

With our Annual Show this month, we thought it might be interesting to “do a centennial” and recall what our predecessors were up to with their 1922 event.



The venue on that occasion was the Belmont Building on Government Street, built in 1912. Sadly, that show, held in October, marked the last months of the highly influential Lady Sarah Crease, an Island Arts Club Charter Member who was to pass away the following December at the venerable age of 96.

As a teenager in England she had attended the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837, and had later undergone the long sea voyage to Victoria with three of her children to join her husband there. A very accomplished artist, she was a prolific sketcher, and her legacy included several hundred ink, pencil and watercolour sketches, many reflecting life in BC from its Fort Victoria beginnings.

Also in 1922, the Club amalgamated with the Provincial Arts and Industrial Institute and became known as the Island Arts and Crafts Society. Under the auspices of the former Club, a School of Handicraft and Design had opened in 1913, though its life was short and craft instruction was subsequently left in the hands of BC’s school system. However, a craft section became an established feature in the Society’s annual shows and endured until the Society’s last show in 1950

From the Club’s outset, a catalogue of works was produced for each annual show. The 1922 version, price ten cents and, for once, backed up by some advertising customers, listed 178 paintings, of which 138 were watercolours and 40 oils, together with 84 craft items. Only 5 paintings were priced in excess of \$100: \$30 was a more average figure. There were 79 exhibitors.



The catalogue included a membership application form, which advised that membership was open to all persons over 16 years of age, on payment of an annual subscription of two dollars. Despite the modest revenue accrued from membership dues, the Society managed to keep itself solvent in those years by hosting music concerts and other fund-raising events.

The 1922 show was lacking some of the names who were to become stars in the artistic world, although the Crease family was represented by Lady Sarah’s children Josephine and Lindley, who had inherited much of their mother’s talent.

One missing name was that of Emily Carr, who after an unfulfilled experience in Vancouver had returned to Victoria in 1913 to run a boarding house. Subsequently she did little painting in the years leading up to 1927, when she was to receive some due recognition at national level.

The ailing Samuel Maclure was also absent, and the “modernist” stars of the future, Maynard and Shadbolt, and their colleagues Ina Uhthoff and Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, were yet to arrive on the scene. Nevertheless, standards were maintained through the contributions of such stalwarts as Tom Bamford, Donald Cameron, Tom Gore, Margaret Kitto, Maude Lettice, Will Menelaws, Lillian Sweeney and Gwladys Woodward.

Much water has flowed over the past century, but traditions have weathered the years. Acrylic work may now predominate, but the basic structure of our Show remains intact, with its 6-day duration and - not to be forgotten - the prize draw!

Illustrations: (1) Belmont Building, 614 Humboldt Street, Victoria (2) Lady Sarah Crease

~John Lover