

THE ART OF
TOM THOMSON

A decorative graphic for the title. It features the text 'THE ART OF' in a simple serif font above the name 'TOM THOMSON' in a large, bold, blocky serif font. Below the name is a stylized illustration of a winged figure, possibly a cherub or a personification of art, holding a scroll. The figure is rendered in a dark, woodcut-like style with intricate line work. The entire graphic is set against a light, textured background.

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AGO coll. : p. 6, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31, 35,
38-41, 43-45, 48, 56, 59,
64-67, 70, 76-79, 83-85,
89, 91-96

Joan Murray
by Joan Murray
Curator of Canadian Art

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
October 30 - December 12, 1971



*As pines
keep the shape of the wind
even when the wind has fled, and is no longer there,
so words
guard the shape of man
even when man has fled, and is no longer there.*

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George Seferis, "On Stage",
Three Secret Poems (Trans. by W. Kaiser).
Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 31

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Photograph of Tom Thomson in Algonquin Park/COURTESY OF MRS. MAUD VARLEY

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Preface

In 1936, Mr. Martin Baldwin, the Director of the then Art Gallery of Toronto, began a systematic index of the paintings of Tom Thomson. He felt that the apparent lack of scholarly concern for one of the best-known names in Canadian art represented an anomaly in art-historical research in this country, which the Art Gallery should commit itself to correct. More than thirty years later the situation was basically unchanged, apart from Mr. Baldwin's unpublished work. It was for these reasons that we decided to ask the Curator of Canadian Art, Joan Murray, to update this pioneering study.

Mrs. Murray has examined the life and art of Tom Thomson, searching wherever possible for primary source material, so that a comprehensive and exact chronology of the artist's activities could be detailed. Having accomplished this, it may now be possible to suggest the artist's true development, his intentions and ideals, and assess, for the first time, his major contribution to Canadian art.

Among the many people who assisted the Curator in the preparation of this catalogue, I would like to thank especially the Thomson family, who have been more than generous with their time and material, particularly Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, the artist's sister; Mrs. F. E. Fisk; Mrs. T. Gibson Henry and Mr. George M. Thomson. Almost all the collectors of Thomson's work have assisted by allowing the Art Gallery of Ontario to photograph their paintings for a pictorial index to the artist's work. Among the many galleries and dealers in Canada who have assisted in our research, the help of Mr. Walter Klinkhoff in Montreal, and Mr. Jack Wildridge, Mr. Philip McCready, and Mr. David Mitchell in Toronto, must be particularly noted. We are grateful as well for the aid of Mr. Paul Duval. Without The National Gallery of Canada—especially the Director, Miss Jean Boggs; the Registrar, Miss Dorothea Coates; the Curator of Post-Confederation Canadian Art, Mr. Dennis Reid; and the Photograph Librarian, Miss Allison Lang—it would have been almost impossible to organize this exhibition. I would like to thank as well The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery in Owen Sound, and its Curator, Mr. Douglas Wood, who selflessly lent a major portion of their Thomson collection to our show. I would also like to thank two staff members of the Art Gallery of Ontario: the Conservator, Mr. Edouard Zukowski and our Registrar, Mr. Charles McFaddin; as well as the photographer for this exhibition, Mr. Ron Vickers. Mr. Douglas S. Richardson, Assistant Professor in the Fine Art Department, University of Toronto, assisted the Curator with his useful suggestions.

We are particularly indebted to AIR CANADA, whose generosity made it possible for the exhibition to travel to our sister galleries across Canada.

It should be noted here that this catalogue has

been prepared by Joan Murray as the basis for an eventual *catalogue raisonné* of Thomson's work, which the University of Toronto Press will publish. For this reason, both the list of exhibitions, provenance and literature concerning specific paintings have been omitted from the catalogue entries in this text.

William J. Withrow
Director

Introduction

The name Tom Thomson conjures up an image of the Canadian North which may combine in the hearts of wistful city-dwellers with ideas of mystery and romance. The name may also bring to mind Canada's two best-known paintings: *The West Wind* and *Jack Pine*—two works that have become part of every Canadian's childhood through classroom reproductions.

But who was the artist? How did he develop? What did he intend in his paintings? These are all questions that have remained almost completely unanswered, perhaps due to the length of time which people traditionally take to investigate a myth—for a myth is what Thomson has become.

Indeed, as early as 1924, only seven years after the artist's death, an artist and friend, F. H. Varley, told one of his students that Thomson was already a legend.¹ The reasons why are apparent: his life and the circumstances of his death are equally mysterious.

He lived in the Canadian wilderness for the latter part of his life. Much later, the section of the country he most favoured was to become the nation's vacationland, rather than an area of which few knew outside of the occasional fisherman, forest ranger, or logger. Through some strange chemistry which has taken place in the heart of Canada since its inception, it is this section—the North—which is seen as the symbolic image of the nation. Colder, cleaner, purer, and marked by a distinctive geography of hills, lakes and forests—all these reasons serve to make it our spiritual heartland.

It was accepted as somehow fitting, though tragic, that Thomson should drown in those Northern waters, for nature, and especially 'the wild,' was seen by the artists of this era as a personification of more than natural forces. One can judge this from the inscription (written and designed by J. E. H. MacDonald) on Thomson's cairn, erected September 27th, 1917, on Canoe Lake, which reads in part as follows:

*He lived humbly but passionately with the wild . . . It drew him apart and revealed itself wonderfully to him. It sent him out from the woods only to show these revelations through his art, and it took him to itself at last.*²

The use of the words 'revealed' and 'revelations' suggests some of the semi-mystical connotations with which Thomson's friends—and probably Thomson himself—regarded the Nature which they sought. This quest was seen as a communion with the spirit of the North, and indeed, one of Thomson's main themes is the image of a tree pitted against the forces of wind and wave—which perhaps may have been to him a metaphor for 'that eternal conflict which Nature wages against man, the vulgar intruder'.³

But there are other reasons for Thomson's elevation to legendary status. He died in the prime of life and full of promise, and so became an 'early laurelled head' to whom A. E. Housman's words might have been applied:

*Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.*⁴

With Thomson, one forever wonders what more he would have achieved if he had lived.

Because of his early death, his paintings seem to have that flawless quality of youth, that exuberance which makes obstacles easy to overcome. His work was actually both a prototype for, and an archetype of, the work of the Group of Seven which followed him. Though the Group was only founded in 1920, three years after he died, many of the members' ideas and ideals had been formulated by Thomson.

After his sudden death, the members of the Group abandoned Algonquin Park as a sketching site and went instead to the Algoma area. Algonquin Park was considered 'too sad', too filled with the presence of the dead painter.⁵ From Algoma, the Group decided to go farther and farther North, and eventually they expanded their range to include all of Canada.

Later, they recalled specific memories of Thomson and paid homage to him. Thomson's example had released in all of them a new freedom in handling paint and a greater brilliance of colour.

Why Thomson's paintings are so memorable may be partly because of the artist's training in the photo-engraving houses of his day. This training moulded his vision in a certain way. His best remembered paintings combine the vivid impression of an illustrator's work with the intense impact of a designer's. It could even be argued that his work in oils matured only when it incorporated these primarily graphic qualities.

Thomson's images reproduce extremely well. Hence, his work sometimes conveys more monumentality and sweep in reproduction than did the original. This achievement, the creation of the 'memorable image', combined with extensive commercial reproduction of Thomson's work, the mystique of his life, the circumstances surrounding his mysterious death, and the extent of his influence, have all contributed to the creation of the legend.

But Thomson should be remembered for something more. An examination of the artist's life and work, using such primary source material as exists, shows that Thomson began doing semi-abstract paintings no later than 1914. Every autumn from that time on led him to the same results: a series of colour notes which are pure lyrical abstractions. This feeling for abstraction, at such a remarkably early period in Canadian art, was found only in Thomson's small panels. The culmination of these experiments was in the year 1916, the autumn before the artist died. His study of the colours of the Canadian autumn is analogous in some ways to Constable's observations of clouds. But it is probable that if Thomson had lived, truly abstract or non-figurative art would have appeared in Canada much sooner than it did. Thomson might then be remembered not only as a precursor of a national school of pervasive—and therefore occasionally limiting—influence, but also as a liberating figure whose work had the effect of adjusting Canadian art to the modern era with greater ease than was actually experienced.

Joan Murray
Curator of Canadian Art

Footnotes to Introduction

1. Interview with Robert Ross, April 8, 1971.
2. *Catalogue of a Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by Tom Thomson. February 13-19, 1920, Art Gallery of Ontario.* The memorial is reproduced in this catalogue, p. 7. It had been published previously by J. E. H. MacDonald in 'A Landmark of Canadian Art' *The Rebel II, No. 2* (Nov. 1917), p. 49. A handy reproduction of it appears in W. Colgate's *Canadian Art: its Origins and Development* (Toronto, 1967), p. 96.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4. The introductory text was probably written by Dr. J. M. MacCallum. There are certain parallels between its text and an earlier article by the doctor, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine*, L, No. 5 (March, 1918), pp. 375-386.
4. A. E. Housman, XIX. 'To an Athlete Dying Young', *A Shropshire Lad* (N.Y., 1932), p. 30.
5. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.

FIG. 1 The Thomson children around 1890, taken by an anonymous Owen Sound photographer.

(From left to right)

Front row: Fraser Thomson, Margaret Thomson (Tweeddale)*

Middle row: Henry Thomson, Elizabeth Thomson (Harkness)*
George Thomson, Louisa Thomson (Henry)*

Back row: Tom Thomson, Minnie Thomson (Henry)*, Ralph Thomson

**For ease in identification, the later married names of Thomson's sisters have been included.*

(Photograph courtesy of George M. Thomson, Brantford)



FIG. 2 Photograph of the artist taken in Seattle
Courtesy of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Early Years 1877-1910

Thomson was born near the little village of Claremont, Ontario, on August 4th, 1877, in a stone house which is still standing, but the family moved in the first few months of his life to the village of Leith in the Owen Sound area, where his father had bought a farm.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this Owen Sound upbringing, besides its gentle, friendly, small community atmosphere, is the fact that another one-time resident was the well-known Canadian poet, William Wilfred Campbell (1858-1918), whose collected *Poems* (1905) Thomson probably read with affection and enjoyment. (Campbell was likewise born elsewhere, in Kitchener, but spent his childhood here, since he moved to Wiarton at an early age, in 1872.)

In other ways, Thomson was strongly influenced by his own family (FIG. 1), which was large and seems to have been drawn to the arts. One of his sisters remembers that their mother's brother was good at drawing.¹ Their father also sketched, and it is significant that of Thomson's family, at least five members were good amateur artists, while one other, George Thomson, achieved professional status. In taking early to the habit of sketching (as early as 1900 he was said to be sketching 'in pencil and in water colours the beauties of Puget Sound')², Tom Thomson simply followed the family pattern.

Thomson, like his brothers, lived at home until he was 21, and then left what seems to have been a secure haven to take his first job, in the winter of 1899, as an apprentice in the machinist trade, with William Kennedy and Sons (now Black Clawson-Kennedy Ltd.) of Owen Sound. He later regretted the fact that he left after only eight months.³

After his apprenticeship in the Kennedy Foundry, he returned home for a few months. He then went to Chatham, Ontario, where he entered the Canada Business College in order to prepare himself for an office job, following his brothers George and Henry, who had already graduated from there. A friend of his at the time records 'I don't think Tom's stay in Chatham did him much good. He seemed to me at the time to be drifting . . .'⁴ But it is probable that here he began his studies in penmanship, a pre-requisite for business training in those days, and one which was to prove significant for Thomson's later development.

By 1901, he was home again, only to move on to Winnipeg, and then to Seattle. A letter written by his brother Henry states that he arrived in Seattle on January 11, 1902, 'and Tom had already been there—about six or seven months'⁵. He stayed until around 1904, returning to Owen Sound 'in 1904 with his friend Horace Rutherford.'⁶

FIG. 3

After a Day in Tacoma
(Self-portrait of the Artist)

Water colour on paper, 8¹⁵/₁₆ x 5⁹/₁₆"

Inscription:

recto (pen): 'After a Day in Tacoma/Tom Thomson'

Mr. and Mrs. F. Schaeffer, Toronto



Seattle was important to Thomson as a family centre, because George Thomson, Tom's older brother, was associate proprietor, with F. R. McLaren, of a school called the Acme Business College. When the business was sold by the Thomson family in 1906, it was apparently fairly substantial—indeed, a survey of the business colleges around 1904, indicated that it was the eleventh largest in the United States.⁷ It was a natural place for Thomson to go to continue his training for the business world.

A photograph of the artist, from a group of eleven taken in Seattle, shows a young, sensitive and remarkably handsome man. Thomson's father considered it 'a good picture of Tom as we knew him'⁸ (FIG. 2). In a self-portrait Thomson did after 'a day in Tacoma' (a rival city), he acutely expressed his own delicacy and shyness (FIG. 3).

FIG. 4

Endorsement of the 'Special Penmanship Department' of the Acme Business College', Seattle

Present location unknown

FIG. 6

The artist's Business Card

Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto

As at Chatham, Thomson's stay seems to have been short—only six months—but he attended the Special Penmanship Department, developing an ability which was to prove basic to his talent later on. His semi-serious endorsement of the work of the institution combines Gothic lettering with a classicizing figure, a goddess (Fortuna?) with the ABCs on her shield (FIG. 4).

After leaving the business college, Thomson secured a position with the firm, Maring and Ladd of Seattle, the first photo-engraving plant west of the Mississippi,⁹ which later changed its name and partnership to Maring and Blake. C. C. Maring and Edgar L. Blake were both from Ontario, and Mr. Maring was from Chatham,¹⁰ where he had taught penmanship as a young man, and had met George Thomson.¹¹ This firm did advertising work and were handling 'three-colour jobs' before Mr. Maring died in 1905.¹² After about a year here, Thomson went to work for the Seattle Engraving Company, Maring and Blake's strongest competitors, because a certain Mr. Adams had hired him on the spot, upon seeing his work.¹³

Reminiscing on this period, one brother said that Thomson:

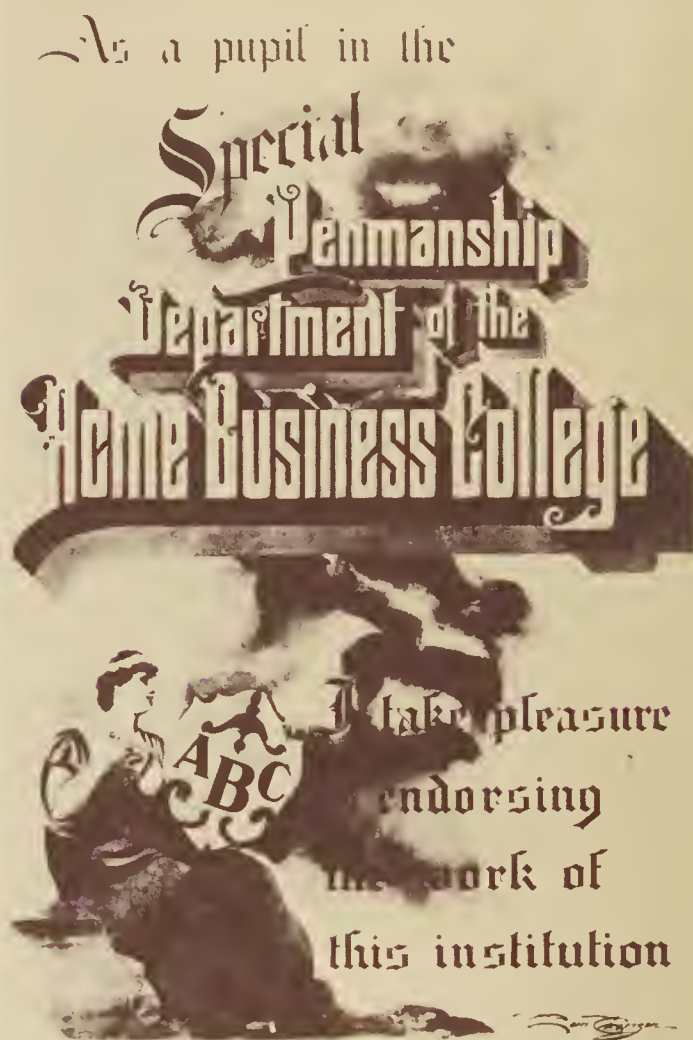
*. . . worked in pen and ink, water colour and black and white wash. He was continually looking over the various magazines, giving its advertisements a great deal of study, principally from the standpoint of decoration. It was a regular game with him to pick the best of them, change the design to suit his own ideas—and then compare their respective merits.*¹⁴

Another brother recalls that:

*Instead of his doing the work according to the instructions given by Mr. Maring he would invariably work out the design to suit his own ideas which would make Mr. Maring angry . . .*¹⁵

In both cases the artist's brothers clearly recollect that Tom Thomson had his own ideas and distinctive working habits. The ideas were very definite, well-formulated ones, and he was convinced of their merit. The practice of studying earlier advertisements was to train his sense of design so that it became oriented to a linear, decorative mode of vision. It is also significant that Thomson used no source whatever without first retranslating it, which is why it is difficult to track down his much modified and anonymous sources.

