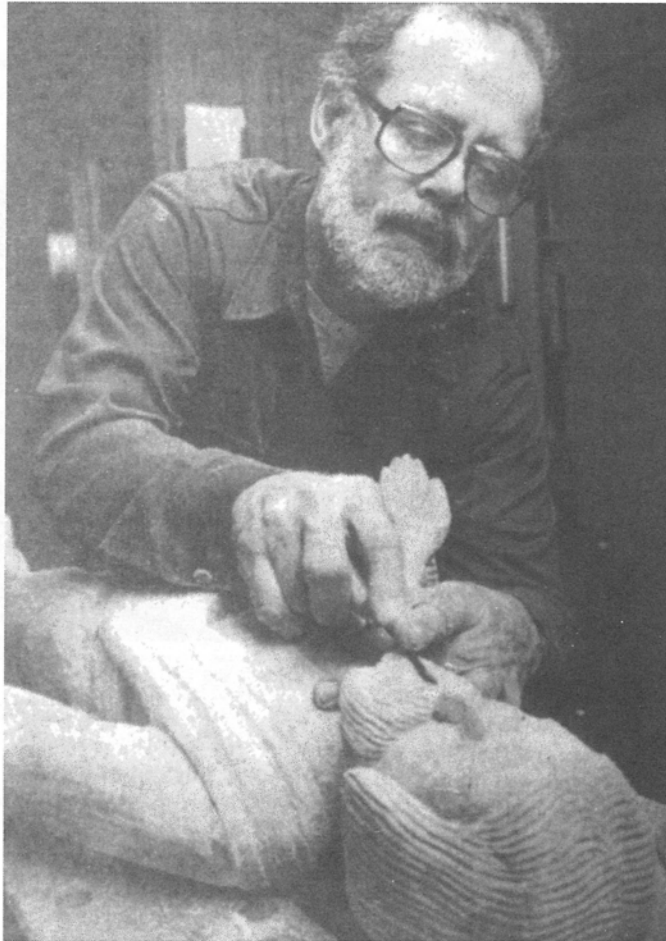


The Visual Arts



After taking up woodcarving as a hobby, André Bourget carved the “Risen Christ”

Photo credit: Paul Chivers, *The Nugget* (North Bay, Ont.)

Deaf people are visually oriented people who have often expressed themselves through the visual arts: painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, and other visual media. This chapter includes a few deaf Canadian artists and the results of their creative endeavours.

Ambrose Wilcock Mason, Portrait Artist

Ambrose Wilcock Mason (b. Feb. 16, 1851; d. Jan. 8, 1935) was an eminent born-deaf artist who lived and worked in Toronto, Ont. in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Born in Bickleigh, in the county of Devonshire, England, Mason came to Canada with his parents in 1857 and lived in Bowmanville,

Ont. At the age of 19, he was enrolled as a pupil at the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville, where he studied for three years (1871-1874). He then became the school’s dormitory supervisor of boys (1874-1878) and teacher of drawing (1876-1878).

In 1878, Mason decided to leave the Institution to become a professional painter. He studied under the best artists in Toronto for a few years. Then, in 1883, he opened his first Toronto studio at 286 Queen Street West. Over the years, Mason established a solid artistic reputation, specializing in life-sized portraits in crayon and oil, as well as in photography.

His prices for enlarged photos in crayon, sepia, watercolours, and India ink, as advertised in such papers as *The Silent Echo*, were reasonable — the highest price (\$5.00) was

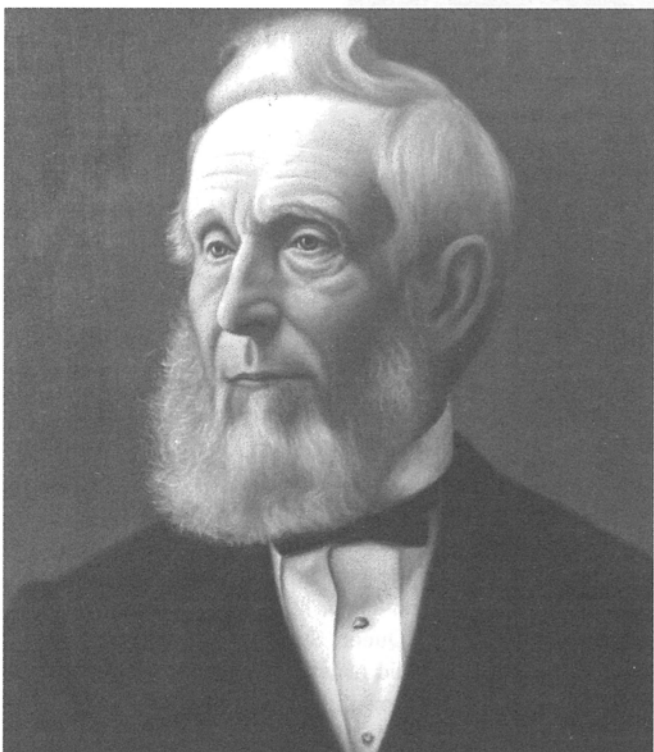


Mason at work in his art studio (circa 1920s)

