

Art & Artists in Exhibition: Vancouver 1890 - 1950

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James Jerris Blomfield (born Bloomfield)

1872 - 1951

**Henry Bloomfield & Sons - Artists in Stained and Leaded Glass
Vancouver Arts and Crafts Association
Vancouver Studio Club and School of Art**

The creation of stained glass windows is one of those niches of art that encompasses not only art, but also a multi-disciplinary craftsmanship. Stained glass is frequently installed as a prominent feature in a permanent architectural setting - employing the use of plain and coloured glass, paint, acid etching, bevelling, and other effects to enhance the ambient light entering the space.

In Vancouver stained glass was used frequently in the construction of churches, office buildings, and private dwellings, beginning in the very first days of Vancouver's metamorphosis from a wood shanty-town. The first stained glass installed in Vancouver was manufactured elsewhere and shipped here. The first art glass firm in British Columbia, Henry Bloomfield and Sons, opened in New Westminster in 1889, the firm later moving to Vancouver in 1898.

One of Henry Bloomfield's sons was James Blomfield. He was born James Jerris Bloomfield in Maidenhead, Berkshire, England in 1872, later dropping one of the "o's" from his name around 1900. His father Henry was an artist and engraver. James worked as a junior draftman in an architectural office, and studied art in Calgary between 1887 and 1889 after the family moved there from England. The family moved to New Westminster in 1889, where Lord Aberdeen, impressed by an example of James' work, sponsored his further education in England and Belgium. Blomfield also studied art glass manufacture in Chicago, New Orleans, London, and Manchester.

Returning to the West Coast, he and members of his father's firm decorated the new Parliament Buildings, and created memorial windows for Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. In Vancouver he designed the Queen Victoria Memorial Fountain in Stanley Park, and a magnificent three-part "landing light" for *Gabriola*, the mansion on Davie Street built for local sugar magnate B.T. Rogers.

James was also a good artist, and in addition to creating stained glass designs, and painting the panels on the windows, he also painted in watercolour and did woodcuts and etchings. He supported the arts, and gave an exhibition in his Vancouver studio of the work of [Sophie Pemberton](#). In 1907 he moved to the United States, living in various cities until 1920 when he moved to Toronto. He was a highly-regarded artist and architectural renderer, but died in 1951 after being struck by an automobile. He married in 1902, his wife dying in 1932 without any children.

During his time in Vancouver he was actively involved in support of the local arts scene, helping to found the [Vancouver Arts and Crafts Association](#) in 1900. This was the precursor of the [Studio Club](#)

founded in 1904, which led eventually to the formation of the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#) in 1908. Blomfield was in group exhibitions with [T.W. Fripp](#) and [S.P. Judge](#) in 1903 and 1906.

Many years later he was represented in the 1980 exhibition *Rainbows In Our Walls - Art and Stained Glass in Vancouver 1890 - 1940*, published by the Vancouver Centennial Museum. The exhibition catalogue included a short biography of Blomfield, a reproduction of the artist at work, and information about his stained glass work (see abbreviated listing below).

Three years later his etching "Cannery Store", c.1900, was included in the 1983 survey exhibition *Printmaking In British Columbia* at the [Art Gallery of Greater Victoria](#), on loan from the collection of the Vancouver City Archives.

Exhibitions

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
October 1903	Group Exhibition - T.W.Fripp , J. Blomfield, S.P. Judge	title(s) not known to editor
November 1906	Group Exhibition - T.W.Fripp , J. Blomfield, S.P. Judge	title(s) not known to editor
Dec. 9 1978 - March 18 1979	Rainbows In Our Walls	5 untitled watercolours - local scenes The Lions of Capilano, Vancouver (m/m) The Tenaso Sawquai shack Vancouver #6 (etching) The Arms of the Blomfields of Suffolk (Gouache) On Hatzic Lake British Columbia (etching) The Old West Coast (etching) Lonely Fiords of the West Coast (w/c) Old Capilano Beach (etching) untitled - natives in canoe (woodcut) Giftgiving Pole (w/c c1905) Under St. James Spire, Toronto (etching) Hillside Shadows At Sundown (w/c - pencil 1915) The Working End and East Window (w/c)
Oct. 6 - Nov. 27 1983	Printmaking in B.C. 1889-1983	Cannery Store (etching c1900)

References - MONOGRAPHS

Refer to [BIBLIO](#).

