

Art & Artists in Exhibition: Vancouver 1890 - 1950

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Walter Joseph Phillips

October 25 1884 - July 5 1963

**Alberta Society of Artists (honorary member)
Arts and Letters Club**

Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour (Charter Member, Past Vice-president)

Manitoba Society of Artists (Past President)

Prairie Print Makers

Print Makers Society of California

Royal Canadian Academy (Associate 1921, Academician 1933)

Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers

Walter Joseph Phillips was born in Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire, England, in 1884. He married in 1910 and the couple moved to Canada in June 1913, settling in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Phillips spent much of his life in Winnipeg before moving west to Calgary, then Banff, and finally to Victoria, British Columbia where he died in 1963.

Phillips trained as an artist in England, and tried to make a living as a commercial artist before taking an appointment as Art Master. He painted throughout his life, and had his first solo exhibition in 1911. He continued to teach upon his arrival in Winnipeg, but eventually became a full-time artist, author, and illustrator of international fame. His colour woodblock prints and watercolours became highly sought after and continue to fetch increasing prices at auction.

Phillips made many prints and watercolours of the West Coast after moving to Victoria, and it is interesting to compare the three main geographic phases (as it were) of Phillip's work: depictions of the almost flat Manitoba prairies and the Red River; the Rocky Mountains and their clouds, torrents and lakes; and finally the ocean, the misty inlets, and the disappearing Indian villages of the West Coast.

Phillips studied traditional Japanese printmaking techniques, and modified them into his own unique way of making prints - using as many as 14 carved woodblocks to make just one finished print. Because of the meticulous and time-consuming hand-made nature of his prints, one print in a run can be noticeably different from other prints in the same edition, sometimes due to mixing more colours during production runs, from applying varying amounts of ink to the blocks, and also from hand-altering some of the impressions while still wet - making every print virtually an "original".

Although he was an important artist with a large output of work done on the West Coast, he did little exhibiting of his work in Vancouver, other than at the [Pacific National Exhibition](#). In addition, he exhibited his work in Salisbury and London, England; Winnipeg, Montreal, Calgary, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Warsaw, Venice, and Philadelphia among other places.

In 1938 he exhibited a colour wood-cut in the 55th Annual Spring Exhibition of the [Art Association of Montreal](#). His address was given as 501 River Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba in the exhibition catalogue.

Many of his illustrations were published, and he also wrote numerous books and articles, some of which are listed below. There are also many references and biographical works on Phillips, so the reader is referred to books such as *Creative Canada* and *Biographical Index of Artists in Canada*, listed below, to use as finding aids for specific research interests.

Info in the Banff School of Fine Arts 1960 *Prospectus*:

"Outstanding Canadian engraver and water color artist. Educated at Bourne College, and Birmingham College of Art. Mr. Phillips has won international renown by winning the Storrow prize at the Los Angeles International in 1924, the gold medal at Boston in 1932, honorable mention at Warsaw in 1933 and 1935. Mr. Phillips has been a member of the Banff staff since 1940."

In 1982 a compilation of his writings was published, titled: **PHILLIPS IN PRINT - The Selected Writings of Walter J. Phillips on Canadian Nature and Art**, selected and edited by Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole. It was published by the Manitoba Record Society Publications in a limited edition of 1,000 copies individually numbered. The five sections of the book are: *Pictures on the Wall*, *Sketching in Canada*, *Canadian Art*, *Western Canadian Art*, *Art of the Woodcut*. Articles by Phillips on other artists include: [L.L. Fitzgerald](#), [A.C. Leighton](#), [Thomas Fripp](#), [Charles John Collings](#), [Charles H. Scott](#), [John Vanderpant](#), [Emily Carr](#), and [Paul Kane](#).

Exhibitions

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	LOCATION
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GROUP EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
1932 May - July	VAG All Canadian Exhibition	Pacific Coast York Boats Karlukwees, B.C. Tulips Mamalilicoola, B.C. Field Barn The Bather York Boats, Lake Winnipeg
1938 March 17 - April 10	AAM 55th Spring Exhibition	The Vapours Round the Mountain Curled

References - BIBLIOGRAPHY

Refer to [BIBLIO](#).