Courtesy of Gladys V. (née Sours) Doyle (Toronto, Ont.)

for a 25-inch by 30-inch India ink print on a stretcher.¹ The motto of Mason's business was "good work and close prices for cash."²

On November 3, 1884, Mason married Fannie Elizabeth Lewis (b. Aug. 3, 1857; Apr. 23, 1928), an alumna of the Ontario Institution (1871-1878). They made their home at No. 1 Garden Avenue in Parkdale, a suburb of Toronto, where Mason also had his studio. The couple raised three hearing children — two sons and one daughter. Mason was an active member of several organizations and served as president (1883-1885) and treasurer (1899-1902) of the Toronto Deaf-Mute Association, and 1st vice-president (1890-1894), 2nd vice-president (1896-1900), and treasurer (1902-1908) of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association (now the Ontario Association of the Deaf). He was also a volunteer worker for the Toronto Mission to the Deaf for most of his life.



The McGann portrait by Mason (early 1880s)

Courtesy of Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf (Belleville, Ont.)



Mason's portrait of Samuel T. Greene (1890)

Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Hau-Sun ("Sunny") Ho (Mississauga, Ont.)

Mason donated several oil paintings to the Ontario Institution, including a magnificent portrait of John Barrett McGann, the hearing man who pioneered deaf education in the province of Ontario (1858-1870) and founded the Ontario Institution in 1870. By all accounts, this portrait was removed from the school in 1886 by Cecilia, one of McGann's four daughters. She took it to the United States that year when her husband, James T. Watson, became founding superintendent of what was then called the deaf department at the Washington State School for Defective Youths in Vancouver, Wash. It was another 104 years before the painting was returned to Belleville (in the summer of 1990) by Dr. Boyce Robert Williams (b. Aug. 29, 1910), a famous deaf American responsible for the creation of many vocational rehabilitation programs for deaf persons in the United States. The portrait probably came into his possession through his late hearing wife, the former Hilda Cecilia Tillinghast (b. Aug. 23, 1902; d. Jan. 12, 1989), who was the great granddaughter of McGann (and niece of John Calvin Watson, who — along with some prominent Winnipeg citizens — pioneered deaf education in Winnipeg, Man. in October 1888).³

In the spring of 1890, Mason painted a life-sized portrait of Samuel Thomas Greene, the province's first deaf teacher (he worked at the Ontario Institution [1870-1890]) and co-founder

in 1886 of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association (now the Ontario Association of the Deaf). The painting — measuring 44 inches by 54 inches — was first unveiled at the 3rd Biennial Convention of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association in Toronto (June 21-24, 1890). Thirty-four years later, in 1924, the same portrait of Greene was again unveiled by Mason during the 18th Biennial Convention of the Ontario Association at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (June 28-July 1). It was then presented to the school as a gift from the Association. Today, Mason's paintings of McGann and Greene can be seen at the school (which was renamed the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in 1974). The portrait of McGann hangs in the foyer of the main school building, and the one of Greene is displayed in the school's dining room.

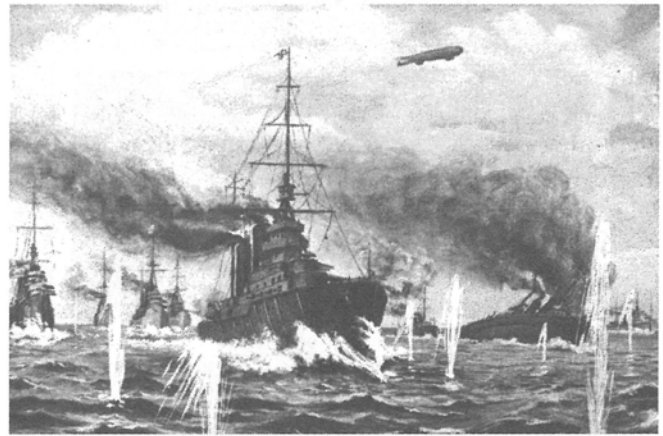
Manton Judah Nickerson, Marine Painter

One of Canada's greatest marine painters was Manton Judah Nickerson (b. Aug. 24, 1871; d. Oct. 23, 1940). A direct descendant of pre-Loyalist families from Cape Cod, Mass., he was born profoundly deaf in Clark's Harbour, a village in the county of Shelburne, N.S. Nickerson attended the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S. (1884-1891).



