

**Art & Artists in Exhibition: Vancouver 1890 - 1950**

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## **Henry Josiah De Forest (also De Forrest, de Forest)**

**February 5 1855 - March 1924**

**[Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#)  
[B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#)  
[British Columbia Artist \(B.C.A., 1921\)](#)**

DeForest was one of the early founders and supporters of art organizations in Vancouver, helping to keep the spark alive from the first days of Vancouver until organizations were formed to carry on his work.

Conflicting information is available for his birthdate and place. According to *Who's Who in Western Canada* (1911) he was born in 1855 in St. John, New Brunswick. Alternate information states (Robson / Harper) that he was born in Rothesay, New Brunswick in 1860.

He was educated at the Sackville Academy, New Brunswick. He married Ruth J. Newcombe in 1879., and then went to London, England, where he "took full advantage of study at [South Kensington](#)". He also studied at the Julian Academie in Paris, in Edinburgh, and in Italy. He took a long tour of Europe up to 1883, then emmigrated to New Zealand and subsequently to Tasmania. He returned to Canada, moving to New Brunswick in 1893, then to Vancouver in 1894, according to Harper, although these dates do not match the dates of his work for AHS AV.

He was Curator of the Vancouver Museum, and supported the [Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#) for many years. He was the group's Secretary from 1889 until 1911.

He painted British Columbia's scenery, and exhibited his work in the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts'](#) debut [First Annual Exhibition](#) at the Dominion Hall in Vancouver, April 1909. Later that year another painting was shown at the [Exhibition of Pictures](#) held by the [Vancouver Studio Club and School of Art](#).

He showed his work at the [Royal Canadian Academy](#) in four exhibitions between 1893 and 1906, including scenes of New Zealand, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia. He also exhibited in Chicago, and at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto (1906).

He moved to Banff in 1921 where he extensively painted the Canadian Rockies. He passed away in Calgary in March, 1924, and is buried in Vancouver. His work was exhibited in the 1932 [All Canadian Exhibition](#), and the 1950 and 1960 retrospective exhibitions of the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#).

## Exhibitions

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

**DATE**

**EXHIBITION**

**LOCATION**

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

**DATE**

**EXHIBITION**

**ARTWORK**

1909 April 20 -28

BCSFA First Annual Exhibition

The Kiss of Departing Day,  
Lake Louise

Mountains That Like Giants  
Stand, Lake Louise

The Beach At Portsborough,  
N.S.

The Old Fog Bell

Rise Up And Grow To  
Wondrous Heights, Mount  
Baker

A Passage In Earth's  
History, Yale-Cariboo Road

The King Of The Southern  
Alps

The Natural Bridge At Field  
The Strength Of The  
Elements

1909 June 19 - July 17

Studio Club Exhibition of Pictures

Still Grinding

1909 November

BCSFA Second Exhibition

Back Bay, Clifton, N.S.W.

Onward to the Sea,  
Kootenay River

Germantown, N.S.

Columbia River, Wash.,  
U.S.A.

The Rush of Many Waters,  
Bonnington Falls

Path of the Mountain  
Torrents

The Creek in the Meadow,  
Coast of Normandy

Homeward on the Tide,  
Normandy

Coldstream Ranch,  
Okanagan Valley

Hazy Morning, Coal Harbor  
Capilano Canyon

1910 May

BCSFA Third Exhibition

1912 Nov. 25 - 30	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Annual Exhibition</u>	Emerald Valley near Field, B.C. Cathedral Donnes (?), Jervis Inlet From the Beach at Buccanneer (sic) Bay Early Morning, Marble Bay, Van Anda Entering the Narrows at Eventide Mt. Cook from Lake Puekaki, N.Z. The Fraser Valley From Hope
1915 April	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Works by Members</u>	Looking West from Stanley Park Sunset from Stanley Park Hope, B.C. Looking West from Horseshoe Bay Mt. Garibald (sic), Howe Sound In Lynn Creek, Canyon Evening Glow, Stanley Park Lynn Creek Falls Early Morning, Horse Shoe Bay Capilano Canyon Close of Day Mt. Robson from W. Maligne Lake, Jasper Park Hazy Morning, Coal Harbour East of Second Narrows Opposite Kelowna, Okanagan In Jervis Inlet
1917 Sept. 14 - 22	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Eleventh Exhibition</u>	Mount Assiniboia Lake McArthur, Alta.
1921 Sept. 19 - 24	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>13th Annual Exhibition</u>	Mount Aberdeen
1932 May - July	<u>VAG</u> <u>All Canadian Exhibition</u>	Near the Duck Pond, Stanley Park
1946 July 2 - 28	<u>VAG</u> <u>Jubilee Exhibition</u>	
1950 April 25 - May 14	<u>BCSA</u> <u>40th Annual Exhibition</u>	

Mount Hardisty, Athabaska  
River

## References

### WHO'S WHO IN WESTERN CANADA

1911; Edited by C.W. Parker

*A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men & Women of Western Canada*

Published by Canadian Press Association Ltd., Vancouver office

Contains 3,000 biographical sketches in 390 pages, incl. 84 pages photo portraits

References include **de Forest**

### 100 YEARS OF B.C. ART (refer to [VAG58](#))

### EARLY PAINTERS & ENGRAVERS IN CANADA by J. Russell Harper

1970 (reprinted 1972, 1976, 1981); University of Toronto Press

ISBN 0-8020-1630-8; 376 pages; includes extensive list of abbreviations & bibliography

Includes short reference to De Forest.