References - GROUP EXHIBITIONS

4th BURNABY NATIONAL PRINT SHOW (refer to [BAG67](#))

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

A NEW CLASS OF ART - The Artist's Print in Canadian Art, 1877 - 1920

1996, Rosemary L. Tovell, ISBN 0-88884-655-X; published by National Gallery of Canada
Technically an exhibition catalogue of travelling show, but has extensive information.

Illustrated; includes endnotes; list of works; selected references; index

An excellent overview of an important period of Canadian printmaking

Includes information on Phillips, with four works illustrated

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

Exhibition included work by **Phillips**

OUR CHANGING LANDSCAPE (refer to [BAG08](#))

SHORE, FOREST AND BEYOND - ART FROM THE AUDAIN COLLECTION (refer to [VAG11](#))

References - GENERAL

THE NEW WOODCUT by Malcolm C. Salaman

"The Studio Special Spring Number 1930"

Edited by C. Geoffrey Holme, published London and New York

176 pages; no ISBN; hardcover, extensively illustrated in colour and black & white

Includes chapters on woodcuts in numerous European countries, Canada, U.S.A., Japan

Canadian artists include Andre Bieler, Charles Comfort, H. Valentine Fanshawe,

H. Eric Bergman, John Jones, **Walter J. Phillips**, Paul Caron, Edwin Holgate

"Mamahlicoole, B.C." (sic) by Phillips illustrated in colour page 145.

BANFF SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS - 1960 PROSPECTUS

24 pages (approx.); illustrated with student work

Art Division Staff list includes H.G. Glyde, **W.J. Phillips** and [Janet Middleton](#).

CREATIVE CANADA - VOLUME ONE, by University of Toronto Press

1971; ISBN 0-8020-3262-1

"A biographical dictionary of twentieth-century creative and performing artists."

Includes 2-1/2 full columns of concise information about Phillips

THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SKY by Lorne E. Render

1974, Glenbow-Alberta Institute; published by McClelland and Stewart West

ISBN 0-7712-1001-2; 224 pages, illustrated throughout in colour and b&w
Includes biographical information on Phillips and 21 of his paintings illustrated

ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS - Exhibitions and Members 1880 - 1979

1981, Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press, ISBN 0-8020-2366-5
Definitive list of Academy members, includes a list of all exhibited paintings.

MURALS FROM A GREAT CANADIAN TRAIN by Ian Thom

1986, bilingual, published by Art Global / Libre Expression
192 pages, illustrated throughout in colour and black and white
History of the murals commissioned for the Canadian Pacific Railway's Park Cars
Includes works by [E.J. Hughes](#), **W.J. Phillips**, [A.Y. Jackson](#)

PHILLIPS, Walter Joseph (W.J. Phillips)

A Dictionary of Canadian Artists, Volume 6, Perrin - Rakine, First Edition Reprint 1996
Colin S. Macdonald, Canadian Paperbacks. ISBN 0-919554-16-4
Extensive seven page biography of the artist, more than sixty references.

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
27 references cited for Phillips, including CC1, M, and RCA listed above.

THE BOW - LIVING WITH A RIVER, edited by Gerald T. Conaty

Includes essays by G.T. Conaty, Daryl Betenia, Catharine Mastin
2004; ISBN 1-55263-634-8; Glenbow Museum, published by Key Porter Books Ltd.
160 pages, hardcover; extensively illustrated with artwork and historical photographs
Includes essays, select artist biographies, art and general bibliographies, index
Artwork by western artists includes **Phillips**

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 print by Phillips

TAMING THE FRONTIER: ART & WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN WEST 1880 - 1920

July 2005; by Virginia G. Berry, copyright Margaret Berry and Julie Berry Melynk.
188 pages softcover; illustrated, footnotes, bibliography, index
Centered on Winnipeg, but has early references to Phillips.

ART INSPIRED BY THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, PURCELL

MOUNTAINS AND SELKIRK MOUNTAINS 1809-2012 (refer to [TOWN12](#))

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

Clippings

"Walter J. Phillips is another important artist located in Winnipeg. He was born at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire, England, and settled in the West in 1913. Phillips had studied in England before coming to Canada, and has been a valuable asset to the art life of the West. Internationally known for his woodblock prints, in both black-and-white and colour, he is a member of the Society of Graver-Printers in Colour, London, the Society of Print Makers of Los Angeles, as well as the Canadian societies. But Phillips is also an excellent water-colour artist, and his western subjects have charm and originality."

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

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