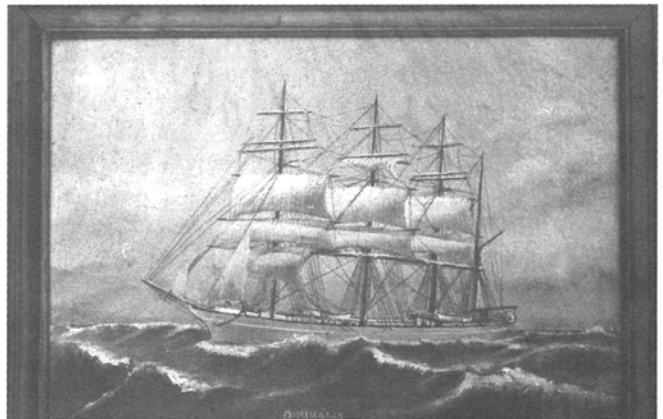
Manton J. Nickerson at work in 1895

A Fred A. Hatfield Photo (Yarmouth, N.S.)



A World War I painting by Manton J. Nickerson (undated)

A Fred A. Hatfield Photo (Yarmouth, N.S.)



"Drumalis" by Manton J. Nickerson (undated)

A Fred A. Hatfield Photo (Yarmouth, N.S.)



"Boston Boat Passing Yarmouth Lighthouse" by Manton J. Nickerson (undated)

A Fred A. Hatfield Photo (Yarmouth, N.S.)

Strongly influenced by his surroundings, Nickerson began painting seascapes and ships at an early age while still attending the Halifax Institution. He eventually became a self-taught accomplished artist. Upon graduation, he returned home to Clark's Harbour, and in 1912 married Bethenia Swim (b. June 17, 1888; d. Apr. 9, 1968) of Lockeport, a former student at the Halifax Institution (1897-1907). They had one daughter, Josephine, born



“Evening on the Canadian Lake” by Manton J. Nickerson (1909)

A Fred A. Hatfield Photo (Yarmouth, N.S.)

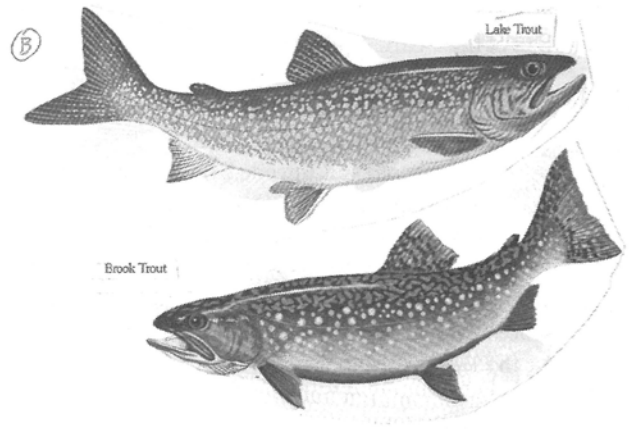
in 1915. In 1916, Nickerson and his family moved to Halifax, where he started working as a house painter for Frank Reardon & Son Contractors. While in Halifax, he was an active member of the Forrest Club (now the Halifax Association for the Deaf). Determined to earn a living by painting on canvas rather than on houses, Nickerson moved his family back to his native Clark’s Harbour in 1925. There he lived what — on the surface — appeared to be a rather uneventful life, struggling as an artist during the hard economic times of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, he skillfully captured the mood of the sea — the lonely vastness and the movement of boats — in all of his marine paintings. When he died in 1940, Nickerson “left behind for future generations his thoughts and aspirations as depicted in his numerous canvasses.”⁴ His paintings have been widely exhibited in the Maritime provinces. Many of his works can be seen in Cape Sable Island’s Archelaus Smith Museum in Centreville, Shelburne County, N.S.

Forrest Curwin Nickerson, Illustrator and Commercial Artist⁵

In his 1982 book, *A Deaf Artist’s Trail*, Forrest Curwin Nickerson (b. Dec. 31, 1929; d. June 16, 1988) said that “to become a

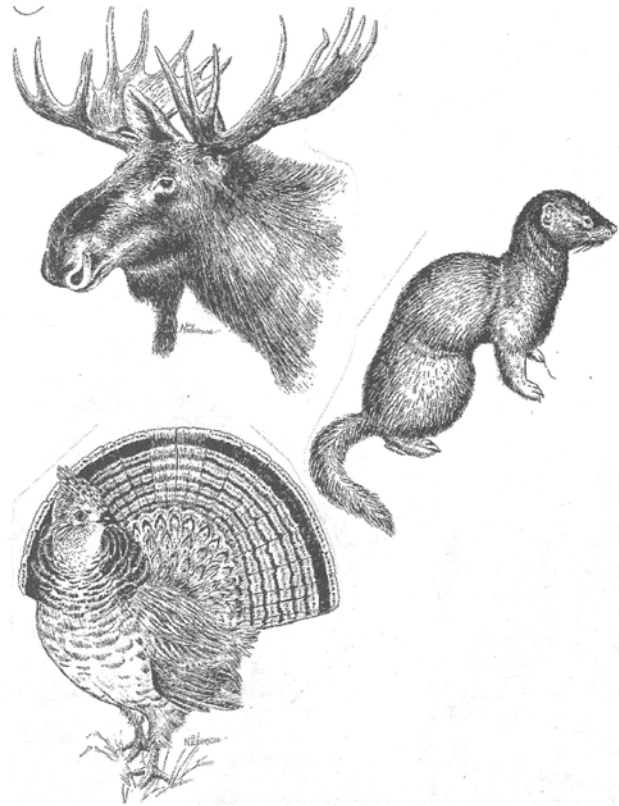


Forrest C. Nickerson at work in 1960
Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)



