

The band of enthusiasts who gathered together in 1909, fired by a determination to encourage artistic and cultural development of Victoria in the form the Island Arts Club, included some prominent figures in the community's history. Such names as Pemberton, Crease, O'Reilly, Maclure and Carr roll easily off the tongue. Yet one that has never been subjected to biographical excesses is the lady who hosted these initial meetings and seems to have played a significant part as one of the moving spirits-- if not *the* moving spirit -- in the coordination of the group.

We do know that the understated Mary Bampfylde Daniell was born in Devonshire, England, from where she moved to London to pursue her artistic interests under the tuition of members of the Royal Academy, in which she was accepted as a probationer, and in due course admitted as a student. She exhibited her work in the capital from 1898 to the time of her emigration to Canada and her arrival in BC in 1905.



With a partner, she started an advertising and illustration company under the title of Rochfort and Daniell. She also began to paint local scenes and people and was soon accepted into the

developing Vancouver art community. She initially exhibited with the Studio Club, then the focus of local art, in 1907, and then with the BC Society of Fine Arts, formed in 1909, of which she was a charter member. During this period in Vancouver, she exhibited in the company of such fellow artists as Samuel Maclure, John Kyle and Emily Carr, soon to be companions in a new enterprise.

The scene had shifted to Victoria by October 1909 when the publication *This Week* reported: “A very representative meeting was held... at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. C. Bampfylde Daniell, when a large number of Victorians prominent in artistic circles were present, and the unanimous resolution was passed to form a Society to be called the Vancouver Island Society of Arts and Crafts. Mrs. C. Bampfylde Daniell was elected Honorary Secretary and it is proposed to call a more extensive meeting at an early date.”

And so the story unfolded. After a series of meetings hosted at the Bampfylde Dannel home at 609 Michigan Street, a residence built in 1860 and demolished in 1925, the outcome was the Island Arts Club which was comprised of 56 charter members. In a subsequent article in *Opportunities Magazine* in 1911, Mary expressed her thinking behind this project: “It has long been held as a matter of regret among lovers of art in Victoria that artists come to this city, but do not remain, and it is to create some feeling of friendliness and goodwill toward them that the Island Arts Club has been started.”



She was able to report that the Club boasted 80 members after its first year, and paid tribute to its first President, J.J. Shallcross, for using his local influence in the vigorous promotion of this new venture.

Mary’s subsequent involvement with this new body seems to have been relatively short, with contributions to just three of its annual shows – in 1910, 1912 and 1913. However, what she went on to say was to prove prophetic: “The Island Arts Club has come to stay, and it is hoped that it will receive the support and encouragement due to it from all lovers of the beautiful.”

Indeed, it has, and after more than a century of fluctuating fortunes, we’re still alive and well.

Illustrations: (1) Entrance to Victoria Harbour (2) [609 Michigan Street](#)Hi

.~John Lover