The nature of Thomson's work at Maring and Blake may be suggested by a sketch of a lady's head, possibly done in their offices (Fraser Thomson records that he



Sketch of a Lady

Pen, pencil and crayon on paper, 4¼ x 3¼"

Gift of Fraser Thomson

The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound



picked a sketch of a lady's head out of a waste basket, where Tom had thrown it)¹⁶. This may be the *Sketch of a Lady* (FIG. 5) which Fraser Thomson gave to The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery in Owen Sound. Slight, but full of vitality, this tiny sketch is of a woman with wiry hair curling out of place and a long, swanlike neck which is exaggerated by the neckline of her dress. Although it might be a portrait, the work is more likely a personification of Thomson's version of the North American dream: the Gibson Girl. Here, the use of pen and ink, combined with crayon, shows us that already Thomson has developed his incisive, driving, nervous line. In every flick of the pen there is the energy characteristic of his later brush work.

Doubtless, it was in Seattle that Thomson came into his own. His work there seems to have authority and presence, qualities which were to mark him as a prac-

tising artist. This can be seen in the aplomb with which he produced an item like his own business card (FIG. 6), done in a similar block lettering, and with the same kind of mythological reference as his penmanship sample for the Acme Business School. Pegasus, the winged horse, rises beneath Thomson's name to rest on stylized foliage (also ultimately classical in derivation.) Pegasus is not only a symbol of the arts, but of those who aspire to greater things and Thomson probably did desire to rise above his circumstance, like every North American boy raised on the myth of success found in the popular Horatio Alger novels of the time.

Authorities have indicated that Thomson arrived in Toronto either in 1904 or 1905, but 1904 seems the more likely date: a letter from Ivan R. MacIntosh, an old friend, says of Thomson '... the last I heard of him around 1904, [he] was engaged in Toronto on designing or engraving work'¹⁷

The years from 1905-1910 are the least known, and therefore the most difficult to reconstruct in Thomson's life. Very little artistic evidence exists, perhaps because, as one sister put it:

*he was doing design and commercial art and had little time for the other work. He was devoting his time then to work, which brought him in money, and later on enabled him to spend all his time at art.*¹⁸

Thomson moved from one Toronto photo-engraving house to another in these years, apparently joining Legg Brothers as a senior artist in June of 1905, for which he was paid \$11 a week (a fairly good salary for the time).¹⁹ Later, he may have worked in Hamilton at the Reid Press.²⁰

A little *Water Colour Sketchers' Pocket Book* which originally cost 45¢ and contained 60 leaves of imitation Steinbach paper, probably dates from the summer of 1905. In it, Thomson did quick sketches of his family (his father and his nephew, Gordon Harkness (FIG. 7)), as well as humorous sketches of a dude in riding gear, portraits of various politicians, and several drawings of boats. Only one of the pencil sketches is labelled: 'St. Thomas Church, St. Catharines.' (Thomson worked this up in pen as a Christmas gift in 1906, for a sister who was working in that town in the fall of 1905).²¹

This tiny sketch book is important, if only as a relic of what seems to have been a constant activity on Thomson's part: sketching. Probably at much the same time, he began to seek out what was to be his first and only formal art training. He seems to have had private lessons from a well-known artist of the

FIG. 7

Gordon Harkness, the artist's nephew

Pencil on paper, 8¾ x 5¼"

From the artist's sketchbook

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

period, William Cruikshank.²² Cruikshank taught at the Central Ontario School of Art and Design, located then at 165 King Street West, Toronto. His course was Drawing from the Antique and from Life. Perhaps sketches like the ones here (PL. 1), all figure studies from a sketch book, are due to his influence. One in particular, that of a hooded man with a distinctive face, seems to be the epitome of the character study being done in the period.

By 1906 Thomson was exploring the medium of oil. His early attempts were, naturally enough, quite amateurish.²³ The first picture that led his teacher to



give him any encouragement was a study of a young man standing by a team of horses and plow, which the artist gave to his sister for Christmas in 1907, and is still in the possession of the family.²⁴ Doubtless, Cruikshank found it to his taste because its Millet-like theme recalled his own work, like his well-known *Breaking the Road*, in the collection of The National Gallery of Canada. However, Thomson's obvious interest in the vivid sunset in the background can be read as a foretaste of his later studies of the skies.

In the same year, Thomson was working in water colour.²⁵ In fact, one niece recalled that when he was taking lessons, he was 'doing chiefly water colour.'²⁶ *The Bridge* may have been done at this time (FIG. 8).

FIG. 10

The Farm at Night

Pencil and water colour on paper, 5¼ x 6⅛"

From the artist's sketchbox

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

In the summer of 1907, Thomson seems to have gone home to Owen Sound. While there, he sketched his nephew George M. Thomson, who had been in Seattle with Thomson's elder brother George, when Tom was there (FIG. 9), as well as sketching farms in the area. One water colour which may date from this period, found in his water colour box, has 'Gordon,' the name of another nephew, written on the back (FIG. 10). Another water colour sketch was done of a niece and shows considerable sensitivity to the delicate contours of the sitter's face (FIG. 11).

Throughout this period, Thomson's main influence would seem to have been his teacher Cruikshank. Today, this artist is considered High Victorian, and somewhat *retardataire*. But in his time, he was known as a liberal, free-thinking mind, as was G. A. Reid, who taught with him at the Central Ontario School of Art. Although Cruikshank's work basically involved figure study, a subject Thomson was never to completely master, certain aspects of Cruikshank's technique might have proved useful to the artist: his use of underpainting and dependence on glazes, and his concomitant achievement of a complex vibrant surface. In some of his works, too, the older man was to strike a hardy, Canadian note through his out-of-doors subject matter, which Thomson would have thought progressive and in accord with his own tendencies. Finally, Cruikshank's handling of colour, with its emphasis on an almost tapestry-like interweave of design, had the effect of creating areas which acted virtually as abstractions, although tied to a traditional, illustrative mode.



FIG. 11
The Artist's Niece
 Water colour and pencil on paper, 10 x 8"
 Gift of Mrs. F. E. Fisk
 The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound

FIG. 9
George M. Thomson (Summer, 1907)
 Pencil on paper, 5¾ x 3⅝"

Inscription:
 verso (pen): 'Pencil drawing by/Tom Thomson/
 of/Geo. M. Thomson/Summer 1907/
 Owen Sound/Ontario'
 George M. Thomson, Brantford

FIG. 8
The Bridge
 Water colour on board, 10½ x 14⅜"
 Private collection, Toronto

FIG. 12
On the Harkness Farm (1907)
 Pen on paper, 5⅜ x 7⅝"

Inscription:
 recto (lower right): signed and dated
 'Tom Thomson/07'
 verso (pen): 'On the Harkness farm'
 Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto

FIG. 13
The Old William McMeen House,
 Owen Sound
 (Opposite the Thomson farm house)
 Pen on paper, 6⅞ x 8⅞"
 Private collection, Toronto



FIG. 14

Grip Ltd. around 1910

On the left:

O'Leary

On the right:

(Starting at the back) J. E. H. MacDonald,
Harold James, Walter Shear, Stanley Kemp

Identification courtesy of Harold James, Toronto

(Photograph courtesy of the Ontario Department of
Public Records and Archives)

By 1907, Thomson was feeling the influence of his work in a photo-engraving house upon his art: he had begun to use the pen rather than the pencil medium for his sketches. With this re-orientation in technique, a certain element of virtuosity comes into his work. Even in such simple subjects as *On the Harkness Farm*, brilliance in the use of the pen is immediately apparent (FIG. 12). Probably dating from the same period, because also in pen and ink (though very much tighter), is *The Old William McMeen House* (FIG. 13).

It may be that this return to drawing with a pen, which he had used in Seattle, shows his confidence in his new position in an important photo-engraving house in Toronto known as 'Grip.' By 1907, Grip had achieved a certain fame as the top advertising and printing house in Canada, doing pictorial advertising and even printing reproductions of art works.²⁷ In 1905, for example, it had produced the first set of quadricolour plates ever to be made in Canada, of a mother and child picture entitled *Her Treasure*, by Frederick S. Challener. (The engraving was the same size as the original and the two were even exhibited side by side in the Art Gallery of the Canadian National Exhibition in 1905.²⁸)

Albert H. Robson, Grip's Director, records that he hired Thomson in 1907 and that his 'specialty was lettering and the laying of Ben-day tints on metal plates.'²⁹ The Ben-day machine allowed a considerable variety of shading to be put on a drawing or plate for reproduction, but it required patience rather than creative flair. Surely it was 'not an exciting or ambitious start, even in a commercial art room.'³⁰

It was not a great beginning, but Grip had a good supporting team, though Thomson seems to have been rather shy and reticent at first. His skill with lettering placed him under J. E. H. MacDonald, an artist who was to have a profound influence on him later. Among other staff, who later founded the Group of Seven, were Arthur Lismer (who joined Grip on February 20, 1911),³¹ Franz Johnston, Franklin Carmichael and F. H. Varley. The firm included as well a number of artistically enlightened individuals, like Stanley Kemp, W. Smithson Broadhead, Ivor Lewis (later to be a famous caricaturist), Tom Martin, Rowley Murphy and T. W. McLean.³² One of Thomson's first close friends seems to have been Stanley Kemp, to whom he later gave a canvas of *Lake Scugog* (PL. 3).

A photograph, often incorrectly said to include the artist, shows a number of these people in Grip Ltd. (FIG. 14). On the left is O'Leary;³³ on the right, starting from the back, J. E. H. MacDonald, Harold James, Walter Shear and Stanley Kemp.³⁴ The best picture



FIG. 15

Arthur Lismer

Tom Thomson at Grip Ltd. (1912)

Pencil on paper, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (sight)

Inscription:

recto (lower right): 'A. Lismer' (sig.)

(pencil): 'T. T. at Grip Ltd. 1912'

The McMichael Conservation Collection, Kleinburg



FIG. 16
View from the Windows of Grip Ltd.
 Water colour on paper, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 4"
 From the artist's sketchbox
 Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

of Thomson at Grip is a caricature done by his friend Arthur Lismer, in 1912, the year after he joined the firm (FIG. 15). Thomson, so lost in thought as he works that he does not notice that his ink bottle has spilled, has heard the fire alarm of inspiration!

A water colour found in Thomson's sketch box is probably a view from the windows of Grip when its offices were on Temperance Street, prior to 1911 when they moved to the Graphic Arts Building on Richmond Street. From the windows one could see across to the Burlesque Show at the Star Theatre (FIG. 16).³⁵ The sketch itself suggests the influence of the New York 'Ashcan School' ('the Eight') in the United States, even more than MacDonald's nearly contemporary *Tracks and Traffic*.

The only known example of the commercial work Thomson did in his Grip years (about 1910) is an advertisement for Sydenham Mutual Fire Insurance (FIG. 17), probably done because T. J. Harkness, the Vice-President, was his brother-in-law. Although the separate elements are inexpertly bound together by a laurel wreath, the view of the house is refreshing and even prophetic in its generalized character and flat quality.

More important than any such products, the workaday atmosphere in Grip actually made for a community of interest which encouraged creative thinking and must have stimulated Thomson. The employees followed the pattern set by an earlier Canadian group, the Toronto Art Students' League (of which Robson was a member), which had an N.D.S.L. Club (the motto was 'Nulla Dies Sine Linea' or 'No day without a line'). Grip artists began to sketch on weekends in such scenic spots as Toronto's High Park or Lake Scugog.

A number of works by Thomson cluster around a pen sketch dated 1908 (FIG. 18), and seem to point to a single prototype or design idea, perhaps culled from *The Studio* magazine. *The Studio* published virtuoso pen drawings which were done for the competitions in practically every issue. The magazine was well known to artists of the period, and Thomson is said to have read it.³⁶ We know it was his practice to work from a design source such as an advertisement: an example of the kind of illustration that might have appealed to the artist is an anonymous 1896 pen and ink drawing of a boy fishing by a meandering stream, which Thomson might have found by flipping through the magazine's pages (FIG. 19).

The group of pen drawings by Thomson includes a number of fishing scenes, one of a house with poplar

FIG. 17
Advertisement for Sydenham Mutual Fire Insurance
 Pencil and water colour on paper, 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
 Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

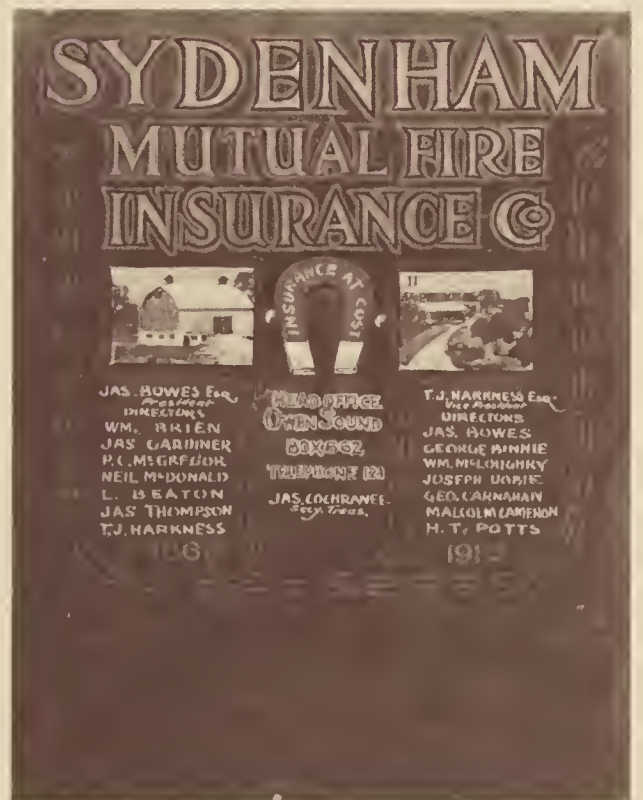




FIG. 18

The Banks of the River

Pen on paper, 12 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 20"

Inscription:

recto (lower right): signed and dated
'Tom Thomson '08'

Mr. Morris Altman, Toronto



FIG. 20

Young Fisherman

Pencil and pen on paper,
12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (sight)

Inscription:

recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)

The McMichael Conservation Collection,
Kleinburg



FIG. 21

On the Don River

Pen on paper, 11 x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

Inscription:

recto (lower right): signed and dated
'Tom Thomson '08'

verso (pen): '99 Gerrard E./T. Thomson'
(Thomson's handwriting)

The title was probably given after
the artist's death.

Rev. Oskar Puhm, Toronto

FIG. 22

Quotation from Maeterlinck

Pen on paper, 8½ x 13½"

Inscription:

recto (under edges of scroll): 'TT'

Gift to the artist's mother
and father at Christmas

Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto

trees in the distance (FIG. 18), one of a saucy young fisherman dressed in his Sunday best (FIG. 20), and one which includes the stream but replaces the fisherman with sheep (FIG. 21). Other elaborate ink sketches may date from 1908, too, like the curiously mixed illustration of a quotation from Maeterlinck, with its typical Maeterlinck subject-matter of a knight on a white horse, done for the artist's parents (FIG. 22). The extraordinary *Girl's Head* (FIG. 23), which the artist drew on linen and gave to his mother for a pillowcase, must date from the same period, though the companion piece, the head of a Tiger within a heart (FIG. 24, not in exhibition), would seem to precede it by a year or so. It was possibly in 1908 also, that Thomson did a competition design for a stained glass window to be placed in Havergal College (FIG. 25). The figure is somewhat ambivalent, and suggests a rather different ideal from the Gibson Girl, but like the *Girl's Head*, strongly reflects the late Art Nouveau currents fashionable in Toronto at this time.