Watercolour illustrations of lake trout and brook trout — two of 26 species of fish painted by Forrest C. Nickerson in 1970 and printed on large wall charts (36” x 38”) entitled “Freshwater Fishes of Manitoba.” Considered some of the best ever done in North America, they can be found in almost every fishing and hunting lodge, sporting goods store, and school on the continent.

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)



Pen-and-ink illustrations of moose, mink, and ruffed grouse by Forrest C. Nickerson, prepared exclusively for educational materials published by the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, 1968

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)

good illustrator you must first love the work — love it well enough to work hard year after year, at least until you have earned a name for yourself and your work is in demand.”⁶



Forrest C. Nickerson's 1969 pen-and-ink rendering with portrait effect of Sir John A. MacDonal, Canada's first prime minister

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)

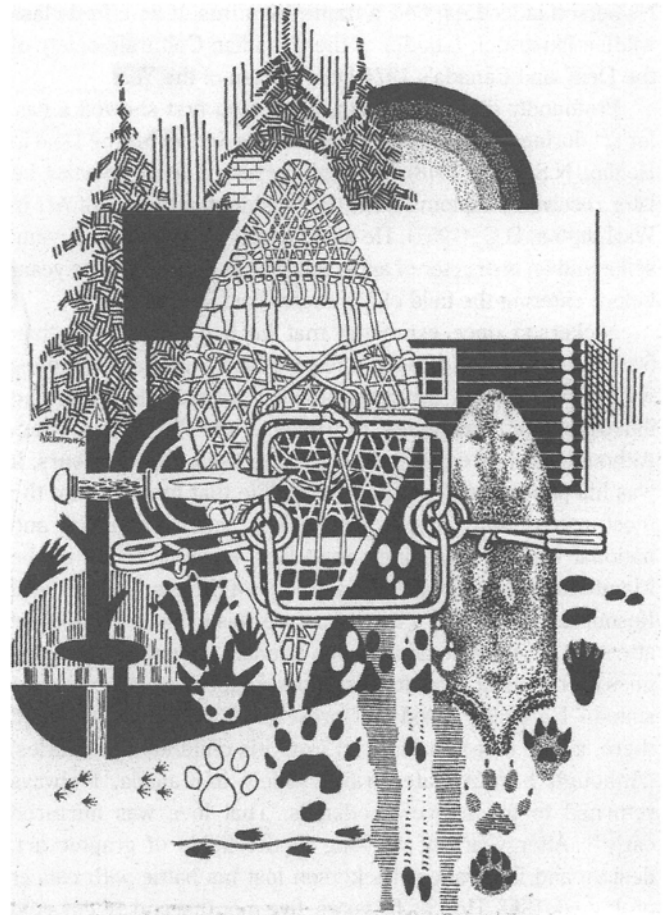
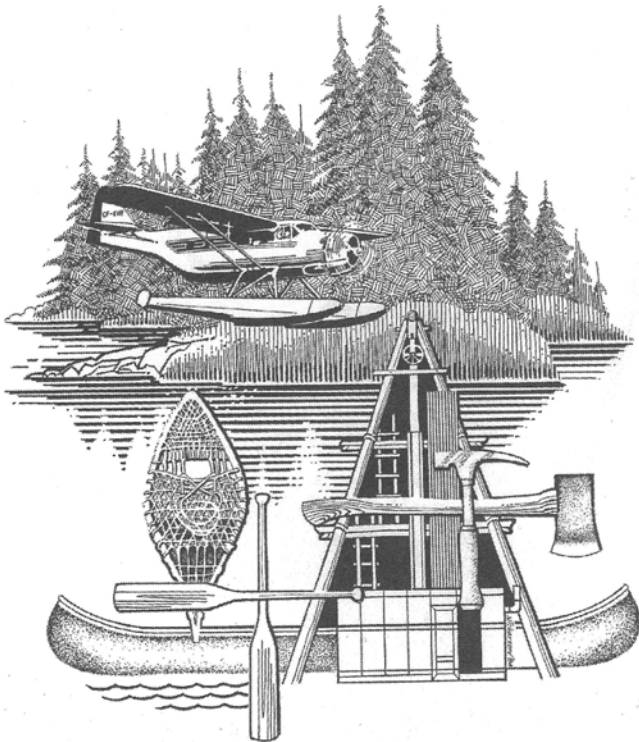