References - GROUP EXHIBITIONS

RAINBOWS IN OUR WALLS - Art and Stained Glass in Vancouver 1890 - 1940

1980 exhibition catalogue, Vancouver Centennial Museum, Robert D. Watt
 Exhibition December 9 1978 - March 18 1979. ISBN 0-919253-02-4 (paper)
 Overview of stained glass making, local history of stained glass installation
 Biographies of James Blomfield, Charles Bloomfield, Bloomfield and Sons, [F.L. Tait](#), others
 Illustrated in colour and black and white; list of exhibits and illustrations

PRINTMAKING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1889-1983 (refer to [AGGV83](#))

BEYOND THE CANVAS - Artists, Stories and the Sea by Jennifer Breckon and James P. Delgado
Featuring the Mary and Bill Everett Family Collection
 2000, ISBN 0-9695221-4-2; exhibition at the Vancouver Maritime Museum; illust. in colour
 Includes Foreword by Patricia E. Bovey, Introduction by James P. Delgado; list of works
 Essay *A Collector Recollects* by Bill Everett
 Exhibition included work by **James Bloomfield**

References - GENERAL

A GUIDE TO SCULPTURE IN VANCOUVER (refer to [GSV80](#))

Blomfield, James J. (originally James Jerris Bloomfield)

A Dictionary of Canadian Artists, Volume 1, A - F, 5th Ed. Revised & Expanded 1997
 Colin S. Macdonald, Canadian Paperbacks. ISBN 0-919554-21-0

BUILDING THE WEST - Early Architects of British Columbia

2003; Edited by Donald Luxton, numerous contributing authors and researchers
 Talonbooks, ISBN 0-88922-474-9
 560 pages, extensively illustrated in black and white, some colour
 Biographies of over 400 architects and firms; extensive bibliography
 Includes biography of Blomfield, history of the stained glass company.

BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF ARTISTS IN CANADA

2003, Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press, ISBN 0-8020-2790-3
 250 pages; 9 pages of *works cited* referenced to 8,800 artists
 2 references listed for Blomfield, including *M & A Guide to Canadian Painters*.

WATERFRONT by James P. Delgado, Executive Director, Vancouver Maritime Museum

"The illustrated maritime story of Greater Vancouver"
 Published by Vancouver Maritime Museum and Stanton Atkins & Dosil Publishers
 2005, ISBN 0-9732346-5-2, 186 pages hardcover first edition with dust jacket

Includes list of sources, index, credits, acknowledgements

Extensively illustrated in colour and black and white with art and photographs

Artwork reproduced from Atkins *Feckless Collection* includes colour etching by Blomfield on cover and on page 34

PUBLIC ART IN VANCOUVER - ANGELS AMONG LIONS by John Steil and Aileen Stalker
2009; ISBN 978-1-894898-79-9; softcover, 176 pages, published by TouchWood Editions
Photographs and locations of more than 500 public art pieces in Vancouver
Illustrated throughout in colour; includes introduction, neighbourhoods, references,
artist index, artwork index, acknowledgments.
Artists referenced include **James Blomfield**
see also [PAV09](#)

Clippings

" ... of which we most admired two plates designed by **Mr. Jas. Bloomfield** ... Miss Drainie's fish set, accompanied by the clever designs prepared for this set by **Mr. Jas. Bloomfield** ... **Mr. Jas. Bloomfield** also showed some cartoons and a folio of delightful schemes in leaded glass; judging from some of these it would appear that this artist is finding more and more to interest him in mosaic treatment, some of the designs being for absolute mosaic in glass and lead without painting."

From "[British Columbia Letters, No. VII](#)", by (unknown)
The Canadian Architect and Builder 1901

"The career of James Blomfield has been varied and colourful. At the age of thirteen he migrated to the western plains, and for a time lived the life of a cowpuncher. The major part of his professional life has been occupied as a designer in stained glass. As a painter he is best known for his fine work in water-colour, in which medium he paints with a fine freedom, if somewhat traditional in execution. While he has produced many pictures of the mountains and plains, his work in Toronto and its environs constitute his most important contribution to painting."

From *Canadian Landscape Painters*, Albert H. Robson; page 204
The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1932

"Church Beauty Lives In Blomfield's Art"
Toronto Globe and Mail, Nov. 26, 1946

"Artist James Blomfield Is 26th Traffic Fatality"
Toronto Star, June 25, 1951