

Rose Willis

1866 - 1960

Rose Willis was born in Newport, near Glasgow, Scotland in 1866, and came with her parents to Montreal at the age of four. She was educated at St. Ann's Academy and was a teacher in Montreal. She arrived in Victoria with her husband William Arthur Willis of Willis Piano Company in 1913 and became a member of the Island Arts and Crafts Club, as well as the Business and Professional Women's Club. Willis studied under William Raphael of Montreal, Tom Tripp of Vancouver, and other well-known artists. Widely known in Montreal and on the west coast for her works in oils and watercolours, she specialized in flower painting in later years, and acquired the title flower artist of Canada.

Rose Willis was a prolific artist, and contributed to 22 annual exhibitions of the Island Arts and Craft Club (later Society) between 1913 and 1947, and was one of the veterans of the Society, who, after its demise, was instrumental in the formation of the Victoria Sketch Club in 1952.

She was among the exhibitors at the Victoria Sketch Club's annual show in 1958, which took on a heritage theme in recognition of British Columbia's centennial year. The art critic of the Daily Colonist made special mention of this 91-year-old artist, "whose hand is as sure and capable as that of an artist 50 years younger.

The following year, Willis was made a life member of the Victoria Sketch Club. Up to the age of 91 she was still teaching occasionally, and energetically painting. She made her sketches at the scene, and her philosophy was that going over a picture too often lost its spirit. Rose Willis died in Victoria in 1960 at the age of 93.



Rose Branch, William Vallevand Collection