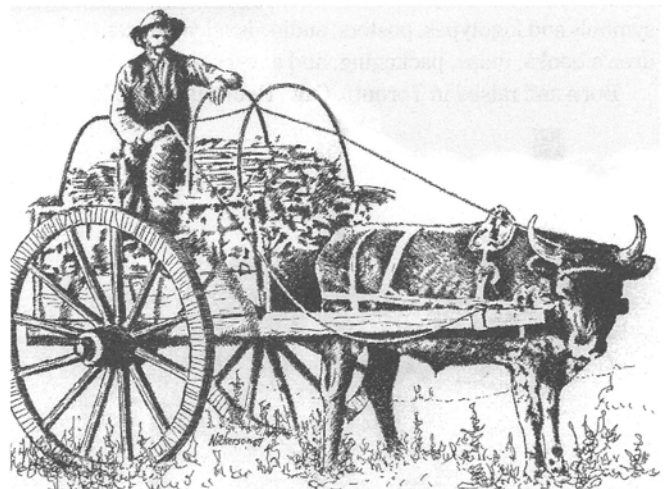
Illustration with variety of pen techniques by Forrest C. Nickerson in 1970 for cover of Trapper Education series published by the Province of Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)



One of 21 pen-and-ink illustrations by Forrest C. Nickerson in 1985 for Hugh S. Fraser's book, *The Great Thompson Nickel Discovery*

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)



Pen-and-ink illustration of the Red River cart with an ox depicting the history of the Great West by Forrest C. Nickerson (1969)

Courtesy of Forrest C. Nickerson (Winnipeg, Man.)

Nickerson indeed earned a name for himself as a first-class wildlife illustrator, founder of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, and Canada's 1974 Deaf Citizen of the Year.

Profoundly deaf since birth, Nickerson first showed a flair for art during his years as a student at the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. (1937-1948). Through correspondence courses, he later received a diploma from the Washington School of Art in Washington, D.C. (1951). He worked as a boys' residence counsellor and an instructor of art at the Halifax School for five years before entering the field of commercial art in 1954.

Nickerson once estimated that he had done more than 50,000 spot and line drawings, illustrations, logos, and cartoons while working as a commercial artist, graphic designer, and illustrator for companies in Halifax, and Winnipeg, Man. Although he was equally skilled in the use of watercolours, it was his pen-and-ink drawings of wildlife that brought him the most recognition. These appeared in many provincial and national wildlife magazines as well as in publications of the Manitoba government's Department of Mines and Natural Resources. Nickerson's love of nature was evident in his close attention to every detail about an animal. "To nature the artist goes for his inspiration, for his colors, shapes and shadows," he stated.⁷ He dearly loved the forest and the animals he found there, a love that was inspired from his childhood memories: "Although I would later travel widely in Canada, I always returned to my native woodlands. That love was nurtured early."⁸ After years of working in the fields of graphic art, design, and illustration, Nickerson lost his battle with cancer on June 6, 1988. He was 58 years, five months, and 16 days old when he died. His legacy — both in the arts and in the Deaf community — will long be remembered.

Beverley Anne Boudreau, Artist

Beverley Anne Boudreau (b. Jan. 30, 1954) is a deaf Canadian artist who specializes in illustration and graphic design. She has been involved in a wide variety of educational and commercial projects since 1977, including book covers, symbols and logotypes, posters, audio-visual presentations, children's books, maps, packaging, and advertising.

Born and raised in Toronto, Ont., Boudreau (who has a pro-



Boudreau at work (1988)

Courtesy of Beverley A. Boudreau (Windsor, Ont.)

found hearing loss) attended regular classes at St. Ambrose (1960-1968), a private parish school. She completed her high school education at Alderwood Collegiate Institute (1969-1973). Following graduation, Boudreau worked for two years for the Canadian Red Cross Society in Toronto, writing and illustrating materials for elementary school programs. She then moved to British Columbia to study in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby (1976-1978). In 1977, she received the Simon Fraser University Award for her contribution to community life on campus. Boudreau then went on to earn her associate of arts diploma in graphic design from Kwantlen College (1979-1981) in Surrey, B.C. In both 1980 and 1981, the Vancouver Foundation of British Columbia presented her with the William and Emily Ross Award as the most deserving physically handicapped student. At the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf's 1980 National Festival



First Day cover with Boudreau's stamp designs

Courtesy of Beverley A. Boudreau (Windsor, Ont.)



Kalahari bushman by Boudreau (1985)

Courtesy of Beverley A. Boudreau (Windsor, Ont.)



Hawk watch by Boudreau (1988)

Courtesy of Beverley A. Boudreau (Windsor, Ont.)

of the Arts in Winnipeg, Man., she won the Golden Defty Award (a special trophy presented by the CCSD) for her paintings, and a bronze medallion in painting and drawing.

