Studies at University College Dublin (2014–15). With Anne Whitelaw and Sandra Paikowsky he edited *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, a collection of twenty new essays (Oxford University Press, 2010). Outside of Canadian art, his monograph *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939–1945* was published in 2007 by Yale University Press.

Foss has curated and co-curated several exhibitions of historical Canadian art, including the work of Mary Hiester Reid (with Janice Anderson, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2000) and the Beaver Hall Group (with Jacques Des Rochers, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2015). The Beaver Hall Group show won the Canadian Museums Association's 2015 Award of Outstanding Achievement for art exhibitions, and the catalogue was the recipient of that year's Melva J. Dwyer Award from ARLIS/NA (the Art Libraries Society of North America), as well as of the 2016 publications prize from the Société des musées du Québec. Foss was co-editor of *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* (2001–12) and is currently the chair of the advisory board of the *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*.



**"My first opportunity to do sustained work on Homer Watson came in 2000, when I held a Canadian Centre for the Visual Arts Fellowship at the National Gallery of Canada. That fellowship gave me time and funding to work my way through the NGC's collection of hundreds of pages of drawings from Watson's sketchbooks as well as large holdings of his correspondence and unpublished writings, especially in Ottawa but also in Toronto, Kingston, Victoria, and Regina."**



## COPYRIGHT & CREDITS

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

#### From the Author

The origins of this project lie with the Canadian Centre for the Visual Arts, at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), which gave me the funding, time, and facilities to read through the gallery's collection of Homer Watson's correspondence and to think seriously about his art. I will always be grateful for that opportunity. While I was in residence the late Murray Waddington (Chief, Library and Archives) added to the gallery's already voluminous holdings of Watson papers. I regret that he did not live to see this book's publication. Cyndie Campbell, the extraordinary head of the NGC Archives, was equally supportive.

I'm indebted to the private collectors who shared their artworks with me, and to the museum employees who responded patiently to my questions. Above all, Faith Hieblinger at the Homer Watson House & Gallery was unstintingly generous. Thanks also to Sandu Sindile; Tobi Bruce and Christine Braun (Art Gallery of Hamilton); Georgiana Uhlyarik and Donna Austria (Art Gallery of Ontario); Nicole McCabe and Jaclyn Meloche (Art Gallery of Windsor); Meredith Briden (Beaverbrook Art Gallery); Tracy Loch (Castle Kilbride); Jennifer Bullock (Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery); Jacques Des Rochers, Marie-Claude Saia, Justine Lebeau, and Anna Ciocola (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts); and Elaire Maund (Vancouver Art Gallery). Back at the NGC, John Collins, Sonia Del Re, and Jacqueline Warren gave me liberal access to the gallery's many Watson sketchbooks, while Susan Walker of the painting conservation lab helped me understand the physical aspects of his oils.

At the Art Canada Institute, Kendra Ward, Amanda Lewis, and Joy Xiang personified the principle of respectful collaboration. And, as ever, this book has benefited immeasurably from the advice, raised eyebrows, and outright criticisms of Charles C. Hill, the volume and detail of whose knowledge of Canadian art never fail to amaze.

#### From the Art Canada Institute

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*The Wheatfield*, c.1880-90. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener.

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Biography: *Homer Watson*, c.1913, photograph by Edmond Dyonnet. (See below for details.)



Key Works: *The Pioneer Mill*, 1880. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: *Before the Storm*, 1887. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: *River Landscape*, 1882. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Drawing for *A Land of Thrift*, c.1883. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Installation view of *Bringing Heritage Home* at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener, 2012. (See below for details.)



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### Credits for Works by Homer Watson



*After the Rain*, 1883. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, gift of Lord Beaverbrook, 1959 (1959.277). Photo credit: Beaverbrook Art Gallery.



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*Down in the Laurentides*, 1882. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, donated by the artist as a Royal Canadian Academy of Arts diploma work, Doon, 1882 (122). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



Drawing for *A Land of Thrift*, c.1883. Collection of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, gift of Paul and Stella Murphy, 1983. Courtesy of Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.