In Toronto in 1908, the artistic community was stirring with new life and vigour. One indication of this budding enthusiasm for the arts was the creation of The Arts & Letters Club, of which Thomson would have known since Robson, the Art Director of Grip Ltd., was a charter member. The Arts & Letters Club had a catholic membership which represented the broad current of artistic activity in its day, and later was to give Thomson his first one-man show. It is possible that Thomson read books in the Club Library, which included works like *Art in Photography* (donated by the artist, E. Wyly Grier and listed in the Club's magazine, *The Lamps* in January of 1910), which might have interested him since he was an amateur photographer. Certainly, about 1906, Thomson told a sister that he liked the crowd at George S. McConkey's,³⁷ a restaurant at 27/31 King West well known for its 'dainty teas', which was an Arts & Letters Club hang-out in those years.³⁸ It was also artistically ambitious in that it boasted two oval murals by F. S. Challenger entitled *Night and Morning* and *Life is a Dance*.³⁹

Thomson was an avid reader and it is possible that books were a great influence on him. His sister remembers that he read numerous volumes on art which he borrowed from the public library and that later such books were given to him by another artist, Lawren Harris.⁴⁰ A. Y. Jackson remembers that Thomson would often read all night, and specifies that he read a lot of poetry.⁴¹ And indeed, the artist once told one of his aunts, that he 'liked poetry best'.⁴²

In fact, Thomson's poetic tastes were simple, but

frequently supplied him with subjects in his early years. The range from Longfellow to Kipling is not especially wide. Yet he loved 'The Wreck of the Hesperus', by the former, with its melodramatic narrative.⁴³ He gave his parents a book of Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* at Christmas 1905,⁴⁴ did a penmanship sample of 'Dargai Hill' in 1907, now in The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery in Owen Sound, and read *The Light that Failed* (1890), quoting specifically from a passage in which the hero views Art as a calling in which you must 'sacrifice yourself, and live under orders'.⁴⁵ He also turned out drawings of Burn's 'Blessing' as gifts for friends (in the McMichael Conservation Collection). Later, he was to do a pen

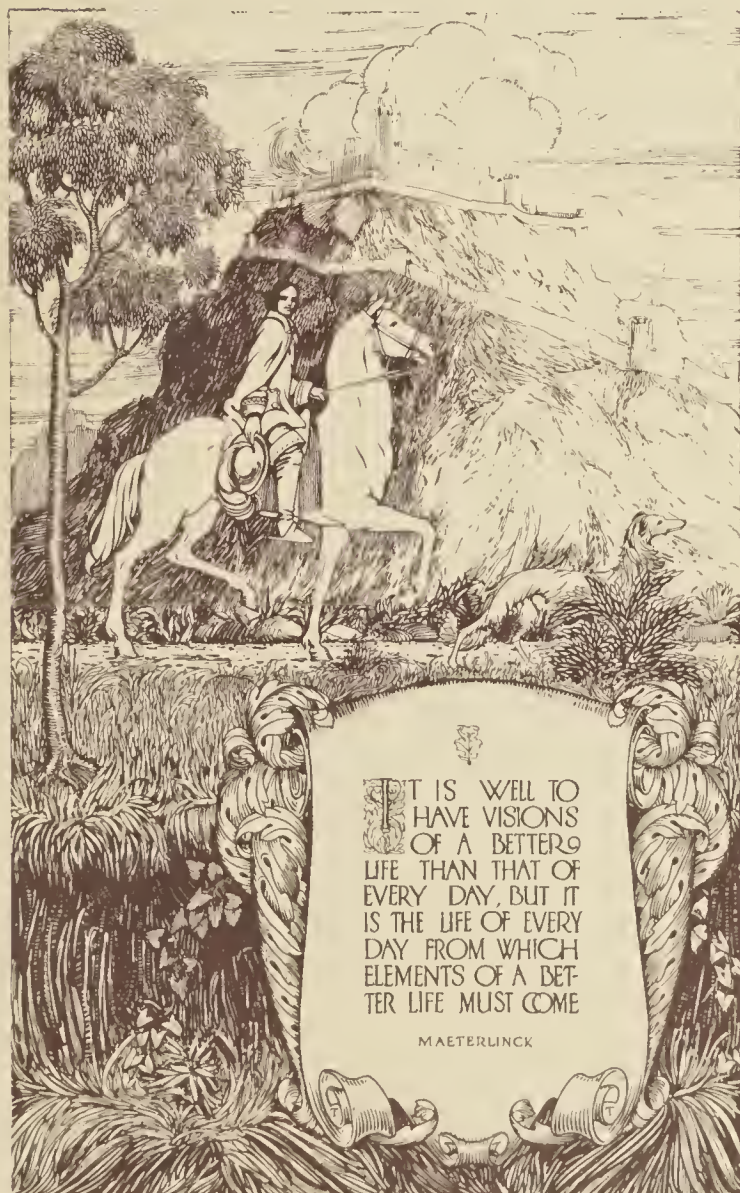


FIG. 23

Girl's Head (design for a pillowcase)
Oil on linen, 25 x 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Gift for the artist's mother
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto



FIG. 24

Tiger in a heart (design for a pillowcase)
Oil on linen, 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Gift for the artist's mother
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto

FIG. 25

Design for Stained Glass Window, Havergal College
Water colour and pen on paper, 13 x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (sight)
Private collection, Toronto



FIG. 19
 Anonymous
 Landscape for 'Competition B XXXV'
 Pen on paper
 The Studio, Vol. 1X (1896-1897), p. 78

and water colour quotation from a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, 'Not Quite the Same', which seems to indicate some amatory disappointment on his part.⁴⁶ Still another homily from the semi-mystical literature of Maeterlinck has already been mentioned, but characteristically the section chosen for quotation carried a down-to-earth message. Thomson's tastes extended even to Chaucer's *The Prioress' Tale and Other Tales*, published in Modern English by Professor Skeat, (London, 1904), which the artist owned.⁴⁷

However, the poet that most influenced Thomson was undoubtedly William Wilfred Campbell. Thomson specifically quoted fragments from Campbell in his titles and Campbell may have been the source of some of Thomson's themes as well. Wilfred Campbell's collected *Poems* appeared in Toronto in 1905, and contained all 'the author cares to preserve'. In its Introduction, the poet spoke of the nature of poetry. He called it:

*a sort of instrument which thrills the soul not only by what it reveals but what it suggests. For this reason, a more esthetic word-picture, no matter how carefully wrought, is not in the true sense poetry...It may emulate the careful photograph, which seemingly loses nothing yet fails to catch the one necessary insight which the painter who is a genius puts into his picture—that light that never was on sea or land, yet which all men see sometime or other in what the average world may call the dull and commonplace.*⁴⁸

These sentiments may have struck home to Thomson, who was later to make powerful works of sites that would not previously have been considered suitable subjects. Moreover, in 1912, Thomson did a painting very explicitly called *Sky (The Light that Never Was)* (PL. 9). Other striking parallels between the words of the poet and the work of the artist exist. For instance, Campbell entitled a poem 'A Northern River', one of the subjects with which Thomson dealt early in his career (PL. 36 and 37).

It is more significant that the general tone of Campbell's nature verse with its odes to the sunset ('Glory of the Dying Day'), studies of the wind ('Wind' and 'The Wind Dancer') and numerous reveries on autumn colour or winter snow form a convincing parallel to Thomson's choice of subject matter. It seems distinctly possible that Thomson, like Campbell, also wanted to 'dwell upon the human, and nature as affecting the human, rather than upon the more objective nature, as solely an aesthetic aspect'.⁴⁹ For example, Thomson's *Autumn's Garland* (The National Gallery of Canada) delineates precisely the same

image and evokes much the same mood as Campbell's 'Autumn' which speaks directly to the

*Spirit of Autumn, siren of all the year
 Who dost my soul with glamouries entwine;
 As some old trunk, deep in the forest drear,
 Is gloried by some crimson, clinging vine . . .*⁵⁰



Footnotes to Early Years 1877-1910

1. Interview with Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, February 12, 1971.
2. Letter from George M. Thomson to Blodwen Davies, December 29, 1930. Blodwen Davies Papers, on file at the Public Archives of Canada, (cited hereafter as BDP).
3. Letter from Alan H. Ross to Blodwen Davies, June 11, 1930, p. 2. BDP.
4. *Ibid.*
5. From a letter dated November 19, 1946, from Henry Thomson written for him by Ralph Thomson, on file at The National Gallery of Canada, (cited hereafter as NGC).
6. Letter from Alan H. Ross to Blodwen Davies, June 11, 1930, p. 3. BDP.
7. Interview with George M. Thomson, November 4, 1970.
8. Letter from John Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, July 27, 1917. MacCallum Correspondence, The National Gallery of Canada, (cited hereafter as MacCC).
9. Letter from Edith Maring Willey, July 16, 1971, p. 2, on file at the Art Gallery of Ontario (cited hereafter as AGO).
10. Interview with George M. Thomson, November 4, 1970.
11. Letter from Edith Maring Willey, July 16, 1971, p. 2. AGO.

12. Letter from Edith Maring Willey, July 19, 1971, p. 1. AGO.
13. Letter from Fraser Thomson to Blodwen Davies, May 19, 1930, p. 2. BDP.
14. From a copy of an undated letter from Henry Thomson, written for him by Ralph Thomson. NGC. He also says that Tom Thomson roomed with Mr. and Mrs. P. P. Shaw, whose daughter afterwards married Tom's brother Henry, and boarded with Mr. and Mrs. F. R. McLaren, George Thomson's business associate. At some time, too, Thomson seems to have roomed with C. C. Maring, proprietor with Mr. Blake of the Engraving House (letter from Fraser Thomson to Blodwen Davies, May 19, 1930. BDP).
15. Letter from Fraser Thomson to Blodwen Davies, May 19, 1930. BDP.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Letter from Ivan R. Mackintosh to Stewart Dick, August 31, 1928. BDP.
18. Letter from Mrs. F. E. Fisk to Martin Baldwin, March 2, 1936, p. 3. AGO.
19. Letter from Stuart L. Thompson to Alan Jarvis, February 14, 1956. NGC.
20. Interview with Harold James, October 29, 1970. Mr. James worked with Thomson at Grip Ltd. It is important to realize that in this era, work in a photo-engraving house was the equivalent of the contemporary artist's apprenticeship in an advertising agency or teaching position, until he can make enough money to support himself by his art.
21. Letter from Minnie Henry to Blodwen Davies, February 2, 1931, p. 11. BDP.
22. Letter from Harry B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, April 29, 1931, BDP, which says 'Tom studied from life and the antique in art school. If I remember right Cruikshank was the instructor', p. 2. That he had private lessons was recalled by his sister, Mrs. M. Tweedale, interview of February 12, 1971.
23. See *Lady in Her Garden*, McMichael Conservation Collection (cited hereafter as MCC), which is signed and dated (lower right): 'Tom Thomson /'06'.
24. Letter from Minnie Henry to Blodwen Davies, February 2, 1931, pp. 2-3. BDP.
25. Letter from Mrs. F. E. Fisk to Martin Baldwin, March 2, 1936. AGO.
26. *Ibid.*, p.2.
27. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", p. 1 (section crossed out in text), unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges, describes the work of a commercial artist as producing 'designs and illustrations for catalogues, railway folders, real estate publicity and many other kinds of pictorial advertising'. This would apply to Grip Ltd.
28. S. R. Johnson, 'How the Group of Seven, Canadian Press and other Canadian phenomena grew from one Graphic Arts Company', *Canadian Printer and Publisher* 76, No. 5 (May 1967), p. 103.
29. A. H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters* (Toronto, 1932), p. 138. In his *Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1937), p. 5, he says 'about 1908'.
30. A. H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters*, p. 138.
31. J. A. B. McLeish, *September Gale* (Toronto, 1955), p. 24.
32. See A. H. Robson, *Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1937), p. 6, for a full line-up of individuals working in Grip Ltd. Also "Memoirs of Stanley Kemp" October, 1955, p. 2, a copy of which is on file at the MCC, and which is published as 'A Recollection of Tom Thomson' in W. T. Little, *The Tom Thomson Mystery* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 173-178.
33. In the only other partially convincing identification done by a former Grip staff member, Leonard Rossell, the author identifies himself as this individual (see unpublished manuscript, NGC).
34. Identified by Harold James (interview of October 21, 1969). Photograph courtesy of Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives (cited hereafter as PAO). The photograph has been variously identified prior to this authoritative identification by a person actually on the scene. The same photograph in the files of the AGO was identified (on the verso) by Thoreau MacDonald as 'Tom Thomson/ at Grip Ltd. Toronto/J. MacD. at rear right/T.M.' The Thomson family agrees that this is not a photograph of Tom Thomson (interviews with Mrs. M. Tweedale, February 12, 1971; Mrs. F. E. Fisk, April 23, 1971; George M. Thomson, November 4, 1970). A. Y. Jackson also says it is not Thomson (interview, March 4, 1971).
35. Letter from Harold James, June 6, 1971. AGO.
36. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.
37. Letter from Minnie Henry to Blodwen Davies, February 2, 1931, p. 11. BDP. Thomson took his sister there for tea and apparently told her 'I like the atmosphere of this place, and the class of people who come here'. His sister viewed his comment as a 'hunger' in Thomson 'for the refinements and niceties of life', p. 12.
38. A. Bridle, *The Story of the Club* (Toronto, 1945), p. 1.
39. *Who's Who in Ontario Art*, Part 15 (reprinted separately from the *Ontario Library Review*, August, 1951, n.p.). Charles McFaddin of the AGO brought this to my attention.
40. Interview with Mrs. M. Tweedale, February 12, and August 24, 1971.
41. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.
42. See letter from Louise Henry to Blodwen Davies, March 11, 1931, p. 10. BDP.
43. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.
44. R. Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads* (N.Y. and Boston, 1899), private collection, Toronto. The book is bound in doeskin, possibly by the artist's father. One notes the oval portrait of a girl reading on the cover, as well as the misspelled title: 'Barrack Room Ballards'.
45. He used a quotation from *The Light that Failed* as a lettering sample, reproduced in *The Canadian Forum*, VI (March, 1926), p. 181.
46. The entire poem appears in *Poetical Works of Ella Wheeler Wilcox* (Toronto, n.d.), pp. 30-31. It originally appeared in one of the first books published by this author, *Poems of Passion* (1883).
47. This book is now in a private collection, Owen Sound.
48. *The Poems of Wilfred Campbell* (Toronto, 1905), n.p.
49. *Ibid.*, 'Introduction', n.p.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Years of Transition

1911-1913

In the late autumn of 1911, Tom Thomson began to 'regard painting seriously'.¹ As a result, he got 'his painting outfit in the spring of 1912'.² Besides two little oil sketches he gave away as a wedding present³ only one work is securely dated to 1911: *Near Owen Sound* (PL. 2), which is inscribed 'November, 1911' on the back.

Near Owen Sound is a significant sketch in many ways. First of all, it reveals the basically delicate scale and treatment of Thomson's work. It was always his aim to monumentalize his subject matter and develop a bolder technique in spite of an innate tendency to intimate format in his art. But at the end of his life, he returned to this discreet sense of form, with, of course, vastly enlarged technical resources at his command. The effect here is naturally increased by the small size of the work (*Near Owen Sound* measures only $5\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ "") and this is another characteristic of Thomson's sketches, one perhaps forced on him by circumstances and his desire to sketch out-of-doors, as well as by the conventions of the time.

The technical treatment of this work is accomplished, especially for such a relative newcomer to oils as Thomson. One notices that there are dots of blue paint abstractly flecked over the whole land surface and in the trees, as well as slight flecks in the distance to represent cows in the fields. This use of a flecking or dotting of colour which enlivens the work and draws it into a unified whole, recalls what J. E. H. MacDonald was doing in sketches like his *Log Drive on Gull River* (1911) (Collection of Jennings Young). Indeed, Thomson, who often worked on designs originated by the older man,⁴ seems to have shown him his work for approval,⁵ and looked to him for advice. After all, MacDonald, among all the men at Grip Ltd., was the only recognized artist who actually sold his work. (In 1912, MacDonald exhibited some 'initial letters' as well as two works—*Epping Forest* and *The Riverman*—in the Art Museum of Toronto).⁶ It is possible too, that Thomson was influenced by the small sketches of other contemporaries, like J. W. Beatty. The oils of C. W. Jefferys with their open and expansive landscapes may also have proved a potent influence.

Other features of *Near Owen Sound* are typical of Thomson's work of the next two years. The proportion of land to the sky is a little over one to three, a scale which was to last until 1913. Equally typical of this period is the lack of distinction made in the structure of the composition, and the delicate, wispy treatment accorded to the trees, whose intimate forms Thomson was not yet able to fully interpret.

