

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

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**William Ferris (Will)****1839 - May 25 1930****Vancouver Art Association Founding Member 1889****Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver Founding Member 1894****Curator Emeritus, Vancouver Museum****B.C. Society of Fine Arts**

William Ferris was born in Oxford, England in 1839, and died in Vancouver, B.C. in 1930, according to McMann's entry in *Biographical Index of Artists in Canada*. B.C. Vital Statistics on-line gives the information that he died on May 25 1930 at the age of 91. He arrived in Vancouver in 1888, becoming one of the earliest artists to exhibit in Vancouver. He was the first art teacher in Vancouver. He was a founding member of the first two important arts organizations in Vancouver, the [Vancouver Art Association](#) in 1889, and the [Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#) in 1894. Refer to "Clippings" section below for further biographical information.

Ferris exhibited a number of his paintings in the [First Annual Exhibition](#) of the [Vancouver Art Association](#) in 1890, and also in the 1894 exhibition. He had work in the first annual exhibition of the [Vancouver Arts and Crafts Association](#) in 1900.

He had a number of paintings in the 1909 [B.C. Society of Fine Arts'](#) debut [First Annual Exhibition](#) at the Dominion Hall in Vancouver.

Ferris exhibited in the 1920 [Annual Exhibition](#) of the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#), held at the Vancouver School Board offices on Hamilton Street.

**Exhibitions****SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

DATE	EXHIBITION	LOCATION
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**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
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1890 October 6 - 11	<a href="#">Vancouver Art Assoc.</a> <a href="#">1st Annual Exhibition</a>	Cedar Tree, Stanley Park A Veteran, Stanley Park Fisherman's Home, Stanley Park On the Rail Track, Vancouver
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			Burrard Inlet, From Drydock A Tangled Corner, Stanley Park Observation Point, from Stanley Park The old "Beaver" Brockton Point, from Jones' boathouse The Old Saw-pit, Ealing The Two Lions, from Capilano Wild Music, The Canyon, Capilano Day's Point, Second Narrows The San Juan Lime Works False Creek Bridge River Thames, Wandsworth Kew
1909 April 20 - 28	<a href="#"><u>BCSFA</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>First Annual Exhibition</u></a>	Low Tide, English Bay Spring Day, English Bay Peep at Vancouver from Brockton Pt. Autumn Morn, English Bay Cedar Cove, 20 Years Ago Howe Sound from Jericho A Fishing Morn, Vedder River Mt. Crown, from Jericho Evening, Sechelt
1912 Nov. 25 - 30	<a href="#"><u>BCSFA</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Annual Exhibition</u></a>	Surlingham on the Nate, Norfolk Site of Pacific Coast Lumber Mill, 1900 Indian Summer, English Bay Pt. Atkinson from Jericho Old Cannery, Jericho Sechelt Cloud Effect, English Bay
1915 April	<a href="#"><u>BCSFA</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Works by Members</u></a>	Backwater, Lulu Island The Reef, English Bay Coal Harbour, Foggy Morning Shuswap River Mabel Lake
1920 September 18 - 25	<a href="#"><u>BCSFA</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Annual Exhibition</u></a>	Kileaua Volcano, Hawaii The Old Cannery, Jericho Beach The Narrows from Stanley Park
1932 May - July	<a href="#"><u>VAG</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>All Canadian Exhibition</u></a>	
1946 July 2 - 28	<a href="#"><u>VAG</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Jubilee Exhibition</u></a>	

Site of Bath-House, English Bay,  
1892

Trees, Stanley Park

Landscape, 1911

1950 April 25 - May 14 [BCSA](#) [40th Annual Exhibition](#)

The Beaver, 1888

## References

[William Ferris](#) by E.J. Norcross

*Museum and Art Notes*, June 1930, Vol. 5 No. 2; page 61 (includes photograph)

Published by [Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#)

**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 Ferris.

**AN EXHIBITION OF OUR COLLECTION OF  
EARLY WESTERN CANADIAN WATERCOLORS** (refer to [UL78](#))

**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 **Ferris**

**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

1 reference *cited* for Ferris: Harper above

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

## Clippings

"W. Ferris, who is another great worker, contributed many pretty subjects, nearly always well chosen, but not so frequently pleasing in color, which is too dense, particularly in the forest shades... .. Mr. Ferris's screen of water colours is chiefly made up of sketches in and around Vancouver, many pretty bits of sky and water, but we would suggest that he subordinate his foregrounds far more than he does at times, and that if he stippled less and washed or stained more he would gain both in breadth and transparency."

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

*The Canadian Architect and Builder* 1900

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

drawings ..."

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

"One of the first pioneers of art in this Province was William Ferris, who came to Vancouver in 1888, after some years of the legal profession in London, where he had had the advantage of the companionship and help of many painters since famous. His week-ends and afternoons were frequently devoted to sketching with those congenial comrades, and he attained considerable dexterity with the brush. It was natural that he should, on coming to British Columbia, begin to sketch the scenery he saw around him. One of the earliest of these sketches had for its subject the wreck of the steamship "Beaver" - a picture that may now be regarded as the best actual representation of that ill-fated vessel. Sketches of Cedar Cove and various objects and scenes along the waterfront attest his skill, and are valued evidences of what Vancouver was in those early days. Along with others, he was instrumental in the inauguration of the [Art, Historical and Scientific Association](#), which has remained in existence until this day."

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

"Mr. Will Ferris has a charming little watercolor, No. (5), "Old Country Road Near London". His "Deadman's Island", No. (6), shows, I am told, a vanished past. The artist has obtained an excellent water effect, but as a painting it suffers a little from the regularity of the trees."

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

"Owing to the retirement of Mr. Will Ferris, who had been connected with the Association from its earliest days, and now seeks a very well-earned retirement, it was necessary to appoint a new secretary-curator. This was carried out by a special committee, who, after interviewing numerous applicants, finally selected myself, and I was duly appointed to the position of secretary-curator at the meeting held on the 26th of March, 1925, the appointment to date from the 1st of April of that year. Mr. Will Ferris kindly consented to remain in office to instruct his successor for the period of one month."

From "[Curator's Report](#)", by T.P.O. Menzies  
*Museum Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1926.

"May 19th a reception was held at the home of Mrs. J.W. Weart, where His Worship Mayor L.D. Taylor made a presentation of a handsome walking stick, as a token of appreciation of the long and faithful services rendered by Mr. Will Ferris by the Association, on his retirement."

From "[Curator's Report](#)", by T.P.O. Menzies  
*Museum Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1926.

"A meeting called the following Tuesday, April 17th (1894) ,, saw the founding of a the present society. The new association soon printed a new Constitution, from which is taken the first list of officers, as follows: ... General Committee: ... Mr. Ferris ... "

From "[History of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#)"  
*Museum Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1926.

"At that time Prof. Charles Hill-Tout had charge of the Archaeological section, and Mr. Will Ferris of the Arts."

From "[History of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver](#)"  
*Museum Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1926.

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