*Early Winter*, c.1930. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Mrs. S.J. Williams, Mrs. Harvey Sims, Mrs. T.M. Cram, and Miss Geneva Jackson, Kitchener, 1943. Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Emerald Lake, Banff*, c.1925. Collection of the Homer Watson House and Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.



*Evening Moonrise*, 1933. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, on loan to Laurier House, Ottawa (C-151410). Courtesy of Brechin Group.



*Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881. Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, purchased 1950 (1950.1). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



*Grand River Valley*, c.1880. Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.





*A Grey Day at the Ford*, 1885. Collection of the Hamilton Club. Photo credit: Daniel Banko. Courtesy of the Hamilton Club.



*Haymaking, Last Load*, c.1880. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the North American Life Assurance Co., 1963. Photo credit: Art Gallery of Hamilton.



*High Water, Pine Bend*, c.1935. Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, gift of Earl Putnam, 1980. Photo credit: Robert McNair. Courtesy of Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.



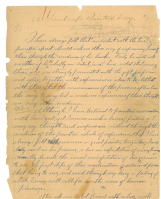
*A Hillside Gorge*, 1889. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, 1890 (5). Courtesy of Brian Foss.



*The Flood Gate*, c.1900-1. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1925 (3343). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*In Valley Flats near Doon*, c.1910. Collection of the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.



"A Landscape Painter's Day," first page from a prose manuscript, n.d., Queen's University Archives, Kingston, purchased through Chancellor Richardson Memorial Fund (2033). Photo credit and courtesy of Jeremy Heil.



*Landscape*, 1889. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1981 (23984). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



Landscape drawings and a preliminary outline of a building from Sketchbook F, early 1880s. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (7875.92r). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Landscape, Scotland*, 1888. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1957 from Harold M. Gully, Toronto (6678). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Landscape with Road*, c.1889. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1962 (7903). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*The Last of the Drouth (The Last Day of the Drought)*, 1881. Royal Collection Trust, Windsor, acquired by Queen Victoria (RCIN 400547). Photo credit: Royal Collection Trust.



*Life and Thought Hath Fled Away*, c.1865-69. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (7875.96). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



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*Log-cutting in the Woods*, 1894. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Lord Strathcona and family, 1927. Photo credit: Brian Merrett.



*Moonlight, Waning Winter*, 1924. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1927 (3514). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.





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*The Old Mill and Stream*, 1879. Collection of Castle Kilbride, Baden. Photo credit: Robert McNair. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



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*On the Mohawk River*, 1878. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Colonel D.H.C. Mason, Toronto, 1949 (48/34). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Ontario.



*Passage to the Unknown*, 1918-20. Location unknown. Courtesy of RACAR 14:2 (1987) and Ellen Donald.



*Pioneers Crossing the River*, 1896. Private collection. Courtesy Brian Foss.



*The Pioneer Mill*, 1880. Royal Collection, Windsor, acquired by Queen Victoria as a gift from the Marquis of Lorne (RCIN 400548). Photo credit: Royal Collection Trust.



*The Pioneer Mill*, 1890. Private collection. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



*Quilp and Sampson Brass in the Old Curiosity Shop*, late 1860s to early 1870s. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1962 (Sketchbook 7875.63). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*The Ranges (Camp at Sunrise)*, 1915. Canadian War Museum, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Ottawa (19710261-0810). Photo credit: Canadian War Museum.

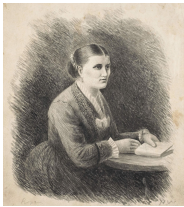




*The River Drivers*, 1914, 1925. MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, gift of Mr. Norman MacKenzie (1914-003). Photo credit: Don Hall. Courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.



*River Landscape*, 1882. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, gift of Susan and Rick Diamond (2007.5.2). Photo credit: Trevor Mills. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Roxanna Bechtel Watson* from Sketchbook C, c.1880s. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1962 (7875.90). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Sheep and Shepherd*, c.1900. Private collection. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



*Smugglers' Cove, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia*, 1909. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, gift of Lord Beaverbrook, 1959 (1959.275). Photo credit: Beaverbrook Art Gallery.



*Speed River Flats near Preston*, c.1930. Collection of Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.