The remainder of Thomson's work from 1911 is difficult to determine. Apparently, the artist was making regular sketching trips with Franz Johnston to areas like the Humber River.⁷ He may also have gone to Lake Scugog.⁸ A friend of his wrote of 1911 that, 'we visited Lake Scugog two or three times when Tom did some sketching'.⁹ *Evening: Lake Scugog* (The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound) may date from this year or the next. In it, a radiant sunset creates a reflected path upon the waters of the lake. Certainly it was on these trips into the country around Toronto, to the Humber River and the bush near York Mills, as well as on excursions to the country around Lindsay and Lake Scugog,¹⁰ that Thomson first began painting the themes which would constitute the major part of his *oeuvre* (here is a precursor of his later sky studies).

Thomson was to begin another habit intrinsic to his technique at this time—that of working up the canvas in his studio. From the Lake Scugog sketches, he did *The Marsh, Lake Scugog* (PL. 3), which he gave to his friend from Grip Ltd., Stanley Kemp, in 1913. Dark-toned, with a heavy impasto, and almost structureless landscape, the canvas foretells little of Thomson's later subtlety of handling and brilliance of colour. In effect, it points to Thomson's early training and artistic milieu: Canadian Victorian art, with its recollections of the sombre browns of the Dutch Old Masters of the seventeenth century, and the Dutch-like masters of the nineteenth, which meant in Canada artists like Homer Watson, Horatio Walker, or even Thomson's own teacher, Cruikshank. Yet the picture is transitional and important because it is, quite frankly, a simple subject drawn from a section of Canada which has a distinctively Canadian quality, but is not the 'picturesque' site favoured by Victorian artists.

In this choice, Thomson was in the vanguard of his period, as was a movement stemming from The Arts & Letters Club in Toronto. Here, in the Club's magazine, *The Lamps*, Lawren Harris, later to be a founding member of the Group of Seven, reviewed the 1911 Royal Canadian Academy exhibition as follows:

*In the last ten odd years there has been a struggle to rise above the conventional and sentimental art (so-called) of the Victorian era. In each succeeding exhibition one notices fresher, more vigorous and original work; a true Canadian note, not so much in choice of subject as in the spirit of the thing done.*¹¹

A review by C. W. Jefferys of MacDonald's sketches in the same issue of the magazine stressed the point

FIG. 26

Tom Thomson's Tent

Photograph found among the artist's possessions at his death.

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

(Photograph courtesy of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)



again: what was needed was 'native inspiration' and 'a method of expression in paint as native and original as itself'.¹² A third article in this issue, called 'The Whale in Art', by Augustus Bridle, was a parody on the whole subject and concerned the desire of Arthur Heming (later a good friend of Thomson) to 'enable connoisseurs to see the real bigness of Canadian art without comparison to Dutch models'.¹³ For this, of course, the artist chose the whale, so that he could be 'recognized as a Canadian artist with a purpose'.¹⁴

How was one to find this new method of expression, this new spirit? The praise awarded by Lawren Harris in his article perhaps gives a clue: he liked a portrait by Curtis Williamson, and a landscape by Homer Watson, as well as the work of Cullen and Suzor-Côté, two French Canadian artists. In criticism, Harris said that some of the pictures lacked one essential, a focal point, and added, 'One believes a masterpiece must be a unit, a little world, and that this is one of the great secrets of all art of all time'.¹⁵

Jefferys, an illustrator who worked for the *New York Herald*, tried to answer the question of how to achieve a break with tradition. He spoke and wrote of the rise of a new group of painters 'whose work has been mainly inspired by their local environment and their racial temperament'¹⁶—Scandinavian and modern German and Austrian painters. To the contribution of these 'young innovators', one should add the work of the Glasgow School of Art, for in 1912, an exhibition from the University of Glasgow was held in the Art Museum of Toronto.¹⁷ However, Jefferys, who considered the Americans 'the foremost landscape painters of today', asked, 'Has the wave yet reached Canada?'¹⁸

FIG. 27

The 'boy next door' in Owen Sound, Wesley Nash

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

(Photograph courtesy of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)

As if in response to this query, Tom Thomson was to begin to paint seriously.

His first visit to Algonquin Park dates from May of 1912, when he camped at Tea Lake Dam with a friend from Grip, Harry B. (Ben) Jackson. The trip developed because of the stories of another Grip man, Tom McLean, who told them of the 'beauty and fine fishing in that region'.¹⁹ McLean was a member of the Mahlstock Club which grew up after the Toronto Arts Students' League and developed into The Arts & Letters Club. He would probably have known of the various trips made to the Park, from 1901 on by three Canadian artists, W. W. Alexander, David Thomson and Robert Holmes,²⁰ (who were friends of Robson's as well) and of the trips made by J. W. Beatty, another friend. He himself had been there often. As for Thomson, on this visit he did, 'very little serious sketching, making a few notes, sky lines and colour effects'.²¹

Later that season, Thomson went north again, this time with W. S. Broadhead, an English artist who was working with him at the time with the Photo-Engraving Co., Designers and Illustrators, Toronto. (By then, Thomson had obviously left his job at Grip). A later comment by H. B. Jackson declares that it was on this trip that Thomson, 'started to paint'.²²

Luckily, the progress of the journey was recorded in detail by Thomson's home town newspaper, *The Owen Sound Sun*, which reported the whole three-month



FIG. 28

Ruffed Grouse

Photograph found among the artist's possessions at his death.

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

(Photograph courtesy of
The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound)

trip in New Ontario, when the artist got to Owen Sound on September 27th. It was a holiday on which, 'incidentally', the two, 'did some sketching and secured some snapshots in the forests of the North'. They, 'left Biscotasing about the last week in July and paddled down the beautiful Bisco Lake...sketching and photographing where the scenery was grandest'.²³ Continuing their voyage through various lakes, they reached the Mississauga Forest Reserve and, after considerably more travel and a lift from a 'settler', they took the Midland steamship which travelled from Bruce Mines.

What were the images conjured up of the 'North' in this article? By 1912 New Ontario was already something of a myth. The reporter, and probably the artists as well, saw it as a:

*land of rich resources and scenic beauty—rich in mineral wealth, because iron and copper have already been discovered and the time may not be far distant when some lucky prospector will strike something that will make of it a second Cobalt—rich because of its forests and red and white pine and spruce—rich because of its immense waterfalls and consequently water power, and rich because of the abundance of fish and game to be found there.*²⁴

The stress on exploitative possibilities differs somewhat from the interest in the North of the conservation-conscious public of today.

As for their photographs, Thomson wrote a letter to Dr. M. J. (John) McRuer, whom he had met at his boarding house, and mentioned 'snapshots of game', but added, 'we only saved 2 rolls of films out of about 14 dozen...' ²⁵ due to the fact that their canoe capsized after striking a submerged rock.²⁶ Dr. McRuer would have understood well Thomson's joking comment on the number of photographs he took (substantially enlarged to suit a 'tall tale') because he would have known that Thomson was a camera enthusiast. The artist had, in fact, already photographed Dr. McRuer.²⁷ Another photograph found among the artist's possessions when he died, may be of Bill Broadhead, with whom Thomson made his 1912 trip.²⁸ Thomson seems to have been always taking snapshots of his tent (FIG. 26), or of his fish or of his friend George Rowe's cabin, although he also photographed friends like Winifred Trainor, or Wesley Nash, the 'boy next door' in Owen Sound (FIG. 27).²⁹ Some of the results, such as the print of a ruffed grouse (FIG. 28) or that of a loon's egg, are surprisingly beautiful and demonstrate that the artist knew how to use his camera and considered photography an art.³⁰



When Thomson came back to Toronto after his second trip north in 1912, he found that Robson, his old art director from Grip Ltd., had moved to a new company, Rous & Mann Press Ltd. Thomson decided to follow him from his job at the Photo-Engraving Company and was engaged on October 16th as an 'artist' at 75¢ an hour, with a working week of 46½ hours. (Franklin Carmichael was engaged the month after him, and Varley joined that year, too).³¹ Here Thomson was to work until the spring of 1914.³² It was perhaps at Rous & Mann that Lismer sketched him (FIG. 29).

Also in October 1912, Thomson met his future patron and close friend, Dr. J. M. MacCallum, a well-known ophthalmologist, in the studio of J. E. H. MacDonald.³³

When Thomson joined Rous & Mann, he naturally told his friends about his trip and showed them his sketches. Upon seeing them, a number of the artists realized that, 'here was a new artist and a new idea about the North Country. It was a land for the painter'.³⁴ Robson, Thomson's art director, said that, although the sketches were 'timid' and 'self-conscious in execution', they, 'had caught the real northern character'.³⁵ Moreover, they showed an 'intimate feeling of the country'.³⁶ He cited one work he remembered especially from the trip, a study of 'drowned land', the well-known sketch now in the Art Gallery of Ontario (PL. 4).

In comparison with Thomson's work of 1911, *Drowned Land* shows certain similarities. The proportions of land and sky are the same, the trees are delicately and sensitively handled, and there is a remarkable attempt to achieve accuracy. But now, the artist is able to determine the structure of the land with more skill, so that instead of an indeterminate foreground, the three land masses are clearly set in water, as are numerous tree trunks and stumps, and their various reflected shadows are securely located. The sky is still a sombre grey. There is an elegant treatment of the artist's signature, and a similar signature style is found on two other works: *Fairy Lake*, which is inscribed lower right 'Tom Thomson/'12' (PL. 5), and *Forest Interior* which is signed but not dated (PL. 6). This suggests that all three are very closely related in date—*Fairy Lake* again exhibits the discreet handling and flecking of paint, as well as the dark tonality of *Near Owen Sound* (1911), and one notes that there is some ambiguity

between the tree shapes and the land. It may therefore predate *Drowned Land* in this sequence.

But *Forest Interior* shows an extraordinary development in the freedom of the brush work and the sure treatment of the complex organization of the trees. It is remarkable, for such an early date, as a composition in which the artist managed to maintain a feeling for the structure of the land and a feeling for depth.

The boldness of the technique suggests that Thomson was aware of the meaning of 'impressionism'. He may have seen Monet's *The Cliffs at Varengeville near Dieppe* which was shown in the French artist's section of the Fine Arts Show of the 1910 Canadian National Exhibition,³⁷ or he may have heard of it from Bill Broadhead, his English companion, or from other artist friends. He could also have read articles like the one on Claude Monet by Arsène Alexandre which appeared in *The Studio* in 1908.³⁸ What is



A Lismer

stressed in the article is 'impressionism' in its most generalized sense, with its thesis of going straight to nature itself, 'to demand every rapture of the mind, every joy of vision. . .'.³⁹ Much later in his work, Thomson was to parallel Monet's habit of treating the same motif in a number of versions, 'either . . . taken from a different point of view or at a different hour or season', a feature which Alexandre claimed Monet had taken from Japanese printmakers.⁴⁰ This would help to account for a series of 62 works Thomson did in the last season of his life. But at this point he concentrated on the overt significance of the impressionist manner by using a technique of bold brush strokes.

Other sketches done by the artist on his Mississauga trip can be identified by studying the canvas he worked up from them, with the encouragement of his friends at Rous & Mann, who apparently even lent him the workshop for painting on weekends. The well-known *A Northern Lake* (PL. I) was shown in the annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists in 1913. It was selected for purchase by the Education Department of the Ontario Government through the action of a committee which consisted of William Cruikshank (Thomson's former teacher), Dr. James Loudon, and Dr. John Seath. Cruikshank must have been gratified to see the progress his student had made, and his aid in the selection of the canvas certainly indicates that he favoured the direction Thomson's work was taking.⁴¹

The composition of *A Northern Lake* is typical of a new development in this period. The land mass accounts for over half of the picture, the sky is now differentiated somewhat more in terms of clouds, and the trees on either side of the work form a frame through which the viewer looks, as through a window into space. A *repoussoir* is formed by massive rocks where the paint is vigorously applied by palette knife rather than brush (recalling the broad treatment of rocks by Realist artists like Courbet). This creates a bold and distinctive foreground beyond which the water ripples as though troubled by an angry wind. The sketches which Thomson used in his studio as studies for the later work seem to include at least four —although *A Northern Lake* (PL. 7), is probably the closest. Here, too, trees form a framing boundary which gave Thomson his basic motif for the later painting. There is as well a small tree branch at the left that seems to pick up a branch in the foreground of the larger canvas. The picture space in fact resembles a stage set, with a foreground front, wings and a backdrop of hills in the distance.⁴²

Other works from the Mississauga trip are simply studies of the movement of the lake waters or of the opposite shore. These had obviously been painted as notations for the future.

The sale of *A Northern Lake* (PL. I) was apparently a great thrill to Thomson, and the \$250 he obtained for it must have been a windfall for him. He decided to take a long vacation, probably more because of the encouragement than the new riches he had received, and in May of 1913 he went to sketch in Algonquin Park with renewed spirits. Perhaps it was this summer that he met the ranger Mark Robinson, and began to look for work as a guide in the Park. He was never to spend time in the photo-engraving trade again. His success was astonishing for an artist with only a single year of serious work.

In November of 1913, after two months leave of absence from his job, Thomson returned to Toronto.⁴³ Dr. J. M. MacCallum, whom he had met the year before, came to visit him, and was sufficiently impressed by the work he saw that day in the artist's rented room that he took half of the sketches home to study. He in turn showed these sketches to a promising young painter from Montreal, A. Y. Jackson. The result was natural—Jackson asked to meet Thomson and MacCallum arranged a meeting at Lawren Harris' studio (over the Bank of Commerce at the corner of Bloor and Yonge). Jackson was working there, as he waited for space in the new Studio Building which Harris was preparing. At the time, Jackson was painting a canvas his friends called *Mount Ararat* (later known as *North Country* and finally as *Terre Sauvage*, in the National Gallery of Canada), which Thomson saw and liked.⁴⁴ He also saw Jackson's *The Edge of the Maple Wood*, and Jackson says that he called it, 'the most Canadian painting he had ever seen up to that time'.⁴⁵

Both Jackson and Dr. MacCallum have described the sketches Thomson brought down from Algonquin Park in the fall of 1913. Jackson said that they were 'very faithful and painstaking' although their colour was 'sombre and dead', and they were, he adds,

*peculiar in composition, in that many of them were of an upright panel shape, showing a low shore line and a big sky. The country in them always seemed to be viewed extensively. There were no gay little rapids or wood interiors, or patterned rocks, but only the opposite shore of lakes, far hills, or wide stretches of country.*⁴⁶

Dr. MacCallum also described Thomson's work in this period, telling us that, 'he sought to depict lightning flashes, moving thunder storms, and trees with branches lashing in the wind'.⁴⁷

The Morning Cloud (PL. 8), a sketch for the canvas *The Morning Cloud* (PL. II) which Thomson did that fall, is a good example and shows the 'distant view' the artist preferred, as well as his careful, literal handling. The choice of subject clearly shows that Thomson was interested in cloud formations in general, not only in the 'lightning flashes' of which the doctor wrote. Here again is the feathery treatment of the trees on the distant shore, and the tenderly stroked-in waters of the lake.

Thomson's studies of clouds give the feeling of movement which is so constant a feature of the northern landscape and they seem to have had a quasi-scientific interest for him in an era when little information on meteorology was available. He titled a sketch he showed in the second annual exhibition of 'Little Pictures by Canadian Artists' (February 7-18, 1914) *Cumulus Clouds*, using the scientific term. It is significant that Thomson's mentor in Grip, J. E. H. MacDonald, had already done a series of cloud studies (perhaps influenced in turn by Constable's studies of the Lake District). Still other works, like *Sky (The Light that Never Was)* (PL. 9) demonstrate Thomson's interest in other facets of transient sky phenomena. Dr. MacCallum helpfully wrote on the back of this panel, 'Thomson saw this in early morning—he had spent all night in his canoe out on the lake because of the flies—1913 MacCallum'. Here is an ethereal sunrise in which the sun hovers between an unreal sky above the misty, gently rippling waters of a lake. The broad brush strokes point to an increasing openness in the artist's technique.

This breadth and potential appear at their best in *Stormy Evening* (PL. 10) which, with its upright panel shape, fits exactly Jackson's description of the artist's work in this period. Other paintings done in the year may include *Northern Lake* (PL. 11) and perhaps even the study of the artist's canoe, *The Canoe* (PL. 12). In the latter two works, the artist's training in graphic design has come into prominence and the treatment of the trees has a trace of the elegance of the international Art Nouveau style. Yet the structure is still tentative, land exists as a block set in space, and the trees are frail and tenuous. Two features, however, point to the future: the artist's increasing use of a heavy impasto and his interest in the passage of the wind, as in this later *Northern Lake* (PL. 11), which presages *The West Wind*.

