

• • • RECORD • • •

OF

THE • FOUNDING

OF THE

Royal Canadian Academy

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE

AND HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS LOUISE

AND THE

CONSTITUTION

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1891  
BINGHAM & WEBBER  
PRINTERS

40 LOMBARD ST.

TORONTO,

RECORDS OF THE FOUNDING

—OF THE—

*Royal Canadian Academy*

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE

AND HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS LOUISE

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In the month of February, 1879, the Vice-President of the Ontario Society of Artists, Mr. O'Brien, waited upon His Excellency the Marquis of Lorne, Governor-General of Canada, with a request that His Excellency and her Royal Highness the Princess Louise would become Patrons of the Society, as Lord Dufferin, the late Governor-General, had previously been.

In acceding to this request, His Excellency expressed the hope that it might not be long before a ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS might be instituted, to be composed of and managed by Canadian Artists.

On May 26th, the new building of the Arts Association of Montreal was opened by His Excellency and Her Royal Highness, and on this occasion the Governor-General again alluded to the prospect of forming a Royal Canadian Academy.

Shortly after this, in reply to a communication upon the same subject, His Excellency addressed the following letter to the Vice-President of the Ontario Society of Artists:

CITADEL, QUEBEC, JUNE 8TH, 1879.

DEAR MR. O'BRIEN,—I am only, comparatively speaking, a stranger here, and cannot know how such a scheme as that we have discussed will be taken up. I may, however, give you my impressions for whatever they are worth.

1st. That the existing Art Societies of each Province be requested to elect a certain number (which need not be much restricted) to represent the Province in a Dominion Art Association. Perhaps all present members of Provincial Societies might be willing to join.

2nd. That the Dominion Art Association (or whatever name is given to it) should consist of a President, Academicians, Associates, and Honorary Members. The last class might include all men willing to assist, everywhere, if approved of by the members who are not honorary.

3rd. That the objects of the Association be the exhibition of (1) Pictures on loan ; (2) Pictures by Artists who have not exhibited at any Dominion Exhibition held at the city in which the Dominion Exhibition for the year is held ; (3) Architectural Drawings ; (4) Designs for Manufactures, these being drawings and designs for all sorts and kinds of useful things, from wearing apparel and embroidery to designs for new stoves and implements.

4th. That it be a standing rule that each capital city of each Province be visited in turn by the Dominion Exhibition, *leaving, of course, the local societies to have an exhibition of their own each year as they like.* This would bring the exhibition to Ottawa only after Halifax, Fredericton, Quebec and Toronto had been visited, namely, every fifth year. No. 4 seems most necessary, as the jealousy between our widely scattered cities is great. We may except Winnipeg and Victoria until they are united by rail ; and for the want of good communication, Prince Edward Island might also be left out as far as an exhibition to be held there is concerned. In the meantime, it should be satisfied, I think, with having some members elected to the Association, and the share in prizes any of its artists or draughtsmen might obtain.

It is a question whether, in such a widely extended population, men can be brought to work together for art purposes ; but the attempt might be made, and could at all events do no harm. Forgive the crudeness of these suggestions, and believe me,  
yours sincerely,

LORNE.

In September of the same year, His Excellency and Her Royal Highness visited the rooms of the Ontario Society of Artists in Toronto. On this occasion His Excellency presided at a meeting of the Artists, when the project of the formation of an Academy was discussed, and the following resolution unanimously adopted :

*Resolved*,—That the members of this Society, having listened to the valuable suggestions of His Excellency in regard to the enlargement of the Society's usefulness, by the establishment of a Royal Canadian Academy to embrace the whole Dominion (leaving all present art organizations intact), desire to express their cordial approval of His Excellency's views, and also that an early meeting of the Society be called for the purpose of taking practical steps in that direction."

His Excellency the Governor-General having requested the officers of the Society of Artists to meet him on a subsequent day, drafted the following paper which he requested should be submitted to the Art Association of Montreal, that and the Ontario Society of Artists being the only important Art Societies existing in the Dominion.

" PROPOSITIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE  
MONTREAL ART ASSOCIATION.

1. That a Central Dominion Association be formed, to be called "The Canadian Academy." That when formed, the Association apply for permission to be called the "Royal Canadian Academy."

2. That Academicians be selected from gentlemen and ladies of the present Art Association of Montreal and Toronto, and who exhibit pictures or sculpture for sale ; and that by agreement between the officers of these societies a list of members be drafted, with power to add to the number, if it appear on enquiry that any other Art Association exists within the Dominion.

That in the first instance the Governor-General be asked by the Society to affirm this list, any subsequent co-operation on his part with the Society being a matter for after consideration.

3. That the Academicians so chosen shall be the governing body of the new Academy.

That they shall elect a certain number of new members at intervals to be subsequently determined.

That Associates be also elected by them.

That other gentlemen be invited by them to become honorary members.

4. That architecture and engraving be represented among the academicians.

5. That local associations hold their meetings as at present, and that the Dominion Academy shall in no way alter their present arrangements. Their meetings to be held or not at their option when the Academy exhibits in their city.

6. That the Academy hold the exhibition each year in a different city, taking by preference the capital cities of each Province.

That for the present Ottawa, Halifax, St. John, Montreal and Toronto be considered the cities best situated for the meetings of the first five years. The time of such exhibitions to be separately determined annually.

7. That the Exhibition consist of—

(1). Oil and water color pictures of the year.

(2). Sculpture.

(3). That pictures and sculpture may be exhibited, on selection by committee, more than once at option of Committee to Arrange Details for any given year.

(4). That architectural drawings be admitted on selection by committee.

(5). That engravings be admitted on selection by committee.

(6). That engineering drawings be admitted on selection by committee.

(7). That drawings of machinery be admitted on selection by committee.

(8). That drawings of industrial art and for house decoration and furniture be admitted on selection by committee.

(9). That a loan collection be also shown at the same time."

In pursuance of this request of His Excellency, a list of members was proposed for His Excellency's consideration. This list, small at first, was, after much enquiry and consideration with artists and others interested in the subject, considerably enlarged, and finally received His Excellency's approval.

His Excellency then directed that the constitution, mainly founded upon that of the Royal Academy of Arts, should be printed and sent to those whom he had nominated as the first members of the Academy. With a very few exceptions, all those nominated accepted the offered position, and undertook the responsibilities which thus devolved upon them.

His Excellency appointed the following gentlemen as officers of the Academy at its outset, after which the constitution provides that they are to be elected by the Academicians :

L. R. O'BRIEN, <i>President.</i>		M. MATTHEWS, <i>Secretary.</i>
N. BOURASSA, <i>Vice-President.</i>		JAMES SMITH, <i>Treasurer.</i>

The following letter of the President, having been approved by His Excellency, was addressed to the press in answer to numerous enquiries as to the proposed working and objects of the new society :

*To the Editor of the "Montreal Herald" :*

DEAR SIR,—In the very kindly feeling with which the press and the public have received the project for the formation of a Canadian Academy of Arts, a good deal has been taken for granted, and there has been some natural misapprehension of its character at the outset of its career.

The term "Academy" at once suggests the "Royal Academy" of England and the "Academies" of other countries, while the title of "Academician" as obviously appears to invite comparison with the members of those academies;—institutions which have grown up under the fostering care of powerful governments through many generations of wealth and culture, and whose members are the ablest representative artists of the world. Here, it is needless to say, we have no such conditions and no such material, but it is not less evident that we have great need of the culture, education and skill that these academies represent; and that we have need of such encouragement and sympathy being accorded to our artists as will induce the ablest of them to remain in Canada, and also help to develop such latent talent as may exist by using it in the various branches of art.

His Excellency the Governor-General, coming from a country where the industrial and economic value of art is as well understood as its influence upon the higher mental culture of the people, was prepared from the first to do what was possible in organizing and developing our resources in this as in other directions. Shortly after his arrival in Canada, at the Art Association in Montreal he alluded to the formation of a Canadian Academy as something to be looked forward to in the future, while in conversation and correspondence with the artists he discussed its present practicability.