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Studio frieze, 1893-94. Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



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*The Swollen Creek*, c.1870. Collection of the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.



*Two Cows in a Stream*, c.1885. Collection of the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.



*The Valley of the Ridge*, 1922. Collection of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, gift of Earl Putnam, 1980. Photo credit: Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.





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*Baie-Saint-Paul*, c.1927, by Randolph Hewton. Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, bequest of Douglas S. Wilson, 1993 (36-009). Photo credit: Paul Litherland. Courtesy of Agnes Etherington Art Centre.



The Canadian Art section at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley Park, London, England, 1924. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada.



Canadian section at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886. Courtesy of *The Illustrated London News* (May 1886).



*The Cowherd*, c.1879, by Anton Mauve. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, bequest of William John and Agnes Learmont. Photo credit: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



*The Dead Steer'd by the Dumb*, by Gustave Doré, published in Alfred Tennyson, *Elaine*, London: Moxon, 1867. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo credit: Joy Xiang. Courtesy of the Toronto Reference Library.



The 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion training at Valcartier, Quebec, 1914. Canadian War Museum, George Metcalf Archival Collection, Ottawa (19740416-003). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.



*The Hay Wain*, 1821, by John Constable. Collection of the National Gallery, London, gift of Henry Vaughan, 1886 (NG1207).



*Homer Watson*, c.1913, photograph by Edmond Dyonnet. Edmond Dyonnet Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Courtesy of National Gallery of Canada.



Homer Watson in the new gallery addition to his home, Doon, 1906. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



Homer Watson picnicking in Cressman's Woods (now Homer Watson Park), 1934. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



Homer Watson reclining outdoors, c.1880. Photographer unknown. Collection of Queen's University Archives, Kingston (Homer Watson Fonds, 2033-2-10). Courtesy of Queen's University Archives.





Homer Watson's birthplace, 1866. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



Homer Watson with Rex the dog in Cressman's Woods, 1925. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



Homer Watson with spirits of the dead (faked photograph), 1930. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Queen's University Archives.



Installation view of *Bringing Heritage Home* at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener, 2012. Photo credit: Robert McNair. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



Installation view of *Bringing Heritage Home* at the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener, 2012. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



Installation view of *Homer Watson, R.C.A., 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings / Peintures et dessins* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1963. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of National Gallery of Canada.



*The Jack Pine*, 1916-17, by Tom Thomson. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1918 (1519). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Lake, North of Lake Superior*, 1870, by Frederick Verner. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Isabella C. McLennan, 1935 (1935.652). Photo credit: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



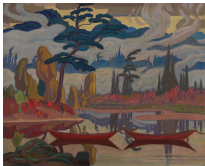
*The Lock and Dedham Vale*, 1834, by David Lucas (after John Constable). Private collection.



*Logging*, 1888, by George Reid. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, transfer from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2011, gift of the Brigadier General W.F. Sweny, C.M.G., DSO, in memory of his father, Colonel George A. Sweny, 1938 (45392). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



Members of the Canadian Art Club, c.1907-13. Collection of Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Lachlan MacTavish, 1971, 1976 (Newton MacTavish Fonds, LA.SC018.S8.41). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.



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*The Oak in the Valley*, 1871, by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. Collection of the National Gallery, London, gift of Mrs. Alice Bleecker, 1981 (NG6466).



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*The Rainbow*, c.1878-79, by George Inness. Collection of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Photo credit: Indianapolis Museum of Art.



Roxanna "Roxa" Watson with Mary Watson and Rex the dog, Doon, 1917. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Homer Watson House & Gallery.



*Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Marquis of Lorne*, 1879, by Notman & Sandham Studio, McCord Museum, Montreal (51-076-Misc.II). Courtesy of McCord Museum.



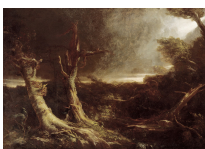
Six Nations Confederacy Council, Ohseweken, c.1910. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Six Nations Legacy Consortium, Ohseweken (SNPL000091v00i). Courtesy of Six Nations Public Library.



*The Storm*, 1872, by Narcisse Díaz de la Peña. Collection of Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (37.121). Photo credit: Walters Art Museum.



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