Thomson seemed to be experiencing some difficulty with colour at this time, and in fact, he confided a problem in handling 'browns and greys' to his ranger friend, Mark Robinson.⁴⁸ But in July 1913, he also told the Honorable J. C. McRuer (the brother of his friend, Dr. M. J. McRuer), to whom he gave two small works, that, 'when I will take these sketches down to Toronto, the experts will all scoff at them, but those were the colours that I saw'.⁴⁹

Jackson's advice, which was probably considerable since they shared Studio One in the newly-completed Studio Building in December 1913 and January 1914, probably accounts for the increased daring with which Thomson applied his knowledge, once he began to work on the canvases which he showed in the March-April exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists held at the Art Museum of Toronto. These were *The Morning Cloud* (PL. II) and *Moonlight, Early Evening* (PL. 13).

In *The Morning Cloud*, Thomson used details found in his sketch of the same subject, a one-to-one correspondence that he was to follow from then on, but added large strokes of pastel colour to give a brilliant, gently vibrating effect. *Moonlight, Early Evening*, shows the same proportions of land to sky found in the sketches of this period, though the brush strokes are broader as they describe the emanations of light from the luminous half-moon.

These two studies of light and sky, at night and in the morning, suggest that Thomson found these aspects of Algonquin Park as fascinating as the general nobility and grandeur of the landscape.

Jackson himself was to describe his own technical influence on Thomson. He had lived in France for four years and had seen works by Pissarro, Sisley, and Monet, and brought back to Canada books on their works. According to Jackson, he told Thomson how to combine his colours by using little separate strokes or 'clean-cut dots'.⁵⁰ Thomson had, by then, of course, prepared the way in his own work so that he was receptive to the influence.

Another artist whose work may have been influential at this point was J. W. Beatty. Beatty had done the well-known *The Evening Cloud of the Northland* (1910), now in the National Gallery of Canada. The title alone suggests parallels to Thomson's *Morning* theme. Thomson probably met both this artist and Lawren Harris late in 1913.⁵¹ But Beatty was not so much an influence as a figure with whom Thomson felt himself to be in competition. After all, Beatty's *Evening Cloud* spells the end of an

Footnotes to Years of Transition 1911-1913

era in Canadian art; whilst Thomson's *Morning Cloud* was intended to represent the rise of a new day, for in this work Beatty's atmospheric conception, so reminiscent of Dutch painting, and stemming from Canadian Victorian art, was replaced by a decisively bold and untrammelled technique. It is possible that Thomson had other, more complex links with the cultural milieu of Toronto in this period. The subject 'Moonlight', though brilliantly used by J. E. H. MacDonald, also appears in works by Archibald Browne and G. A. Gagnon, among others.⁵²

Another canvas from the winter of 1913-14 is *Little Falls*, signed and dated on the recto 'Tom Thomson 1913' (PL. III),⁵³ which is almost identical in composition to *The Woodland Stream* (PL. IV) and suggests that the latter canvas was painted at the same time. Both show a fairly broad handling, combined with a similar subject matter, and the view in each is taken from a spot which is *not* Thomson's usual shoreline site. Here too, the light strokes of colour representing the rocks and the water are laid carefully side by side, which shows the artist's acute study of this new technique.

The success that Thomson achieved with these canvases was reflected in three distinct steps on the path of his career. First, during the fall of 1913, his artist friends and Dr. MacCallum talked him into becoming a full-time artist. Secondly, his decision to do so was marked with success, since on March 17, 1914, at the annual meeting of the Ontario Society of Artists, Thomson was elected a member, which must have been gratifying proof of his new status.⁵⁴ Thirdly, the Trustees of The National Gallery of Canada bought *Moonlight, Early Evening* in 1914.

With the funds available from his latest sale, Thomson decided to go north again, and from this year on his trips north:

*settled down into a steadier rhythm, winter and spring. As soon as the ice on the lakes gave signs of breaking, he would disappear into the North Country—and when the snow came in November, he would be back again with more sketches.*⁵⁵

From the winter of 1913-14, the artist's 'critical path' was established.

1. B. Davies, *A Study of Tom Thomson*, (Toronto, 1935) p. 35.
2. Letter from H. B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, May 5, 1931. The clue to the change lies in the size of the works. Thomson's first sketching outfit must account for his series of 7 x 10" sketches (see Appendix: *Materials*).
3. These two oil sketches (about 4¼ x 6") are in a private collection, Hamilton. The date of the wedding, June 15, 1911, ties them securely to 1911. Although in other instances—like that of the marriage of his friends, Dr. and Mrs. Cousins, he could be tardy with his gift: he gave them *White Birches* and *Algonquin Sketch*, presently in the Willistead Art Gallery. Both sketches seem to date from the fall of 1914; the Cousins were married November 18, 1912.
4. B. Davies, *Paddle and Palette, The Story of Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1930) p. 17.
5. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges, says 'MacDonald . . . was by mutual consent one of the most important influences on Thomson at this stage' (p.2). He then crossed out a passage in which he said that the young artists at Grip Ltd. showed MacDonald on Monday the sketches they had done on Saturday and Sunday, for his 'opinion' and 'philosophic encouragement'.
6. "Record of Exhibitions", nos. 327-29, (Art Museum of Toronto, 1912), unpublished manuscript in the AGO.
7. Interview with Mrs. Paul Rodrik, May 10, 1971.
8. R. H. Hubbard, *Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1962), p. 5, dates these trips to 1910.
9. Letter from H. B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, May 5, 1931. BDP.
10. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", p. 3.
11. L. S. Harris, 'The R.C.A. Reviewed', *The Lamps* 1, No. 2 (December, 1911), p. 9. One should note that there were two volumes I in this serial.
12. C. W. Jefferys, 'MacDonald Sketches' *The Lamps* I, No. 2 (December 1911), p.11.
13. A. Bridle, 'The Whale in Art' *The Lamps* 1, No. 2 (December, 1911), p. 11.
14. *Ibid.*
15. L. S. Harris, 'The R.C.A. Reviewed', *The Lamps* I, No. 2 (December 1911), p. 9.
16. 'Tendencies in Art', précis of a talk given by C. W. Jefferys, *The Lamps* I, No. 2 (December, 1911), p. 16.
17. "Record of Exhibitions" (Art Museum of Toronto, 1912), Nos. 1071-1110, unpublished manuscript. AGO. Etchings by artists like Jessie M. King and Annie French appeared in this exhibition.
18. 'Tendencies in Art', *The Lamps* I, No. 2 (December, 1911), p. 16.
19. Letter from H. B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, May 5, 1931. BDP.
20. A. Saunders, *Algonquin Story* (Toronto, n.d.), p. 161.

21. Letter from H. B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, May 5, 1931. BDP.
22. Letter from H. B. Jackson to Blodwen Davies, April 29, 1931. BDP.
23. *The Owen Sound Sun*, Friday, September 27, 1912.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. M. J. McRuer, envelope postmarked October 17, 1912. MCC.
26. Letter from Louise Henry to Blodwen Davies, March 11, 1931, pp. 7-8. BDP.
27. Information from an interview with the Honourable J. C. McRuer, November 13, 1970. Chief Justice McRuer says the photograph is of his brother John, around the time he graduated from medical school, when he was 19 years of age (1907).
28. Harold James, who worked in Grip Ltd. with both Thomson and Broadhead, thought 'at first impression' that this photograph was of Broadhead. Letter of May 13, 1971. AGO.
29. Interviews with Mrs. M. Tweedale, April 7, 1971, and Mrs. F. E. Fisk, April 21, 1971.
30. All of these photographs are from a Private Collection in Owen Sound. It is possible that Thomson occasionally intended to use photographs as he did sketches—as aids towards working on a canvas in his studio. This was a common practice in the art world of his day, as one can see if one examines art texts of the period, like the one used by a student in Hamilton Normal School in the first decade of the century, written by H. B. Froehlich and B. E. Snow, *Text Books of Art Education, Book VII, Seventh Year* (N.Y. Boston and Chicago, 1905). (My thanks to David Buchan for showing me this text.) In the first chapter, 'Out of Doors', the author describes 'How to Sketch from a Photograph of a Landscape', and tells the artist that he should look for the points of main interest in the photograph in order to create the finished work. It is also possible, of course, that Thomson intended some of his photographs to be finished art works in themselves. Since 1893, the year of its founding, *The Studio* magazine had published articles on the art of photography, and Thomson is known to have read this magazine. He was doubtless well aware of this current of thought in sophisticated art circles. Finally, of course, he worked in a photo-engraving house, and may have intended to use the photographs for his work in one capacity or another. A number of such photographs as remain have a *memento* quality which was perhaps their main reason for being. But this would not explain the urgency with which Thomson questioned Dr. McRuer at the end of his letter, saying that if a mutual friend, Dr. Hicks, knew of anyone with photographs to lend him, he might 'save a life'.
31. Employment Record of Rous & Mann Press, Ltd., courtesy of John E. Langdon, Toronto.
32. A. H. Robson, *Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1937), p. 7.
33. J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson, Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine* L, No. 5 (March, 1918), p. 375.
34. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", p. 4.
35. A. H. Robson, *Tom Thomson*, p. 6.
36. A. H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters*, p. 140.
37. *Catalogue of the Canadian National Exhibition, Department of Fine Arts, Toronto, August 27-September 12, 1910*, #62 A. Y. Jackson once wrote that Thomson 'had seen nothing in the way of art except the second-rate paintings which came to the Canadian National Exhibitions in Toronto' when he was telling him of the 'Impressionist school' (*Painter's Country*) (Toronto, 1964), p. 34. Clearly, if Thomson went to the C.N.E., he would have seen French Impressionism there.
38. A. Alexandre, 'Claude Monet, His Career and Work', *The Studio*, XLIII, No. 180 (March 1908), pp. 88-106.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
41. *A Northern Lake* was sold for \$250 as recorded in the official minutes of the O.S.A. (see the *President's Annual Report for the Year Ending Feb. 28th, 1914*), but a number of authors record the Education Department of the Ontario government as paying less. It is incorrect to think the sale was a prize (see B. Davies, *A Study of Tom Thomson*, p. 44). Nor was Sir Edmund Walker a member of the selection committee (*Ibid.*, p. 44), although his enthusiasm may have been conducive to the painting's selection.
42. A second work in a Private Collection in Toronto has left a motif which, reversed, seems to form the small trees to the right of the final canvas. (Thomson, retaining a habit from his Seattle days, often varied the elements of the original works, since he was interested in the way the design could look in different combinations.) The other two sketches include a study of *Rocks* (Private Collection, Toronto), and a study of the driftwood on the shore (Private Collection, Toronto).
43. A. H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters*, p. 140.
44. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.
45. *Ibid.*
46. A. Y. Jackson, 'Foreword', *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings by the Late Tom Thomson* (Montreal, 1919), n.p.
47. J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine* L, No. 5 (March, 1918), p. 376.
48. O. Addison and E. Harwood, *Tom Thomson, the Algonquin Years* (Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto, 1969), p. 24.
49. Interview with the Honourable J. C. McRuer, November 13, 1970. The artist was then staying at the Dominion Hotel in Huntsville.
50. Interview with A. Y. Jackson, March 4, 1971.
51. For the date of the meeting, see A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", p. 6, where the (crossed out) text says 'Later in 1913, he met Jackson, Harris & Beatty & all influenced him—he got something from all of them & gave much in return'. This is the only primary source to date which records Thomson's meeting with Harris or Beatty.
52. Archibald Browne and G. A. Gagnon both showed scenes entitled *Moonlight* in an exhibition of the Canadian Art Club which began February 8, 1912, in the Art Museum of Toronto. Browne's titles also include *The Pines* and *Spring*, two used later by Thomson. Both these artists were well aware of the impressionist manner in their work at that period. However, J. E. H. MacDonald also used the subject of moonlight in his work as early as 1907 when he did miniatures such as *Moonlight on the Hudson* (1907, Catherine Harrison, Owen Sound). Thomson could have taken it from these sources, or from others. In fact, this subject seems to have been used by many of the figures transitional between the High Victorian and the modern mode in Canada, like W. Brymner or F. McGillivray Knowles.
53. Title given by the author.
54. *Ontario Society of Artists President's Annual Report for the Year ending February 28th, 1915*, p. 5.
55. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", p. 4.

Consolidation 1914-1915

FIG. 30

Mowat Lodge, Canoe Lake,
Algonquin Park

Undated photograph

Courtesy of Dr. Harry Ebbs, Toronto

With the year 1914, Thomson broke from his past and assumed the status of a professional artist. He began full-time with his move in January into Studio One of the newly-completed Studio Building, where a number of artists like J. E. H. MacDonald, J. W. Beatty, Curtis Williamson and Arthur Heming—close friends of Thomson—were also working.¹

The renewed purpose behind Thomson's artistic activity is seen in his adoption of a new material and size for his sketches: now he began to use the 8½ x 10½" panel of birch or pressed board, which was also used by MacDonald, Beatty and A. Y. Jackson.² The 'uniform size made it easier to order panels and frames',³ and they would also fit neatly into a sketch-box contrived by Jackson, which Thomson had duplicated for himself.⁴

But Jackson's influence on Thomson was not a one-way affair. In return, Thomson gave Jackson the notion of going to Algonquin Park: Jackson went in February of 1914 and stayed for about a month,⁵ during which time he was joined by J. E. H. MacDonald and J. W. Beatty.⁶ Jackson only returned to Toronto in the spring, on his way to the Rockies, when Thomson was packing to leave for the Park where he would stay—with the exception of a trip to Georgian Bay—until November.

Probably in late April or early May of 1914, Arthur Lismer went to Algonquin Park to sketch with

Thomson. (Lismer had been friendly with Thomson from 1911, when he joined the staff of Grip Ltd.) Thomson had been in the Park for two weeks, staying at a boarding house on Canoe Lake, Mowat Lodge (FIG. 30). When Lismer came, the two went camping for two weeks, first on Molly's Island on Smoke Lake, then to Ragged, Crown and Wolf Lakes.⁷

Two documents by Lismer are the source for this period; a short description of his 'First Impressions' of 'Algonquin Park' written in May, 1914,⁸ and a sketchbook of impressions from the trip. In his description, Lismer graphically describes the Park on his arrival, saying:

We were there before a single tourist or dilettante had thought about holidays, we were there just after the ice had gone out of the lakes and before it had completely gone from the southern slopes of the shores of the lakes. We were there before the maple and birch burst into leaf, and we stayed to see the wonderful miracle of a northern spring come again; we were there when the first spring flower came up, and bravely faced the frosty nights and chilly mornings, and we stayed to see the woods carpeted with their infinite variety of colour—the little white Canadian violet, the sweetest scented of them all. Trilliums, Hepaticas, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, auriculas, anemones, to name only a few. . . . The northern spring is later of course than in Toronto. . . . we were there in a wonderful time when everything was on the very edge of re-birth.



Arthur Lismer

*The Cabin on the portage from Ragged Lake to Crown Lake (May 15, 1914)*Pencil on paper, 6 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

A sheet from Lismer's sketchbook

Courtesy of Mrs. Marjorie Lismer Bridges, Ashton, Maryland, USA



It was all a revelation to him, one of the 'wonders of God's creation'. 'Never have I appreciated the big idea of Spring before so strongly.'⁹

Lismer not only describes the nature of the season that he and Thomson saw unfolding in the North, but also conveys his excitement over the new sensation he shared with Thomson of spring in a land which had 'an atmosphere and glamour all its own'. One section of the manuscript tells of his experience of moonlight in the Park and suggests how akin his perception was to Thomson's for it reads like a description of the latter's painting *Moonlight, Early Evening* from the previous winter: 'the moonlight had colour, you could see to paint and be able to appreciate the colour of things'. Clearly, Lismer was tremendously impressed by the same themes in Thomson's territory, '200 square miles of lake, river rapids and impenetrable bush country—a huge National Reserve where all the native animals, birds and fish live in security and wilderness'.¹⁰

Lismer even described their similar equipment (although Thomson's sketch size differs) on the excursion:

Two dozen 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " three-ply veneer boards of birch wood back and front and a soft pine inside, good for sketching. These fit into a holder designed to carry six or more in a flat sketch box, also about twelve to fifteen pounds of paint, oil and brushes per man.¹¹

The other prime document of this period left by Lismer is the sketchbook which he filled on this trip. One leaf shows Thomson sketching (FIG. 31). There are also sketches of a dock, the rocky shore found in the Park, various trees such as a dead spruce or tree stumps, as well as sketches of cabins such as 'The cabin on the portage from Ragged Lake to Crown Lake', which is dated May 15, 1914, and shows a person (perhaps Thomson) chasing a porcupine (FIG. 32). Lismer also identified one of his oil sketches, *Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park*, as a work he did on

Arthur Lismer

Tom Thomson Sketching

Pencil on paper, 6 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

A sheet from Lismer's sketchbook

Courtesy of Mrs. Marjorie Lismer Bridges, Ashton, Maryland, USA



Smoke Lake when he was with Thomson.¹² Upon seeing Thomson's *Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park* (PL. 14), Lismer identified it as being painted on the same day as his own work, which he later gave to the Art Gallery of Ontario.¹³

A comparison of the two sketches is revealing. Thomson's is integral to his work, since it is a development from his sketches of 1913, using the same theme of distant hills, but now more control is exercised over the structure of the land in the total composition. The artist's technical mastery is also more assured than in his work of the previous year, and the surface pattern strengthened. By comparison, Lismer's sketch of the same day is done with a gentler, more delicate technique, softly feathering the paint over the surface, and using a more modulated colour range, one he later described as 'grey, purple and browns.'¹⁴ It does not seem that Lismer's 'loose style of impressionistic painting was a revelation to Thomson', as A. Y. Jackson has said,¹⁵ although doubtless, Lismer's example paved the way for Thomson's exciting work done that fall.