### DE FOREST, HENRY J.

*Royal Canadian Academy of Arts - Exhibitions and Members 1880 - 1979*

Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press 1981, ISBN 0-8020-2366-5

### 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

4 references *cited* for De Forest, including Harper and RCA above.

### VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY - B.C. ARTISTS FILES (refer to [VPL](#))

## Clippings

"... were well represented in oil colors, and Messrs. **DeForest** and [Ferris](#) each sent a number of characteristic works in the same medium."

From "[British Columbia Letters, No. VII](#)", by (unknown)

*The Canadian Architect and Builder* 1901

"Vancouverites of the future will be glad that ... H.J. DeForest ... and other Vancouver artists find imagination in local scenes."

"[Vancouver Studio Club Spring Exhibition](#)"

*B.C. Saturday Sunset*, July 3 1909

"Among those who contributed to this [early exhibition](#) was H.J. De Forest, a native of the Maritime Provinces, who was prepared for an artistic career by various courses of study and a more prolonged opportunity of travel than falls to most men. When he had secured all the elementary training that Canada could give him, he started for London in 1879, where he took full advantage of study at [South Kensington](#), following it up with further courses in Paris and Italy. During a prolonged tour that lasted until 1882, he saw most of the great masterpieces of the world, and stayed long at the principal artistic centres. Returning to Canada, he came West, and has ever since been regarded as one of the pioneers

and chief exponents of the art he loves so well. An enthusiastic lover of nature, he has painted British Columbia's scenery in a way which has earned deserved encomiums from all who know his work."

From "[Art in British Columbia](#)", by [Bernard McEvoy](#)  
*Opportunities Magazine*, 1910

"In his three small pictures, Nos. 16, 17, and 18, Mr. H.J. de Forest exhibits examples of what is no doubt a mature style. His drawing is good, and his color effects enjoyable. A little more freedom of handling would greatly improve these pictures; they appear to us a little too precise, though as transcripts of actual scenes they no doubt have an accuracy that the impressionist is apt to lose. They would reproduce admirably as color illustrations to a work on B.C. Scenery."

From "[With The B.C. Artists](#)", by "A Visitor"  
*Vancouver Daily Province*, September 27, 1916

"Among members who have had the advantage of European training in the continental schools are ... Mr. H.J. DeForest ... "

From "[11th Annual Exhibition of Fine Arts](#)", by [Bernard McEvoy](#)  
"Studio Talk", *Studio Magazine*, Feb. 15, 1918; London England.

"Among local artists, Mr. H.J. de Forest, a representative of the older school of painting, and a worthy pioneer for many years in the cause of art in Vancouver, is seen to advantage in his fine picture of Mount Robson. Mr. de Forest is familiar with our British Columbia Alpine landscape; he has a good sense of color and a sincere method of work. In this picture of the great mountain, its snowy crest contrasted with the dark cloud behind it, the painter not only gives us a topographical portrayal, but a picture which is rich in detail and suffused with color. He is no more stereotyped in style than many of the painters who have essayed to give us transcripts of British Columbia scenery, and his picture will live when those of many less careful paint-(?) have been forgotten."

From "[Local Work is on View](#)" by [Bernard McEvoy](#)  
*Vancouver Daily Province*, October 2 1919

"The President, [Mr. Bernard McEvoy](#), who was in the chair, reported that H.J. De Forest, the well-known artist, had presented the League with drawings of life class models made by him in 1896 ...

From "[Important Meeting of B.C. Art League](#)"  
*Western Woman's Weekly*, April 23, 1921

"Mr. H.J. DeForest, the first secretary, soon left the city, but only for a short time. Returning in 1889, he resumed the position, working for the love of the museum and a pittance of anything between \$25 and \$75 a month as funds permitted. In the year 1905 a serious robbery took place, and a large and valuable collection of coins was taken. The culprit was found and justice meted out, but the coins were not recovered. This happened on three occasions. Since then due precautions are taken. Gates, locks, and bars make the museum fairly safe from burglars. Out of this disaster, however, came some good, for the city granted a sum of money for the curator, and Mr. DeForest was appointed to the position, which he held until 1911, when [Mr. Ferris](#) shared the work, acting as secretary, while Mr. DeForest continued as Curator. After Mr. DeForest resigned in 1912, Mr. Ferris held both posts. Mr. DeForest was a clever artist, and his paintings were much in demand. Two of them hang on the wall of the stairway."

From "[History of the A.H.S.A.V.-Biographical: Founders & Members](#)"  
*Museum Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 2 June 1926

"As we move further west, the name of Henry J. DeForest comes to mind. DeForest was born in Rothesay, New Brunswick, in 1860, and studied art at the [South Kensington School of Art](#), London,

the Julian Academy, Paris, and also in Edinburgh. After sketching in many parts of the world, he located in Vancouver in 1898, later moving to Banff, where he made a great many paintings of the mountains. He died in Calgary in 1924. Mr. DeForest was a landscape painter with a careful technique, inclined to rather literal representation, but, during later years, his work broadened considerably in brushwork and viewpoint."

From *Canadian Landscape Painters*, Albert H. Robson; page 186  
The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1932

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