For one year (1981-1982), Boudreau worked for Child Abuse Research and Education Productions in Surrey, B.C., designing and producing an educational package on sexual abuse. Then, in 1982, she moved to Botswana, Africa, where she lived until 1986. At the National Museum of Botswana in Gaborone (1982-1984), she designed and produced museum display exhibits and designed and illustrated an archeology textbook for a junior high school history curriculum. She also taught art classes for deaf children at Magopane Primary School in Ramotswa (1983-1985) and produced three instructional booklets for special education teachers for the Botswana Ministry of Education in Gaborone (1984-1986). When the Botswana Philatelic Bureau appealed to the Transvaal Museum for help in designing four 1983 Christmas postage stamps, Boudreau was invited to depict colourful dragonflies from original colour slides on loan to the Bureau from entomologist Dr. Louise Prozesky-Schultze of Monument Park, Pretoria. The postage stamps and First Day covers were officially issued on November 7, 1983.

In 1986, Boudreau returned to Canada, settling in Windsor, Ont. She developed and designed teaching and promotional materials for Lakeview Montessori School in St. Clair Beach, Ont. and since 1989 has been employed as the graphic artist at the Essex Region Conservation Authority. She also continues to do a limited amount of freelance work through her design company, *San Design*, which specializes in illustration and graphics for service agencies, professional organizations, and educational institutions.

Alldyn Ellis Clark, Photographer

Alldyn Ellis Clark (b. Mar. 8, 1931) became deaf at the age of 10. He attended oral classes at the Clinton Street Public School (1941-1945) and the Central Technical School (1945-1948), both in Toronto, Ont. He first attempted photography as a teenager in 1945, when he asked his pretty, red-haired girlfriend for her photograph. She refused to give him her picture, saying that if he wanted one so badly, he should get a camera and take it himself. So, he found a used box camera at the Salvation Army and bought it with the 50 cents he had planned on spending at the movies. Then he worked as a pin setter in a bowling alley until he had enough money to buy film for the camera. He taught himself how to work the equipment and develop the prints, and finally took the long-awaited picture of his girlfriend. The reluctant female, Dorothy Grace Tate (b. Apr. 18, 1930), later became his wife.⁹ She is an accomplished



Alldyn Clark and the photograph that won the 1974 Golden Defty Award

Courtesy of Alldyn E. Clark (Bracebridge, Ont.)

born-deaf pianist who, like her husband, attended the Clinton Street Public School (1936-1945). "An excellent pianist ... [she] played the marches for assemblies and dismissals with perfect time and expression."¹⁰ She also studied at Central Technical School (1945-1951), and took piano lessons at the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Clark is a self-taught photographer who learned his trade through reading and trial-and-error. He worked for a time at Brigden's Limited in Toronto, where he learned even more about the photography trade, and in a few years became knowledgeable enough to work as a darkroom technician for Ontario Hydro. He later learned camera repair from correspondence schools and worked at this trade for several years in New Jersey and Florida.

In his spare time, Clark works in his home studio in Bracebridge, Ont., where he does "portraits of every type including children, sports, aerials, police, medical, education, museum, industrial ... nature and wildlife pictures including bird photography."¹¹ He also "restores old and faded pic-

tures.”¹² His bird photographs have been printed in wildlife magazines across the country and abroad, including Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. He has photographed many Canadian politicians, and his pictures have appeared often in local newspapers. In 1974, Clark won the Golden Deft Award from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf for one of his photographs. At the Southern Cross International Exhibition of Stereo Photography, Sydney, Australia (April 1994), he was awarded the International Federation of Photographic Art’s gold medal for “second best in show,” for his three-dimensional photograph called “Flip the Frog.” Clark’s photographs and articles on stereo photography have appeared in *Photographic Canadiana*, a publication of the Photographic Historical Society of Canada.¹³