Another sketch, possibly *not* of the Petawawa Gorges, which Thomson first visited in 1916, although known by this title, may have been done this spring (PL. 15, dated on the back by Dr. MacCallum as '1914?'). The confusion concerning the title shows up in the inscription on the verso, where the title 'Spring Ice' is crossed out. Certainly the work's signature style is definitely that of 1914, and it shows the same freedom as *Smoke Lake*, although it is painted on a material which Thomson used only occasionally in 1914, canvas board.¹⁶

When Lismer returned to Toronto, Thomson went to visit his friend and patron Dr. MacCallum, before returning to the Park. Dr. MacCallum had acquired property in that part of Georgian Bay known as Monument Channel, near Go-Home Bay, which included Split Rock and another tract of islands on the eastern side of the channel. Thomson stayed there from late spring until the middle of July.¹⁷ Then he 'paddled and portaged all the way from Go-Home to Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park, where he was joined by Jackson.'¹⁸ En route, he travelled apparently to Lake Nipissing by way of South River, and then paddled down the French River.¹⁹ Truman W. Kidd remembers meeting him one summer day at South River and Thomson confided in him that he liked to get his supplies where there was a veneer mill, and Kidd noticed piles of birch panels about 8 x 10" ready for him.²⁰

Thomson's visit to Georgian Bay seems to have provided him with a new, scenic landscape for his work. The islands, which 'take the full impact of a persistent wind', are shaped like 'low whalebacks'²¹, formed by a fundamental strata, and supplied the artist's typical subject matter in this period. But the harsh and bare land, with its muted epic grandeur also allowed for the closer study of turbulent stormy skies. Specific sites caught Thomson's attention, like Dr. MacCallum's Y-shaped cottage (built in 1911), which the doctor had largely designed²² (see *Cottage on a Rocky Shore*, PL. 16), as well as *MacCallum's Island* itself (PL. 17), and the various islands which one can see from the cottage, like The Giant's Tomb. Dr. MacCallum wrote later that Thomson's two canvases *Split Rock, Georgian Bay* and *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* were both 'of places in front of my island.'²³ Probably they were from sketches done at this time.

The use of a poor quality board, which often developed long vertical cracks later, assists us in identifying some of the sketches from this trip. But since Thomson continued to use the material into the fall, it is a moot point whether works such as *The Lily Pond* (PL. 18), were done at the Bay or in Algonquin Park. Other sketches were dated, like *Parry Sound Harbour*, (The National Gallery of Canada), which is inscribed on the back 'May 30th, 1914', and was done perhaps en route.

In general, Thomson's Georgian Bay sketches show a fairly dry but progressively bolder handling. The land masses, in particular, are often built up with a series of strokes in heavy impasto which reflects their massive quality. Characteristically, there is a dark,



sombre, rather gritty coloration. Georgian Bay was also to provide the artist with his first intensive study of a theme which would inform his work to the last, that of sparkling light on water, as in *The Lily Pond*. One finds for the first time too, the famous motif of the tree blown by the wind, silhouetted against the sky.

Spring, French River (PL. 19) is dated 'June 1, 1914', and the trees practically dance with the energy and movement the wind has given them. Indeed, the artist seems to have found this theme the most interesting development of his trip, to judge from two sketches worked up that winter into canvases: *Georgian Bay, Byng Inlet*, (PL. 20) verso dated 'June, 1914', used for the canvas *Byng Inlet, Georgian Bay* (PL. V) and

Evening-Pine Island (PL. 21 verso dated '1914'). All three works demonstrate the beginning of Thomson's use of the raw panel board, the surface left to show through the composition in places, especially behind the trees, giving them breathing room, vitality and life.

The theme of the wind and its effect on trees was a topic common to art and poetry at the turn of the century. Perhaps the best-known American work with this subject is Homer Martin's *The Harp of the Winds* (1890, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). By the time Thomson used it the theme had become commonplace. Canadian examples would include such well-known paintings as Homer Watson's *The Flood Gate* (1900) in

Unknown artist

Tom Thomson reading
(on the reverse of *Hill-side, Algonquin Park*)

The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Sketch identified as Thomson by
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale,
interview of April 19, 1971.(Photograph courtesy of
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)

the collection of The National Gallery of Canada. In fact, it was a theme which, like the artist's 'Moonlight', was used by many artists who bridged the gap between Victorian art and the modern era. Thomson used the subject with particular grace: the tree seems not so much racked by the elements but as one with them, charged with their energy.

By the fall of 1914, therefore, Thomson had consolidated his aims and ideals as an artist; the fact that a number of friends came to visit him in Algonquin Park that season acted as a catalyst, giving his work an impetus towards the direction he had chosen.

The way in which the group came together that autumn can be exactly detailed. Jackson came from Winnipeg to join Thomson, who was already in the Park, 'stirring up his red paint for the fray'.²⁴ His specific desire was to make a record of the autumn season, and since 'there are lots of maples round there . . . we ought to keep ourselves busy' as well as getting 'away from war news'.²⁵ They camped first 'below Tea Lake Dam' where Jackson made the sketch from which he later painted *The Red Maple* (1914), now in The National Gallery of Canada.²⁶ Here Thomson may have painted *Red Leaves* (PL. 22), which seems related in composition, colour and general tone to Jackson's sketch. Then they 'moved on to Smoke Lake and afterwards to Ragged Lake'.²⁷ About a month later, on October 1st, Lismer and Varley joined them.

Already Jackson seems to have been thinking of the group as the foundation of a new school and of Thomson as a key figure. He wrote that:

*Tom seems quite enthusiastic and I expect is quite an inspiring chap to work with. You need a man with you who tries to do the impossible. To do what you know is easily within your powers never has given rise to a great school of art or anything else.*²⁸

The trip is chronicled in a number of letters the artists wrote, like dutiful children, to their good friend Dr. MacCallum. Thomson wrote first, on October 6th, with some advice on the cost of his sketches, since the doctor was acting as his dealer. He asked that one, 'with rocks and water' of which he did a rough note (possibly *Petawawa Gorges*, PL. 15), be set aside as he 'would like to paint it up'. He then mentions that he and Jackson had been making quite a number of sketches (apparently they often sketched near the same place),²⁹ and that Lismer and Varley are 'greatly taken with the look of things here'.³⁰ He also describes the scene: 'The maples are about all stripped of leaves

now, but the birches are very rich in colour'. Concerning Jackson, he says, 'Alex has made some fine sketches here'. Yet Thomson felt the best he himself could do 'does not do the place much justice in the way of beauty'.³¹

By now, Thomson was thinking of putting in his application for a Park Ranger's job; alternatively, he might 'get work in some engraving shop for a few months this winter'.³²

Five days later, Lismer wrote MacCallum, and his letter is the first of several with interesting comments on Thomson's work. For his own part, Lismer was 'finding it far from easy to express the riot of full colour and still keep the landscape in a high key'. But he noted that:

*Thomson and Jackson are camped just opposite Fraser's [Mowat Lodge], and both are doing fine work and each having a decided influence on the other—Thomson has a lot of fine wood interiors rich in colour—he seems to be selecting his material carefully and using a finer sense of colour than his previous work shows. Jackson has some brilliant work better than his "Rockies" studies. The material here is more intimate and suits his aggressive soul better I think.*³³





Two days later, Jackson added his voice to the host of letters the doctor had received. He tells him that Varley and Lismer are:

feeling the effects of our uplifting presence and are both going up in key . . . Tom is doing some good work: very different from . . . last year's . . . He shows decided cubistical tendencies and I may have to use a restraining influence on him yet.³⁴

The effect of a close approach to the subject was of great importance to each of these artists. Like Lismer, Jackson stresses that 'the country up here is much more intimate than the mountains, and colour close up is brighter than colour a long way off'.³⁵

Sometime during this period Varley also wrote, only to confirm what the others had already said, that the country was a 'revelation' and that 'Tom is rapidly

developing into a *new cubist*'. He was determined, he adds, to bring the family next year for a few months, 'and paint the outdoor figure'.³⁶

The only sketch so far discovered which Thomson dated 1914, is *Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park* (FIG. 33). It reveals that he had taken the exploration begun at Georgian Bay a step further, adding richer (but still sombre) colours. The paint is still applied dryly but the handling of the colour in broad, flat masses (especially in the forest interiors) shows that the artist was groping towards abstraction (doubtless the 'new cubism' mentioned by his friends) (PL. 23, *White Birches*). Probable examples of the work done in this period include *Birches* (PL. 24), *Autumn* (PL. 25), *Hillside, Smoke Lake* (PL. 26), which has a charcoal sketch of Thomson reading on the back (FIG. 34), *Smoke Lake* (PL. 27), and *Autumn Tapestry: Tangled Trees* (PL. 28).

Occasionally this fall, the artist used the upright panel shape, often with the motif of the branches of a tree springing diagonally across it, as in *Soft Maple in Autumn* (PL. VI) or *The Red Tree* (PL. 29). He also seems to have done his first Nocturnes at this time (PL. 30, *Nocturne*).³⁷ Throughout the period, the artist's brushwork has a wide range: from a fairly tight delineation to a loose, open network of dots and patches.

Sometime that fall, both Thomson and Lismer sketched a cabin that had been built by George Rowe on a point near Mowat Lodge (Thomson's version is *The Shack*, PL. 31).³⁸ Lismer was to develop his sketch of the scene into a well-known canvas: *The Guide's Home, Algonquin* in The National Gallery of Canada. Other sketches show another scene common to them both and point up more strongly how closely they now resembled one another: Thomson's *Tamarack Swamp, Dawn* (PL. 32) and Lismer's *Algonquin Park* (Art Gallery of Ontario, signed and incorrectly dated by the artist, 'A. Lismer '13').

One other sketch, *Burnt Country, Evening* (PL. 33), must have been done this season, since Thomson worked it up into a canvas that winter.

With the late fall came 'white frosts and deep snows'.³⁹ Works like *White Frost* (PL. 34) seem to recall some qualities found in Thomson's work of that season in their fussy, tentative handling and crusty impasto. *Sketch for Afternoon, Algonquin Park* (PL. 35) which he was also to develop into a larger canvas, may likewise date from this period.

From December 1914 to April of 1915, Thomson worked in a new studio with a new friend. Studio One of the Studio Building had been sublet, so a shack was fixed up for him by Lawren Harris and Dr. MacCallum. Because Jackson had left to join the Forces, Thomson now shared 'the shack' with a young artist, Franklin Carmichael, who had worked with him at Grip Ltd. and later at Rous & Mann. Their shack abutted the main building, but was somewhat damp (FIG. 35).⁴⁰

Thomson also maintained his close friendship with Arthur Lismer, although the nature of the relationship was rather less like the 'school' Jackson envisaged and more like the atmosphere of a fraternity house. In one letter to his fiancée, Carmichael wrote:

Tom Thomson and I have got married and we cook and share our meals together, going half and half, Arthur Lismer having lunch with us and he doing his share. . . . I am not starving but am eating well and

*plenty of it. It is most economical and won't cost us any more than \$2.50 a week . . . with plenty of everything, and of the best.*⁴¹

He adds:

*Everyone in the studio is swapping frames and stretchers so that they can have new frames for their pictures and still not have to invest in them. . . . Taking everything into consideration, everyone is doing their best to do something for the mutual benefit of the other fellow, which is very fine and shows a true spirit of comradeship not often found in a class of men who are all working at the same thing, especially at a time like this.*⁴²

As Carmichael's last sentence in the preceding quotation suggests, the times were indeed difficult—photo-engraving work was particularly scarce—so much so that in May 1915 he went to Bolton, Ontario, to work in the carriage trade. But by the end of August, Carmichael was able to come back to Toronto.

Such comradeship probably meant a pre-occupation with the same artistic problems as well. For Carmichael, the chief worry was that his mind ought to be occupied with 'nobler thoughts of how to get all I have in the sketches into a big canvas along with what I have missed in them supplied from my memory'.⁴³

The only three canvases that we know Thomson did for certain in the winter of 1914/15 (because they were shown in the annual exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, March 13-April 10, 1915) are: *Northern River* (PL. 37), *Split Rock, Georgian Bay* (PL. 39), and *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* (PL. 40). Curiously, the latter work, which is larger and more advanced than the other two, seems to have been selling for only half their price of \$500. The only other likely candidate among all the canvases Thomson did is *Byng Inlet* (PL. V), which is of a size appropriate to the price listed in the exhibition catalogue and is of Georgian Bay.⁴⁴

The artist himself, though usually critical concerning his own talent, once confided to a nephew that, of all his works, he thought *Northern River* not 'half bad'.⁴⁵ The choice of title may have come from Wilfred Campbell's poem 'A Northern River'; the pantheistic but funereal nature of this poem, may also help to explain some unexpected qualities in Thomson's painting. The river speaks in Campbell's poem:

*In quiet borders where I sweep
Housed in their roofs of bloom and sod
My music singing round their sleep
The dead lie looking up to God. . . .*⁴⁶

In Thomson's painting, the viewer looks out at the river from some secret place among the trees. The well-lit central space, the contrasting darkness of the silhouetted shafts through which it is viewed, and the quiet mood these forms impose might well be associated with the inside of a church.

The gouache preparatory study (PL. 36) suggests that Thomson followed his own work closely in preparing the final canvas, with differences that are significant and characteristic, though slight. The canvas stabilizes what is fleeting and accidental in the sketch, as well as using certain compositional devices like additional space in the foreground to distance the canvas from the viewer and give more grandeur to the conception. Indeed, if the smaller work can be considered a lyric poem, the other is an epic.

To this epic Thomson wanted to add 'style', and so developed shapes in his sketch close to the international Art Nouveau, just as he did in *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* (note the stalk-like, curvilinear growths at the bases of the trees). The composition seemed to polarize his imagination to some extent, so much so that he even may have recalled it in his pen sketches such as *The Foot Path of Peace* (PL. 38), which may indicate the literary overtones he associated with the scene shown in the canvas as well.⁴⁷

A second canvas shown in the O.S.A. exhibition was *Split Rock, Georgian Bay* (PL. 39), which, with its awkward *repoussoir* foreground forcing the viewer to study the canvas as a series of depth relationships, resembles *Byng Island, Georgian Bay* (PL. V), possibly the third canvas in the exhibition, and certainly the one most advanced in its design. The same large strokes of colour are found in *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* (PL. 40), possibly finished that year or worked on later.

A less advanced canvas, but one also done in 1914, since it was sold at the Patriotic Fund exhibition held December 13th, 1914, is *Afternoon, Algonquin Park* (PL. 41). This work, developed as usual from a sketch, has such a broad snowy foreground that one wonders if Thomson was here influenced by J. E. H. MacDonald's *Morning Shadows*, (1912, Ontario Department of Public Works). Certainly the artist liked his own composition enough to seemingly reverse it and use it in a tempera sketch, *Melting Snow* (PL. 42). Still another gouache, *Decorative Landscape* (PL. 43) has trees on the right, which recall the crossed-tree motif found on the left of the canvas. Another such lyric canvas of a snowy scene, possibly done at this time is *Thirty Birches* (PL. 44).

