

Manly Edward MacDonald (1889-1971)

Interpreter of Old Ontario

SPRING UPDATE 2010

Welcome Spring! Much has happened since the last update in December, 2009. In particular, the photography sessions went very well. Things went so smoothly concerning the bringing and returning of treasured pieces, that the staff at ArtPlus were amazed. Even though the sessions are now closed, new leads keep appearing. Each time another 'Manly' comes to light, there is a desire to see it and include it if possible. However, there are limits, and in this case, the limit is the manuscript and publishing deadlines.

The only real issue during the photography sessions concerned bringing the paintings to the studio and leaving them for a number of days. Since Brant Cowie was photographing all of these pieces, he required three or four days lead time. Generally, this was not something that could be done while the collector waited. In part, this was to ensure that all the pieces were all photographed under the same light conditions. In the end, Brant photographed many of them in complete darkness, which led to some in-house jokes. Additionally, many of the images needed colour correction to offset aging or glare. Donna Guillfoyle has done a wonderful job here. Hats off to Carol Edwards and staff who controlled the registering and safe-keeping of all the paintings brought to the studio and assured their safe return. **We thank again, all those who shared paintings from their private collections.**

Choosing the paintings to be used for plates or inset pieces has been more difficult because there are so many wonderful choices. The intent of the book is to show MacDonald's varied painting talents through style and seasons. In the end, there are over 130 images in the landscape book, which should please everyone. There are barns and mills, streams and waterfalls, winterscapes that lead to spring scenery in full bloom. There are figurals and traditional pieces, semi-impressionistic ones, and those that lean to the abstract. **The owners of selected paintings will be notified presently.** Paintings from private collections that are shown in the book will be designated as such. This ensures anonymity and safety of valued pieces.

There is a wonderful story about the painting of the *Toronto Waterfront*, given to The Queen in 1959. The image will also be included in the book. I'll save the anecdote surrounding this painting for the launch in September.

The design of the dust jacket is another major decision that is not taken lightly, for it is the first thing readers see. Should the painting on the cover be a traditional one of horses, of fishing, or of other early farm chores? Should it be a semi-impressionistic one that would surprise those who think they know MacDonald's style? Or should it be one of the many portraits he mastered? In the end, the title *Interpreter of Old*

Ontario helped decide these questions. Hence, there are few portraits in the book since this is primarily a landscape book. Some do appear as insets, however. A portrait book might be a future project. As well, because the book is primarily about life in Ontario, few of the wonderful paintings by MacDonald from the east coast of Canada and the United States are included - this perhaps for another time too.

A number of people suggested that a farming scene would suit best, as it epitomized his early life in the Quinte region. The decision will be another teaser for you to wonder about. We think you will agree with the final choice all the same. Thanks to Rolf Busch, the designer, for a most effective book style and dust jacket.

I was kept busy writing appraisals for paintings. Some collectors have been surprised at their values. To clarify, an appraised value for a painting is a value set for insurance replacement purposes. The values are set somewhat higher, as it would be impossible to replace the works. As to the actual value of a painting, that is left to the vagaries of the art market, which can surprise you at any time. Certainly, the majority of Manly MacDonald works of art that I have seen, have been in very good to superior condition. Collectors have been careful when cleaning or having them reframed so that the piece has not been altered in any other way. Manly MacDonald paintings in original frames attach a higher value, just as anything in its original condition would do.

I have been asked by a collector if anyone has or knows where there are any extra Manly MacDonald frames. Some people have reframed their Manlys, but not kept the frames. If anyone has any "extras", please let me know.

Art restorer, Chris Williams of Picton, Ontario has done cleaning and restorative work for paintings in the John M. Parrott Art Gallery and for others in private collections, including some of our own. He has 30 years of experience and is now advertising for work. If you have any pieces that need attention, I would recommend him. He can be reached at 613-476-5454.

We have begun working with Friesens of Manitoba in the pre-publishing stage. This is now an exciting phase as all the hard work of the past five years comes to fruition. There is much to do yet but we will keep you posted. THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH HAS NOW BEEN SET FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2010 at the JOHN M. PARROTT ART GALLERY, 254 Pinnacle Street, Belleville, Ontario from 7-9 p.m. Other launch events and book signing dates will follow very soon...