Mona Thrasher, Arctic Artist

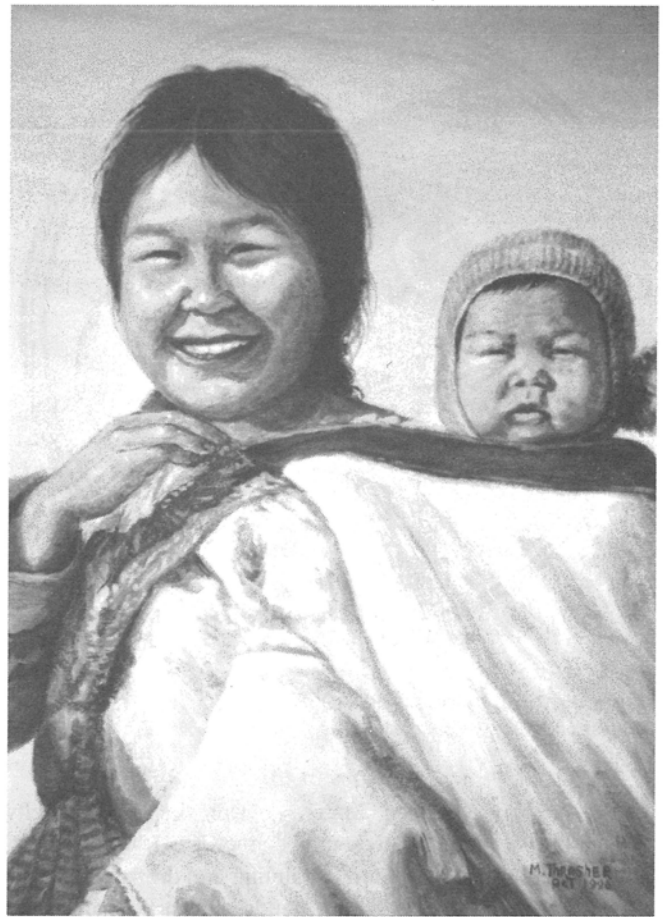
Born in a bush camp on the Mackenzie Delta between the village of Aklavik and what is now the village of Inuvik, N.W.T., Mona Thrasher (b. Feb. 24, 1942) was exposed early in life to



Thrasher and her painting, “Inuvik Church” (1990)
 Courtesy of Arctic Art Gallery (Yellowknife, N.W.T.)



“Homeward Bound” by Thrasher (1990)
 Courtesy of Arctic Art Gallery (Yellowknife, N.W.T.)



“Backseat Driver” by Thrasher (1990)
 Courtesy of Arctic Art Gallery (Yellowknife, N.W.T.)

the Inuit culture. Her father, Billy, son of a Portuguese whaler, was captain of the mission boat *Our Lady of Lourdes*, which brought supplies from Tuktoyaktuk to the Northern missions of Holman Island, Coppermine, Sachs Harbour, and Cambridge Bay. Her mother, Alice, was an Alaskan Inuit and Billy’s second wife. At the age of 10, Thrasher left her family’s log cabin to attend the Aklavik Roman Catholic Mission School, where she remained until the age of 17, returning home only during the months of July and August. When she was 13, a shotgun discharged near her head, and, as a result, she lost her hearing. She continued at the Mission School following this accident, communicating through written English. Thrasher began taking art classes in her early teens and was encouraged to pursue her artistic interests by such instructors as Father Adam, Bishop Dennis Croteau, and Bern Will Brown. It was Father Adam who gave 18-year-old Thrasher her first commission, when he invited her to paint the “Stations of the Cross” in the newly constructed Igloo Church in Inuvik. She completed these 14 murals, each 21½ feet by 3 feet, in a little over two months. Since that time, she has painted more than 800 oils and pastels.

Her paintings reflect her childhood memories of life in the Arctic. Working from a pencil sketch on canvas, she uses such basic colours as blue and white to depict the semi-darkness and frigid climate of her Northern home. Her paintings cap-

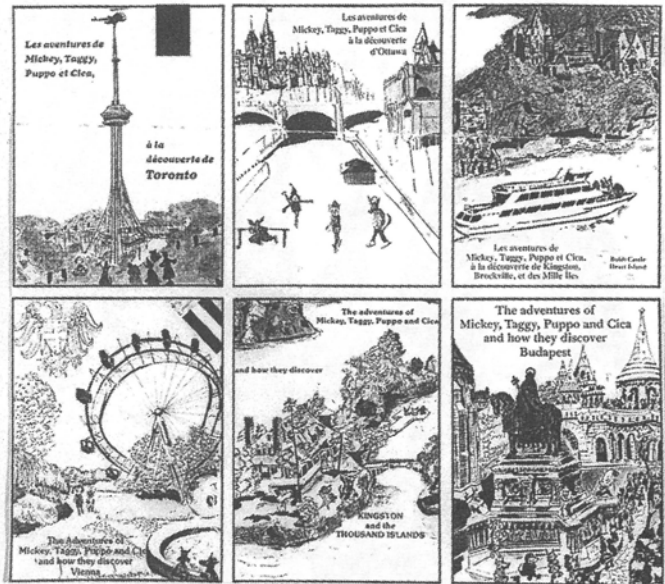
ture everyday scenes such as igloos, dogteams, hunting and fishing parties, polar bears, kayaks, and the northern lights. A very disciplined artist, Thrasher takes between one to two weeks to complete a canvas. Her works were first sold through the efforts of Father Adam and Bishop Croteau, who displayed her oils in the parish hall. In September 1990, she moved to Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories, and now works as the artist-in-residence at the Arctic Art Gallery, where her paintings sell for as much as \$2,600.