Since Thomson usually developed during the winter months the sketches made in the spring, summer and fall, his canvases *Burnt Land* (PL. 45) and *Petawawa Gorges* (PL. 46) were probably begun during this particular winter. Still another canvas, *The Silent Lake* (PL. 47), which has a heavily worked over sky, may have been completed at this time, as well as *Lake in Algonquin Park* (PL. 48) and *The Fisherman* (PL. 49). A final canvas, *Frost-Laden Cedars, Big Cauchon Lake* (PL. 50) may also have been painted immediately after the artist returned from the Park. One notes the similarity in the handling of the frosty trees found here with that found in sketches like *White Frost* (PL. 34).

Thomson's continuing good fortune concerning sales meant that he did not have to work in a photo-engraving studio that winter, and by late April, *Northern River* had been brought in for approval by The National Gallery of Canada, which eventually bought it for \$500. Thomson's reaction was typical. He told Lismer to find his friend Carmichael and tell him to bring 'the swag' (as he called the money received for the painting) up to the Park, envisaging that they would spend the rest of the summer together there, at no expense to Carmichael. Carmichael wrote to his fiancée of the offer, which he regretfully had to decline, but added that he was glad Thomson had:

*sold his picture, as I know this will mean a double effort on the part of Tom to do better stuff, which I hope will place him head and shoulders above all the rest of the other painters.*⁴⁸

Thomson had, indeed, the hopes, trust and confidence of all his friends.

Footnotes to Consolidation 1914-1915

1. For the individuals in the Studio Building when it opened, see A. Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country* (Toronto, 1964), pp. 32-33.
2. A. Y. Jackson, 'Foreword' to B. Davies, *Tom Thomson* (Vancouver, 1967), p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*
4. B. Davies, "Tom Thomson's Sketch Box", unpublished manuscript. BDP.
5. A. Y. Jackson, 'Foreword' to B. Davies, *Tom Thomson* (Vancouver, 1967), p. 2.

6. O. Addison and E. Harwood, *Tom Thomson, The Algonquin Years* (Toronto, 1969), p. 28.
7. A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson", unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges.
8. A. Lismer, "Algonquin Park", unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. The inscription on the back of Lismer's *Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park*, reads: (pencil) 'Smoke L./Algonquin Park/A. Lismer/Spring '14', and on a label, 'Painted Smoke Lake/Algonquin Park. 1913/with Tom Thomson, May 1913. . . .' Clearly, Lismer here confused the year he worked with Thomson.
13. Letter from W. H. Klinkloff, April 14, 1971. AGO.
14. A. Lismer, "Algonquin Park", unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges, p.6.
15. A. Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country* (Toronto, 1964), p. 35.
16. See also *On Georgian Bay* (No. 4666, The National Gallery of Canada), which is done on the same material and must date from this year.
17. Dr. MacCallum says that Thomson stayed at his island until August; see J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine*, L, No. 5 (March, 1918), p. 376. But a letter from Tom Thomson to F. H. Varley, postmarked July 8, 1914, indicates the artist was 'leaving about the end of the week' for Algonquin Park (letter in the possession of the Varley family). Thomson added 'Have not made any sketches for a few weeks but feel like starting in again', which seems to date most of the Georgian Bay panels to the time of his arrival in June.
18. J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine*, L, No. 5 (March, 1918), p. 376.
19. See O. Addison and E. Harwood, *Tom Thomson, The Algonquin Years* (Toronto, 1969), p. 32.
20. Letter from T. W. Kidd, November, 1963, on file at The Riverdale Collegiate Institute, Toronto.
21. C. Comfort, 'Georgian Bay Legacy', *Canadian Art*, VIII, No. 3 (Spring, 1951), p. 106.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
23. Letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum, January 21, 1922. Private Collection, Owen Sound. See also letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum, June 16, 1939, MacCC, which says that the sketch for *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* was done at the 'South West Wooded Pine, an island of granite about a quarter of a mile in length by 100 yards wide and say 50 feet high'.
24. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, n.d. (August ?, 1914). MacCC.
25. *Ibid.*
26. A. Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country* (Toronto, 1964), p. 38.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, n.d. (August ?, 1914). MacCC.
29. Letter from T. Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, October 6, 1914. MacCC.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. Letter from A. Lismer to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, October 11, 1914. MacCC.
34. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, October 13, 1914. MacCC. Interestingly enough, Jackson here records that he and Thomson had had fairly bad weather before the arrival of Varley and Lismer. Later he was to remember only 'sunny days and frosty nights' (see his 'The Origin of the Group of Seven', *High Flight* (ed. J. R. McIntosh) (Toronto, 1951), p. 164).
35. Letter from Jackson to MacCallum, Oct. 13, 1914. MacCC.
36. Letter from F. H. Varley to Dr. J. M. MacCallum (October ?, 1914). MacCC.
37. Another Nocturne from this year is in the collection of The Vancouver Art Gallery.
38. See Dr. R. P. Little, 'Some Recollections of Tom Thomson and Canoe Lake', *Culture*, XVI, No. 2 (Juin 1955), p. 202. Thomson often photographed this shack as well: photographs of it were found in his possessions after he died (identification of the cabin was made by Jim Stringer, interview, October 17, 1970).
39. 'Art and Artists', *The Globe*, Toronto, November 21, 1914, p. 5.
40. Letter from F. Carmichael to his fiancée, August 24, 1915. Private collection, Toronto. After an absence of some four months, when Carmichael returned to the shack he could not work in it immediately because it was apparently too damp to sleep in after so much rain. 'However, I shall make it my headquarters and fire up on Thursday afternoon, so as to dry the atmosphere a little, as well as the bedding'. This shack, cleaned up and refurbished with a neatness inappropriate to its original owners, has been moved from its original location to the McMichael Conservation Collection, Kleinburg.
41. Letter from F. Carmichael to his fiancée, January 28, 1915. Private collection, Toronto.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
43. *Ibid.*
44. In the Canadian National Exhibition Show of that year, held from August 28 to September 13, the artist was listed in the catalogue as exhibiting two works, both for sale: *In Georgian Bay* (\$500) and *Pines, Georgian Bay* (\$250). Today these probably are, with changed titles, *Pine Island, Georgian Bay* (The National Gallery of Canada), and *Byng Inlet* (Private collection, Toronto).
45. Interview with George M. Thomson, November 4, 1970.
46. *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Campbell* (Toronto, 1905), p. 113.
47. It has been suggested by some writers—notably R. H. Hubbard, *The Development of Canadian Art* (Ottawa, 1964), p. 89—that for the inspiration of *Northern River*, Thomson looked at an illustration of a Scandinavian tapestry woven from a design by Henrik Krogh, which appeared in the magazine *The Studio*, 58, No. 240 (March, 1913), p. 109. The resemblance seems slighter than with an American work, *Wilderness*, by an artist named Daniel Garber, illustrated in the same issue, p. 76. However, neither work is particularly close to the gouache study for the canvas.
48. Letter from F. Carmichael to his fiancée, May 10, 1915. Private collection, Toronto.

Years of Progress

1915-1916

By 1915, Thomson had established his course of action. It only remained for him to develop the ideas already implicit in his work to their fullest extent, so that the brilliant colour found in his autumn sketches of 1914 could become more intense, controlled and harmonious, his brushwork more assured and his control of space and structure more confident. Indeed, his particular idiom was created; now he began to use it.

Unfortunately, the specific steps of this progress are difficult to reconstruct (only a few of the artist's sketches have '15 scratched beside his name in their lower corner). But it is possible to suggest a number of themes that seem to have preoccupied Thomson this spring (although sketches with similar subjects may occasionally date earlier or later than 1915): *Spring Ice*, *Wild Cherry Trees in Blossom*, and *Burnt Country*, all of which, to some extent, deal with the regenerative powers of nature.

When Thomson went to Algonquin Park in April of 1915, the snow was still on the ground and the ice which covered the lakes was just beginning to melt.¹ *Spring Ice* (PL. 51) epitomizes his style during this period: the trees are thinly painted and look scraped and ragged, although in other areas the brushwork is fluid and the structure well-established. The colours range from blue to Indian brown and lavender. Other sketches related in general theme and possibly done in this period include *Spring Ice* (PL. 52), and *March, Canoe Lake* (PL. 53). The *Artist's Hut* (PL. 54), done in the spring of 1917, exhibits a similar style and demonstrates how easy it is to confuse the work of Thomson's various 'spring' subjects.² However, in 1915, the artist began to use a new material—a heavy, grey-coloured pressed board—in sketches like *Spring Ice* and *Algonquin Park* (PL. 55), dated on the verso '1915'.

A second theme is that of wild, flowering cherry trees, which seem to throb with a restless energy. *Wild Cherry Trees in Blossom* (PL. 56) done on the same pressed board as before, is a remarkable image of growth and change.³

The third preoccupation of 1915, begun in the fall of 1914, and responsible for a canvas that winter, is *Burnt Country* (a title Thomson himself once wrote on the back of a panel).⁴ This subject was doubtless chosen for its drama and picturesqueness (see *Burnt Country*, PL. 57), as well as its capacity to express growth: tree stumps are here silhouetted against a sky lit with an unearthly glow. Like the ice going out, and the new flowery trees, this image contains in itself the seeds of regeneration: the burnt land would eventually bloom again.⁵

In accord with these ideas are Thomson's flower sketches which may have been done this year, since one work, *Wildflowers* (PL. 58), is dated on the verso '1915' by Dr. MacCallum. In these studies the flowers are pressed close against the edge of the picture plane as though they were growing in an imaginary out-of-doors immediately in front of the viewer, set against a dynamic black background, giving the bright, illusive flowers a still more vibrant yet tremulous colour. The flowers are wild to a greater or lesser degree: among them daisies, wood lilies, and vetch appear (see *Flowers*, PL. 59) and irises (see *Wild Flowers*, PL. 60).

A series of sky studies may have been completed this summer or fall, since several works, like *Clouds* ('*The Zeppelins*') (PL. 61), are dated 1915 by Dr. MacCallum. The clouds are caught in every conceivable variety of formation and time of day, from early morning, as in *Morning* (PL. 62) and *Blue Clouds, Wooded Hills and Marshes* (PL. 63), to sunset, as in *Sunset Sky* (PL. 64) and *Sunset* (PL. 65). The moonlight of the summer nights is also given rapt attention, as in *Hot Summer Moonlight* (PL. 66), and a well-handled, neo-impressionist style to suggest the lake waters, or the foliage of the trees on the shore, as in *Birch and Spruce, Smoke Lake* (PL. 67), is often combined with the daringly brilliant colour used for the sky.

It was in 1915 that Thomson became interested in the logging operations in the Park. Once again, here is a theme which involves movement. The operation of the log chute—the point of greatest tension because here the logs are flung from one environment to another—is particularly well demonstrated in *Timber Chute* (PL. 68), where the vitality and drive of the logs are contrasted with the rugged tenacity of the wooden chute. Another well-known example of this subject is *Tea Lake Dam* (PL. 69). Here, the water is a vital element, along with the loggers, who race along the top of the dam as the sluice gate opens to allow the influx of the logs piled up on the dam's nether side.

That summer, Thomson seems to have had a good deal of time to paint. He wrote J. E. H. MacDonald on July 22nd to tell him that:

Things are very quiet around the Park this summer. Have so far had only 2 or 3 weeks work and prospects are not very bright as the people are not coming in as they were expected. Of course there are a few jobs but there are more guides than jobs.

He added:

Deer

Pencil on paper, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (sight)

Inscription:

recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)

Gift of Thoreau MacDonald,
The McMichael Conservation Collection, Kleinburg

I have made quite a few sketches this summer but lately have not been doing much and have a notion of starting out on a long hike, and will likely wind up somewhere around the French River and go up the shore to Bruce Mines and later on may take on the Harvest Excursion and work at the wheat for a month or two.⁶

Another source confirms that Thomson actually did take his 'long hike' in July. He bought a new chestnut canoe and silk tent, and, starting at Canoe Lake, went on a long trip, 'coming out at South River about Labour Day'⁷. Here, from the New Queen's Hotel, he wrote to Dr. MacCallum on September 8. He told the doctor that he had already sent down his sketches a month before and added, 'Have travelled over a great deal of country this summer, and have done very few sketches, it will be about a hundred so far'.⁸ Apparently, he had worked less than in the previous year. Perhaps the restlessness appearing in his sketches reflects a general quality in his life at that time.

On September 9, Thomson wrote to Dr. MacCallum again, telling him of his immediate plans. He wanted to go:

back up South River and cross into Tea Lake and down as far as Cuchon [sic] and may make it out to Mattawa, but it's fine country up this river about 10 miles, so there is lots to do without travelling very far. There are stretches of country around here that are a good deal like that near Sudbury, mostly burnt over like some of my sketches up the Magnewan River of running the logs. . . .⁹

Although Thomson here proposes a fairly extensive trip, he may never have taken it. By November at least, he was back on South River at a camp on an island in Round Lake, where he had accompanied Tom Wattie and Dr. Bob McComb, the village physician from South River, on a hunting trip.¹⁰ *Round Lake, Mud Bay* (PL. 70), completed here, indicates the fall season: the first flight of Canada geese, on the start of their trip south, appear in the sky.

Between September and November, or perhaps after his Round Lake trip, Thomson may have returned to Canoe Lake, where Mr. and Mrs. Varley might have come to visit him, along with Arthur Lismer (shortly to leave for Bedford, Nova Scotia).¹¹ Thomson camped in his tent (FIG. 26 and *Campfire*

FIG. 37 Detail of a photograph of
*The Arts & Letters Club Meeting in the Clubhouse on Court Lane,
Toronto, prior to 1918.*

Pictures on the wall:
Below: Jules-Cyrille Cavé's *St. Cecilia in the Catacombs*
(today in the Art Gallery of Ontario)
Above: Thomson's *The Birches* (?)
(later destroyed)
Seated below:
(left to right): R. F. Gagen, Dr. J. O. Miller, R. L. Defries,
J. E. H. MacDonald, with Dr. J. M. MacCallum in
the foreground.

PL. 71) the others stayed at Fraser's Lodge. Mrs. Varley recalls, 'a barn on the premises of Mowat Lodge had so many sketches drying it was like a small art gallery'.¹² On this trip, Varley did the sketch which later became his canvas *Indian Summer*.¹³ Thomson may have done a number of studies of deer at this time, perhaps even drawings of them (FIG. 36), since, 'a baby deer, probably motherless . . . came each night and lay down just outside his tent, just to be near somebody,' a visitor who gave him much pleasure.¹⁴

By the fall of 1915, Thomson's colours had become more intense, and his use of a vibrant black ground (a contrast possibly learned from his flower studies) sets off the oranges and golds of the fall trees, as in *Black Spruce and Maple* (PL. 72). In *Autumn Foliage* (PL. 73), the black stabilizes the bright colours in their formalized design, as it does in *Red and Gold* (PL. 74), where the same colour range is combined in a similar hillside view.

By now, Thomson's sketches reveal a synthesis rather than an analysis of nature. The artist is working in an abstract framework and imposing it on what he sees, as in *Autumn Birches* (PL. 75), which is essentially abstract, although tree trunks are discernible. In *The Waterfall* (PL. 76) too, although 'reality' is much in evidence, the falling water and tree masses are so broadly treated that they serve as units in a powerful, semi-abstract design. Two works of this season are virtually abstractions: *A Rapid* (PL. VII), doubtless one of the artist's personal favourites, since he selected it for an article on Canadian landscape painters being written by Eric Brown, Director of The National Gallery of Canada, for the prestigious *Studio* magazine;¹⁵ and *Autumn Colour* (PL. 77).¹⁶

Some weeks after completing these sketches, Thomson returned to Toronto, only to find that his comrades of the year before were no longer to be his boon companions: Carmichael had married, and Lismer had gone to Bedford, Nova Scotia, leaving the Shack, which he had been using, in 'a pretty bad muddle'¹⁷.

By December, Thomson had his first one-man exhibition at the well-known Arts & Letters Club of Toronto. The entry in the Club Minutes for December 1st records that J. W. Beatty, speaking for the Picture Committee, announced, 'an exhibition in the Club rooms of sketches by Mr. Tom Thomson'¹⁸, which would open December 6th. Amusingly enough, Beatty then went on to advise that 'some of the picture lights' had 'disappeared'. The exhibition which was booked to follow Thomson's was a display of sketches by F. S. Challener, a well-established artist, suggesting the recognition accorded Thomson in his own lifetime.



