

## George Lister Thornton Sharp

c1880 - July 2 1974

ARIBA

M.C.

Architectural Institute of B.C. (Charter Member, Member #51, President 1924-26)

B.C. Society of Fine Arts (President 1937 - 1939)

British Columbia Artist (BCA, 1921)

Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver (Member 1931)

George Lister Thornton Sharp was born in London, England. He was educated at Haileybury, England, and commenced his career as an architect in London in 1898. He arrived in Vancouver from London, England in 1908, according to an entry form he filled out for an exhibition. Although he trained and articulated as an architect, he also took art classes at the Royal Academy. He had previously worked in Pretoria, South Africa, then returned to England before emigrating to Canada. He worked for an architectural firm in Montreal in 1906-07 before moving west. He married Hilda Fisher, of Pretoria, South Africa.

He exhibited his artwork in Vancouver, starting at least as early as 1909 with the B.C. Society of Fine Arts' debut First Annual Exhibition at the Dominion Hall in Vancouver. The exhibition catalogue for that show lists Sharp's name in four different ways: J. Thornton Sharp ARIBA; G.L. Thornton Sharp; J.L. Thornton Sharp; and G. Thornton Sharp ARIBA. It is possible that there were two Thornton Sharps in that show: J.L. and G.L.

G.L.T. Sharp was one of the earliest architects in Vancouver, registered as the 51st architect with the Architectural Institute of Vancouver. With Charles Thompson he co-founded the longest surviving architectural firm in Vancouver, Sharp and Thompson, albeit one that has changed names more than once. Around 1908 Sharp designed the Shaughnessy residence of R.S. Lennie, the father of artist Beatrice Lennie, who at that time was only a few years old. Many years later Beatrice was commissioned to create decorative work on Sharp's last major project, the Anglican church St. John's Shaughnessy, designed in the 1940s.

Sharp exhibited extensively with the B.C. Society of Fine Arts, including the exhibitions in November 1909, September 1920 (held at the Vancouver School Board offices on Hamilton Street), 1921, and 1922, May 1924, 1925, and 1926, June 1927, May and November 1929, from 1936 to 1940, 1944, 1950, from 1950 to 1957, 1959 to 1962, 1964, and 1967. He is probably the only artist who personally contributed work to the first and the last exhibitions held by the Society, a remarkable span of almost sixty years of art.

He exhibited his work with the Island Arts & Crafts Society in 1927 and 1928, and at the Vancouver Exhibition in 1924 and 1930, representing the B.C. Society of Fine Arts in the latter exhibitions.

Sharp was the founding Director of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts when it opened in 1925, but resigned after the first session.

Sharp and Thompson Architects designed the first Vancouver Art Gallery on Georgia Street, an art-deco

poured-concrete building which opened in 1931. He exhibited his work in the gallery in the annual *B.C. Artists* exhibitions in 1932, 1933, 1934, from 1936 to 1938, 1941, and 1947. Sharp had solo exhibitions of pictures at the gallery in 1933, 1935, and 1937.

He retired to Vancouver Island, where he continued to paint until he died in Chemainus in 1974 at the age of ninety-four.

## Exhibitions

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1933 December 1 - 10	<u>Exhibition of Pictures</u>	<u>VAG</u>
1935 April 9 - 21	Exhibition of Watercolours	<u>VAG</u>
1937 May 4 - 16	Exhibition of Watercolours	<u>VAG</u>
1940 Oct. 15 - 27	Watercolours	<u>VAG</u>

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
1909 April 20 - 28	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>First Annual Exhibition</u>	Yorkshire Moors Pretoria, South Africa On Howell's Ranch, Hornby Id. Lucerne, Switzerland Basilica Vicenza, Italy
1909 November	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Second Exhibition</u>	Street Scene in Zanzibar Design for Small House, Strathcona, Pt. Grey
1910 May	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Third Exhibition</u>	Architect's Perspective
1920 September 18 - 25	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Annual Exhibition</u>	Evening, North Arm Grey Rocks, North Arm North Arm
1921 Sept. 19 - 24	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>13th Annual Exhibition</u>	A Windy Day, Caulfield A Hot Day Qualicum Beach Evening Mists Morning Mists
1922 Sept. 16 - 23	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>14th Annual Exhibition</u>	Granville St. Bridge False Creek Fish Wharf
1924 May 3 - 17	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>16th Annual Exhibition</u>	Emerald Cave, La Jolla Cormorant Cliffs Balboa Park