The artists of Canada were and are aware, probably better than anyone outside of their ranks, how little consideration they are entitled to in the world of art, and no one can know as well as they do how much they have done, working under the greatest possible disadvantages.

In discussing the subject as placed before them by His Excellency, they felt that, while for them to form an academy, or to assume any title of academician or associate, would have been out of the question, to refuse co-operation in a project designed to advance the interests of the whole country, and which lay within the bounds of their special knowledge, would have been unpatriotic in the extreme. They joined heartily in the movement, accepting at His Excellency's hands not only an honor but a trust and a weighty responsibility. The objects of the Academy as set forth in the constitution must commend themselves to all loyally interested in the progress of Canada. The carrying out of those objects cannot be attained without much united effort, and must entail upon those who undertake it, labor, thought, and a not inconsiderable sacrifice of time and its equivalent. We hope that in time the title of an Academician of the Canadian Academy may be valued as the recognition of a great and undoubted position in Art. At present it only means that the academicians are those whom His Excellency has honored by inviting them to join him in one part of his great work—the welding together and advancing in intellectual and material progress of those provinces which form the Dominion of Canada.

The opening Exhibition of the Academy at Ottawa, which is to be held in the months of February and March, will be the first opportunity there has ever been of comparing the work of artists from distant parts of the country; and in default of such comparison, it has been no easy task to decide who should and who should not be invited to become members of the Academy. I am aware, however, that His Excellency, in undertaking the difficult task of nominating the first list as members, has sought every means of informing himself of the names and standing of all who have done any good original art work throughout the country. It is not unlikely, under the circumstances, that some may have been admitted at too low a standard, and that others of unobtrusive merit may have been overlooked. In all such cases His Excellency is entitled to the most generous forbearance. All who can do good work are invited to send it to the Exhibition, where it will speak for itself. The academician list is only so far filled up as to form a working body, and the vacant seats are to be filled up by election from among the associates as worthy candidates present themselves. The list of associates not being limited, there is room upon it for any good men who may have been overlooked, who come into the country from abroad, or who may rise from among the students. Before long we may fairly hope to place the standard of

admission higher than is possible or prudent just now; and with the improvement of public taste, and growing appreciation of good work, we need not fear the recognition and ultimate reward in Canada of those artists who have talent, and honestly make the best use of it.

It was hoped that the invitation to manufacturers to offer prizes for designs, suited to their different undertakings would have been more largely responded to. Enough has been done, however, to stimulate invention among designers and art students, and to point the way to the attainment of one principal object of the Academy, namely: The establishment and appreciation of good art industry in Canada.

Some exception has been taken, naturally, to leaving Montreal and Toronto, the chief cities of the Dominion, last upon the list of places selected for holding exhibitions. This has been done at the express desire of His Excellency, and has been cordially assented to by the artists, although their immediate personal interests would have been best served by holding the exhibitions in the largest and most wealthy places; but Montreal and Toronto have already efficient art organizations of their own, and I am confident that their liberal and public spirited citizens will be glad to lend a helping hand, in the first place, to those who have no such advantages. We may reasonably hope that in Halifax, St. John's and Quebec, the visit of the Academy will lead to the formation of such local art societies as may be best suited to their circumstances and available material.

Any city which fails to form and support some such local association can scarcely be deemed sufficiently advanced in civilization to justify a second visit of the Academy. London, in the west, has much to offer as inducement to hold an Academy Exhibition there, and the generous appreciation of art which has induced so many artists to make their home in the Province of Ontario, will no doubt soon make it advisable to add the Forest City to the list.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

L. R. O'BRIEN,

*President Canadian Academy of Arts.*

The Government of Canada gave the most generous and cordial support to the Academy, placing at its disposal a commodious building for the use of the opening Exhibition at Ottawa, admirably arranged for the purpose under the personal direction of the Hon. Mr. Langevin, Minister of Public Works.