Elise Kane, Illustrator

Included among Canada's most popular books for children is a series called *The Adventures of Mickey, Taggy, Puppo and Cica and How They Discover Toronto* (and other places such as Montréal, Ottawa, Kingston, and The Thousand Islands). The watercolour illustrations and covers for these books were done by Elise Kane (b. Dec. 3, 1948), a deaf artist residing in Toronto, Ont.

Profoundly deafened at the age of six months following an attack of chicken pox and a high fever, Kane started her education in a special class for deaf students at Toronto's King Edward public school. Gradually integrated into hearing classes, she attended Northern Secondary School, which offered a

four-year commercial arts program, and graduated with a grade 12 diploma in 1967. Although she thought about completing grade 13 and then entering the University of Toronto, she enrolled instead at the Ontario College of Art — a decision for which she remains thankful. With her strong art background, she finished a four-year program in commercial art and advertising in just three years.



Six different book cover illustrations by Kane

Photo by Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services



Elise Kane at her drawing board

Courtesy of Elise Kane (Toronto, Ont.)

In 1970, Kane was invited to participate in the first *Adventures* book by Kati Rekaï, the book's author. Armed with a lively and creative imagination plus reference materials (travel brochures, postcards, newspaper clippings, encyclopedia articles, and so on), Kane worked in her basement studio to develop illustrations based on real-life animals: "Mickey" (a German shepherd belonging to Kati), "Taggy" (Kane's English beagle), "Puppo" (a malamute in their neighbourhood who had come from a native reserve in Northern Manitoba), and "Cica" (a French tabby cat who lived next door to the Kanes). These characters became animal detectives exploring the wonders and beauty of various cities while solving mysteries. Since the first book was published in 1971, *The Adventures of Mickey, Taggy, Puppo and Cica* have included capers around the world in such cities as Amsterdam, Budapest, London, and Vienna. There are now 10 books written in English and five in French. Some have been translated into other languages as well, including Polish, German, and Braille. Jigsaw puzzles based on Kane's illustrations with captions from the stories have also been manufactured. Her original drawings for these delightful travel books for children have appeared at various book and art exhibitions in Canada. She and her husband, Kevin Cachia, and son Alexander enjoy the pastels, watercolours, and oils that Kane paints in her spare time to beautify her home.

Dismas Bruno Gallant, Woodcarver



An award-winning replica of the mace, carved by Dismas B. Gallant. Using a small penknife, Gallant carved the war weapon (originally used in the Middle Ages) from a single piece of wood without using joints or glue.

Courtesy of Doris MacKenzie (Saint John, N.B.)

Dismas Bruno Gallant (b. July 5, 1904; d. Feb. 23, 1977) was a talented woodworker whose hand-carved furniture can still be found in homes, business, and government buildings in New Brunswick.¹⁴ The only deaf child in a family of 11 children, Gallant was born in Cap Pele, N.B. He became deaf at the age of three following spinal meningitis. Enrolled in the New Brunswick School for the Deaf in Lancaster (1914-1918) and the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. (1919-1923), Gallant returned to the Saint John, N.B. area to work when he completed school. On October 1, 1930, he married Bessie Estalla Shaw (b. Mar. 26, 1904; d. Feb. 3, 1980), a born-deaf woman who had also attended the New Brunswick School.

Dismas and his wife learned the two-handed British manual alphabet at school, and used it to communicate with each other and with their hearing children at home. But they could also use the one-handed alphabet with other deaf people. Active in local deaf organizations, the family became an entry point into the Saint John Deaf community for many newcomers to the area, who always seemed to find their way to the couple's

house. For 44 years, Gallant worked at Emery's Cabinet Shop as a woodworker; he retired in 1968. Perhaps his most visible hand carving work can be found in the New Brunswick Legislature — eight chairs (created to match the original chairs used in the government building), adorned with intricate carvings of Gothic arches, shell designs, and lions' heads. Gallant also did freelance furniture repair from his home, and during his leisure hours was constantly seen with a piece of wood in his hand, engaged in his hobby of whittling (which won him first prize — the "Golden Defty" — from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf in 1976). A member of the Saint John Rifle Club, the Saint John Fish and Game Association, the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf, the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, and the Loyalist City Deaf Club, he died of a heart attack a few months following his 1976 induction into CCSD's Hall of Fame.

Subway Paint-In Prize

A subway station in New Brunswick was probably one of the most unusual places to find a painting by deaf artists. An entry in Moncton's annual "Railroad Days" celebration brought recognition to the Moncton Association of the Deaf in 1981 when it won second prize in the "Subway Paint-In" event. Each June, the city-wide "Railroad Days" festival includes canoe races, cultural and craft displays, a fashion show, parade, and the painting event, in which all 41 panels in the Main Street



Second prize-winner in 1981 Subway Paint-In (Moncton, N.B.)

Courtesy of Moncton Association of the Deaf/Photo Credit: Frank LeBlanc (Moncton, N.B.)