1925 May 9 - 16	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>17th Annual Exhibition</u>	La Jolla Bay La Jolla Bay Cactus Japanese Bridge, Fraser River The Thaw The Forest Edge Frost on Fraser Delta Qualicum Beach
1926 May 8 - 15	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>18th Annual Exhibition</u>	The Mouth of the Fraser
1927 June 10 - 25	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>19th Annual Exhibition</u>	St. Colomb Markham Church The Goat Herd Bude Sands
1929 May 18 - June 8	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>21st Annual Exhibition</u>	Clovelly Georgia Street False Creek Balantyne Pier
1929 Nov. 16 - 30	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>Winter Exhibition</u>	Halfmoon Bay The Houseboat The Gable English Landscape
1930 Aug. 6 - 16	<u>VanExh</u> <u>Oil Paintings &amp; Water-colours</u>	Black Tusk Meadows Black Tusk Meadows The Lake, Garibaldi Park
1932 May - July	<u>VAG</u> <u>All Canadian Exhibition</u>	The Spit, Denman Island Alouette River
1932 Oct. 5 - 30	<u>VAG</u> <u>1st Annual B.C. Artists</u>	Denman Island Ferry The Fraser Fleet
1933 Sept. 22 - Oct. 15	<u>VAG</u> <u>2nd Annual B.C. Artists</u>	The Siesta Denman Island
1934 Sept. 21 - Oct. 14	<u>VAG</u> <u>3rd Annual B.C. Artists</u>	Mount Baker Himalayan Poppies Gladioli
1938 April 29 - May 15	<u>BCSFA</u> <u>28th Annual Exhibition</u>	Mouth of the Fraser Sands, Denman Island False Creek Penticton, B.C. Ballantyne Pier
1950 April 25 - May 14	<u>BCSA</u> <u>40th Annual Exhibition</u>	Evening Cove Winter

## 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 **Sharp**

### **VANCOUVER CITY SCHOOLS - TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 1925**

23rd Annual Report; Published by the Board of School Trustees, City of Vancouver

136 pages illustrated; soft cover with drawing by Charles H. Scott

Includes School of Decorative and Applied Arts Report by **Sharp** page 95,

Also includes Drawing Report by S.P. Judge page 85.

Art school references pages 10, 19, 26, art class photos pages 96 and 97

Also complete statistics on students, attendance, buildings, teachers, courses, etc.

### **THE ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA HANDBOOK - 1928**

1928, published by AIBC, 90 pages

Includes Register of Members, regulations, Architect's Act

Also *Index of Building Materials Handled by Wm.N. O'Neil Co. Ltd.*

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

### ISLAND ARTS AND CRAFTS SOCIETY - List of Exhibitors

### **MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS *formerly Art Association of Montreal* Spring Exhibitions 1880 - 1970**

1988, Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press, ISBN 0-8020-2650-8

418 pages; 4 pages of *works cited* referenced to over 3,000 Canadian artists

Two Sharp paintings listed in 1936 exhibition: *Goblin Tree* and *Evening Cove*.

### **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 *cited* for Sharp including *MM* above.

### **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 Sharp, history of Sharp & Thompson Architects, art gallery photo

### **PUBLIC ART IN VANCOUVER - ANGELS AMONG LIONS** (refer to PAV09)

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

## Clippings

"Though but a small organization, numerically considered, the B.C. Society of Fine Arts has had the honor of contributing its quota of members to engage in the determined and now successful fight for freedom and civilization. It may be said that all those belonging to this artistic fraternity have helped in various ways, but those marked out for special recognition are:

GEORGE THORNTON SHARP. - A well-known architect of this city, who, on first going to the Western Front, was attached to the Aviation Corps, where his great ability in translating the results of observations into intelligible drawings and blue prints was much appreciated. He has risen to the rank of captain and for the past year has been a member of the headquarters staff, 3rd Division."

From Honor Roll - B.C. Society of Fine Arts  
The Gold Stripe, Volume One, Christmas 1918

"**J. Thornton Sharp's** sojourn in the Old Country gave him a new start in aquarelles; look at his two pictures."

From "B.C. Society of Fine Arts", by Diogenes  
*Vancouver Daily Province*, November 13 1930

"Mr. Sharp was the architect for the Art Gallery, and his work is well known in this city. This is his first one-man show of pictures."

From *Art Gallery Bulletin*, December 1933, Vol. 1, No. 4

"Charming Display of Watercolours" by R.W.M.

*Daily Province*, April 10 1935

"Other artists showing creditable work are ... G. Thornton Sharp ..."

From "Notable Exhibits of Artists' Work" by Mildred Valley Thornton  
*Vancouver Sun* (presumed), May 1944

"G. Thornton Sharp, a city architect, was director of the School during its first year with Charles H. Scott as Principal. At the end of the first session, Mr. Sharp resigned and Mr. Scott was appointed Director."

From "A Short Art History of British Columbia", by Charles H. Scott  
*Behind The Palette*, June 1947