On Saturday, March 6th, 1880, the first meeting of the members of the Academy was held, the Council for the ensuing year elected, and he first Exhibition opened by His Excellency the Governor-General.



His Excellency, having requested the President to step forward read the following message from the Princess :

*Gentlemen of the Academy—*

I desire to give you a message from the Princess, in her own words. She says that she regards it as a great privation to be unable to be present this evening, and to look upon those works of Canadian art around us. Her whole heart and soul are, as you may well believe, with you in the object for which we have met to-night. She wishes the Academy all prosperity, and hopes you will remember that any help she can give you will always be yours.

On the 17th May, 1880, the following memorial was, by order of the Council of the Academy, addressed to His Excellency the Governor-General, and by him forwarded to the Queen :

*To His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, (commonly called the Marquis of Lorne), Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor-General of Canada, and Vice-Admiral of the same, &c., &c.*

The Memorial of the CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS, presented on behalf of the said Academy by the Council thereof, respectfully prayeth :

That whereas, the Canadian Academy of Arts has been founded by YOUR EXCELLENCY and HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS LOUISE, for the purpose of cultivating and improving the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and industrial design in the Dominion of Canada, the members of the said Academy earnestly desire that the said Canadian Academy of Arts should receive the direct and personal recognition and patronage of HER GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, and as a token thereof, your memorialists respectfully pray that Her Majesty would graciously be pleased to confer upon the said Academy the name and title of the "ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS."

And your memorialists will, as in duty bound, &c., &c.

Signed on behalf of the Council.

L. R. O'BRIEN,

*President,*

The gracious answer to this memorial is contained in the following despatches :

COPY.

OTTAWA, 16TH JULY, 1880.

SIR,—I am desired by His Excellency the Governor-General to forward to you the accompanying copy of a despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, from which you will learn that Her Majesty has been pleased to confer upon the Canadian Academy the name and title of "ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS."

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant

JOHN KIDD,

For the Governor-General, Secretary.

L. R. O'BRIEN, ESQ., 27 Grenville Street, Toronto.

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COPY.

THE EARL OF KIMBERLEY TO THE MARQUIS OF LORNE.

CANADA, 74.]

DOWNING STREET, 22ND JUNE, 1880.

MY LORD,—I have the honor to inform you that I duly received your despatch No. 133, of the 11th May, and that I have laid before the Queen the memorial address to you by the President of the Canadian Academy of Arts, praying that Her Majesty would be pleased to confer upon the Academy the name and title of "ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS." I have now to acquaint you that the Queen has graciously approved that the prayer of the memorial be acceded to, and I request that you will communicate to the President of the Academy this notification of Her Majesty's pleasure.

I have, &c.,

KIMBERLEY.

GOV.-GEN'L THE RIGHT HON. THE MARQUIS OF LORNE, K.T., K.C.M.G.

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*Form of Diploma granted by the Governor-General to Academicians of  
the Royal Canadian Academy.*

FOUNDED BY THE MARQUIS OF LORNE AND PRINCESS LOUISE,  
1880.

*(Governor-General's Signature).*

*To our trusty and well beloved*

*Esq.*

GREETING :

WHEREAS, a Society for the purpose of cultivating and improving the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Industrial Design has been established in the Dominion, and with the sanction of Her Majesty Queen Victoria has been entitled the ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS :

Therefore: in consideration of your great skill in the Art of you are by these presents constituted and appointed to be one of the forty Academicians of the said Royal Canadian Academy ;

And you are hereby granted all the honors, privileges and emoluments thereof, according to the tenor of the Institution.

This honorable distinction is the more readily conferred upon you, as the Governor-General and the members of the Royal Canadian Academy are firmly persuaded that you will, upon every occasion, exert yourself in support of the honor, interest and dignity of the said establishment, and that you will faithfully and assiduously discharge the duties of the several offices to which you shall be nominated.

Your name will be forthwith inserted in the roll of Academicians, and you will subscribe the obligation in the form and manner prescribed.