(Photograph and identification courtesy of
The Arts & Letters Club, Toronto)

FIG. 38

Decorative Panel (I)

Oil on board, 47½ x 38"

Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa(Photograph courtesy of
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)

At the Annual Ontario Society of Artists Exhibition held in March at the Art Museum of Toronto, Thomson exhibited four canvases: *The Birches*, *Spring Ice*, *The Hardwoods* and *Moonlight*. Of these works only two are known for certain today: *Spring Ice* (PL. 78), and *Moonlight* (PL. 79). One work, now titled *October* (PL. 80), is based on a sketch of a group of hardwood trees called *Maple Woods; Bare Trunks* (PL. 81) and therefore is probably the missing canvas, *The Hardwoods*. The fourth painting is known to have been destroyed.¹⁹ The three existing canvases are of similar size and this may explain why they all had the same price: \$300.²⁰ However, *The Birches* cost considerably more (\$500) and hence may have been larger than the others. Its dimensions could have been similar to an earlier canvas, *Northern River*, which also sold for that price.

A photograph taken in the Arts & Letters Club, when the clubhouse was on Court Lane in Toronto (that is, prior to 1919), may show the lost canvas (FIG. 37).²¹ Below it hangs Jules-Cyrille Cavé's *Saint Cecilia in the Catacombs* (now in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario). This was an immense painting executed in the photographically realistic style popular in France during the first decade of the

FIG. 39

Decorative Panel, Forest Undergrowth II

Oil on beaverboard, 47¾ x 33"

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Jackman,
Toronto, 1967
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa(Photograph courtesy of
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)

century, and much respected by some individuals in Toronto, like the art committee of the C.N.E. which bought the work in 1916 after it was shown in the annual exhibition held that year.²²

The canvas above *Saint Cecilia* is about the size of *Northern River*, though horizontal, and depicts birch trees. A motif in it of six trees stemming from a single root (at right) also appears in other canvases done by Thomson, possibly this year, such as *Opulent October* (PL. VIII). Thomson also did several small, lyric canvases this year of birches at dawn or at dusk, like *Evening, Canoe Lake* (PL. IX) or *Silver Birches* (PL. 82). Perhaps the canvas in this photograph is indeed the vanished, *The Birches*.²³

In these canvases, the growth of the artist's decorative genius is noticeable: the works seem flatter than before. Perhaps this is due to a commission the artist executed over the winter—that of a number of decorative panels of forest undergrowth prepared by Thomson for MacCallum's cottage (see *Decorative Panel I* and *Decorative Panel, Forest Undergrowth II* (FIGS. 38 and 39). Spirited and full of verve, these beaverboard panels have almost the quality of Matisse's early works.

FIG. 40

Decorated Stoneware Bowl

Oil on white stoneware,
8¾ (diam.) x 4½" high

Gift of Mrs. F. E. Fisk
The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound

FIG. 41

Decorated Stoneware Bowl II

Oil on white stoneware, 7¼ (diam.) x 4¼" high

Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto

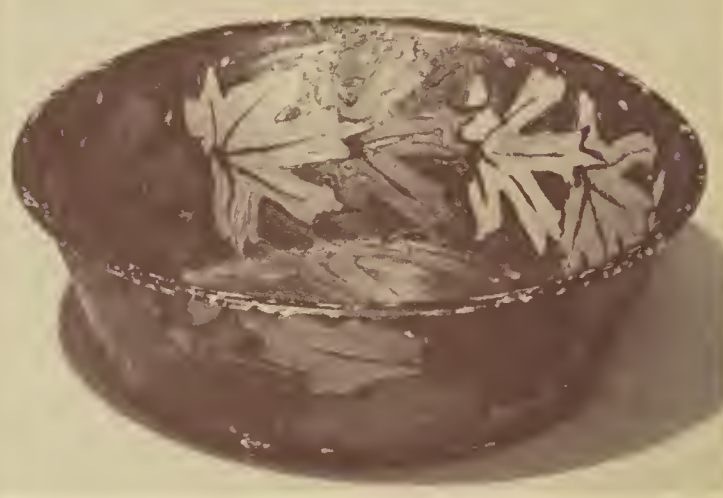


FIG. 42

Decorated Enamel Bowl

Oil paint on enamel, 7¾ (diam.) x 3⅛" high

Acquired, 1936
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
(Photograph courtesy of
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)



Attention to the decoration of such minor objects as bowls (FIGS. 40 and 41), or an enamel basin (FIG. 42) may also have been a feature of this year. The boldly graphic designs and colour range of dark blue, mustard yellow and green, are related to Thomson's panel decorations.

Other works of 1915 seem to reveal the same decorative quality. *In the Northland* (PL. 83), signed and dated '15, worked up from a rough oil sketch which served as a general guide to colour and composition (PL. 84), is a statement on a theme, remarkable for its flat, two-dimensional composition. As usual, Thomson added depth to his foreground in order to distance the scene from the spectator. The motif of the tree (at left) which runs from the top to the bottom of the picture assists in stressing the canvas's flat surface: the illusion of depth is studiously avoided.

A similar device is used in *Decorative Landscape, Birches* (PL. 85), a canvas probably done that winter, which in turn suggests links with *Woodland Waterfall* (PL. x), *The Pool* (PL. 86), and *Spring* (PL. 87). In each of these works, the artist's intention seems to have been to create a design with a general effect of relaxation and quiet.

Perhaps these secret, still places, hidden in the forest, were painted to give not only the viewer, but the artist, respite from daily cares: Thomson hated the First World War.²⁴ The time of day depicted in these works is cool and reflective—often twilight—as in *Decorative Landscape, Birches* or *Silver Birches*. The colours are equally pale and silvery, and the paint, which is put down in broad bands, evokes memories of *cloisonné* or stained glass. Religious overtones seem a natural concomitant to the gentleness and peace of the images created.

Red Pine in front of the park ranger cabin at Achray where Thomson was stationed, 1916
(Photograph taken by T. W. Dwight, on file at the Art Gallery of Ontario)



By 1916, Thomson's artistic reputation was at a new height. But as usual, he was short of money. In the summer of 1915, he had worked intermittently as a fire-ranger,²⁵ but now he decided to make ranging his profession. By June 1st, he was stationed at Achray, a stop on the Canadian National Railway line between Pembroke and North Bay, close by the Park Station on the shores of Grand Lake, at the head of the South branch of the Petawawa River.

This new job seems to have considerably cut down the artist's production of sketches. By the fall, he wrote Dr. MacCallum and told him:

Have done very little sketching this summer as I find that the two jobs don't fit in. It would be great for two artists, or whatever you call us, but the natives can't see what we paint for. A photo would be great but the painted things are awful. When we are travelling, two go together—one for the canoe and the other for the pack, and there's no place for a sketch outfit when your [sic] fireranging.²⁶

At the end of this depressed letter, Thomson added, with his usual tongue-in-cheek: 'We are not fired yet, but I am hoping to be put off right away'.²⁷

It is possible that Thomson somewhat exaggerated his plight. A friend of his, Edward Godin, who had a cabin at Achray, told a rather different story of that summer:

There being only one fire here that summer he had plenty of time to make sketches and he did make quite a few. . . . In August we went on a canoe trip down the south branch of the Petawawa and up the north branch to Lake Traverse. On that trip Tom sketched what they call the Capes on the South Branch. . . .²⁸

Certainly, Thomson enjoyed sketching the Petawawa Capes because he jotted a note about it to J. E. H. MacDonald, telling him that, 'this is a great place for sketching, one part of the river (South Branch, Petawawa) runs between Walls of Rock about 300 feet up. . . .'²⁹

That spring, probably after the artist was already at Achray (since they went fishing on Lake Cauchon, which was nearby), Dr. MacCallum, and Lawren Harris and his cousin came to visit him.³⁰ Thus, the doctor's identification of dates and places is as trustworthy as ever. *Snow Pillars in the Sky* (PL. 88) he identified as being done in early Spring.³¹ But though it indicates snow, and other sketches from this season have snow in them, it is hard to fit works like *March* (PL. 89) into this period of development.³²

An undercoat of ochre paint identifies some sketches done that year: it often shows through, adding sparkle (see *Algonquin Park*, PL. 90). Thomson also continued to use his coarse, grey, pressed board of 1915, as in the sketch *In the Sugar Bush* (PL. 91), one of the artist's rare figure studies, dated '1916' by MacCallum. Since the figure depicted is Shannon Fraser, who ran Mowat Lodge, the artist painted it either before, or after, he went to Achray.

The year 1916 was a very hot one, so hot that Thomson's sisters were afraid for him, fireranging that particular summer.³³ The heat is caught in works like *Cranberry Marsh* (PL. 92), or *The Enchanted Stream, Midnight* (PL. 93), both done this season. At one point, too, when he was stationed at Achray, the artist followed the Booth Company's lumber drive. *Bateaux* (PL. 94), which shows the flat-bottomed boats of the loggers, may date from this trip.

The sketches from August, when Thomson was travelling up the Petawawa Gorges, are the most notable of the summer. Thomson chose an obviously

experimental technique to suit the monumental and exciting shapes found in the sheer walls of rock. A good example is *Petawawa Gorges* (PL. 95). Perhaps at this time, Thomson saw the scene that inspired his *Moose at Night (Moonlight)* (PL. 96).

Some time this summer, Thomson went on a fishing trip to Little Cauchon Lake, which was not far distant from Achray. In *Little Cauchon Lake* (PL. 97) a delicate tracery of line appears, seemingly as the result of the cast of the fisherman's line, which seems to 'capture' the landscape, a poetically visual metaphor for the art of painting. Thomson may have equated artists with fishermen, masters of two different but not unlike arts.

One series which Thomson developed this summer at Achray is that of big trees blown by the wind. The fact that this is a major theme in his work may help to explain the wide-spread dissent over where *The West Wind* was painted,³⁴ and even when it was painted (since Thomson began to use this subject matter extensively by 1915).³⁵ It is practically impossible to identify the specific site for *The West Wind*, although hypotheses abound: the red pine on the rocky point in front of the park ranger's cabin at Achray has been considered by some to be a model for the painting (FIG. 43).³⁶ Curiously enough, this tree looks like one found in another sketch in the Art Gallery of Ontario collection, *Pine Tree* (PL. 98), even to the stump at left, although it bears little resemblance to the sketch for *The West Wind* (PL. 99).

As before, all the tree studies have one common denominator: clouds and water may show that they bear the force of the wind, but the tree stands firm, in harmony with the elements. Such a subject may have had symbolic connotations for Thomson of something which, like himself, was as one with nature. The trees often have a curiously anthropomorphic quality: sometimes feminine and languid, or brisk and defiant. These are indeed the 'trees of man'.³⁷

Sketches like *Thunderhead: Pink Cloud over Lake* (PL. 100) or perhaps *Ragged Oaks* (PL. 101), both of which seem, from their colouring, to be summer works, are clearly contiguous with those Thomson painted that fall, like *Wild Geese* (PL. 102) or *Red Sumac* (PL. 103). But as usual, the autumn brought the artist to new heights of inspiration. Now the progress made in the past two years is brought to a realization of the commitments of his artistic position. The result is almost total abstraction, done with an almost contemporary feeling for the irrational, emotive element of colour.

Forest, October (see cover) reveals the artist's brilliant, imaginative conception. In it, a basically

abstract pattern derived from the branches of the forest combines with the tree shadows in a rhythmic dance. The intense colours, the resilient black, make the enclosed and silent forest begin to burn with the heat before the viewer's eyes. Still another sketch, *Autumn Scene* (PL. 104), shows the sophistication of the artist's technique at this time.³⁸

The first snowfall of the season may have occurred immediately after Thomson completed *Forest, October*, because in *Snow-Covered Trees* (PL. 105), he seems to recall its specific composition. But now, the heart of the forest has turned cold.

After Thomson's return to Toronto, he must have begun almost immediately to work up new canvases from these sketch studies. First, he may have painted *Snow in October* (PL. 106) and *Early Snow* (PL. XI), both of which seem related to each other because both have a similar, elaborately handled foliage, as well as a nearly identical scale (both are almost exactly square).

He might then have decided to develop the garland-like treatment of the tree foliage found in his 'snow' sketches in several autumn subjects. *Autumn's Garland* (PL. 107), *Maple Saplings, October* (PL. 108), and a simplified decorative version of the same theme, *Decoration: Autumn Landscape* (PL. XII), were probably painted next.

It is possible that Dr. MacCallum may have titled *Autumn's Garland* (PL. 107). At least, he once called it by another name, 'The Woodland Garland'³⁹. It recalls a poem of Wilfred Campbell, 'Autumn', which mentions a 'crimson, clinging vine'. However, the subject was a popular one: C. W. Jefferys had painted an *Autumn's Garland* which was exhibited in 1914 and again in 1915.⁴⁰ It received favourable critical attention, but may not have been important as anything but a subject of interest for Thomson.⁴¹ Even its colours of 'golden leafage against a background of green' sound unlike the latter artist's brilliant oranges, reds and golds.⁴²

Three canvases possibly done this winter, all views of the opposite lake or river shore, and painted with big dashes of pure colour, are *Golden Autumn* (PL. 109), *Chill November* (PL. 110), and *The Pointers* (PL. XIII). The artist appears to have begun painting *The Pointers*, in particular, in some detail so that the square bottomed boats which gave the canvas its name are realistically depicted. He then seems to have changed course and desired a bolder effect, and may even have intended his technique to be read as a deliberately contentious statement aimed at his critics. When Dr. MacCallum asked him why he was painting *The*

Pointers 'that way', his answer was 'Damn them! I'll show them . . . !'⁴³

It is also possible that a new artistic contact may have stimulated the artist to an emboldened endeavour. Some time this winter, a woman artist, well-known at the time, F. H. McGillivray, came to visit Thomson in the Shack. He was 'delighted and pleased' by her visit, and confided to a friend that he felt 'favoured and honoured' over the interest of such a 'renowned artist'.⁴⁴ To Thomson, 'she was the first of the artists to recognize instantly what he was trying to do. The others didn't see it at first'.⁴⁵ In March of 1917, she held a small exhibition of paintings and pastels at the studio of Mr. Harry Britton (another well-known artist of the period), to which Thomson was invited.⁴⁶

Perhaps Florence McGillivray impressed Thomson because she, like himself, a former student of William Cruikshank, was moving in a similar direction. She had found her path in Paris, experiencing there the impact of Post-Impressionism, and especially the heady colours and flat composition of the Nabis. One work which she exhibited at the Paris *Salon des Beaux-Arts*, and later in Toronto, at the 1916 C.N.E., was *Contentment* (Art Gallery of Ontario), a broad, almost savage handling of a traditional subject. McGillivray also used a black contour line to delineate form. Possibly Thomson took his use of a contour line from her, and he may also have received encouragement for his increasingly audacious fragmentation of colour.

This new influence appears in his canvas *The Drive* (PL. XIV), worked up from a sketch done the previous summer.⁴⁷ Lawren Harris, J. E. H. MacDonald, and Arthur Lismer had already done powerful essays on this particular subject (Harris' *The Drive* was acquired by the National Gallery in 1912; MacDonald did *Logs on the Gatineau*, now in the Mendel Art Gallery, in 1915; Lismer's *Logging* is in a private collection in Quebec). Now Thomson must have felt it was his turn. His version is remarkable for its dynamism and energy—the logs seem to drive outwards at the spectator in an almost aggressive way. Such men as appear, seem dwarfed by the energy they have set loose. Although the canvas remained unfinished, the treatment of the logs and water was broader than any work done by the artist so far.⁴⁸

The same bold handling and use of contour lines are found in what are probably Thomson's last three canvases: *The Birch Grove, Autumn* (PL. III), developed, unusually enough, from a sketch of 1914; *The Jack Pine* (PL. XV), and *The West Wind* (PL. XVI), which was apparently still wet on the artist's easel

when he died.⁴⁹ All three seem to indicate Thomson's efforts to add depth to the flat, decorative treatment found in his canvases of a year earlier. But achievement of this depth is attempted through colour and not form. For instance, in *The Jack Pine*, we look through the delicate, pendulous branches of the tree to the distant purple hills. The colour 'pulls' us back.

The Jack Pine and *The West Wind* are similar enough in composition, technique and colouring for us to call them a pair. In both, a vermilion red undercoat lies beneath the layers of paint on tree, hills and foreground rocks. This undercoat gives the tree forms a throbbing vitality and force, almost as though the colour meant to Thomson the stuff of life itself.

The West Wind has been considered 'the spirit of Canada made manifest in a picture'.⁵⁰ But the theme itself is an ancient one and appeared before in American art, at first as a personification.⁵¹ By the turn of the century, the 'West Wind', dematerialized, had become a common landscape subject. *The Studio* magazine showed a scene of sky, cliffs, trees and cattle by J. L. Pickering called *The West Wind's Burden* in 1906.⁵² But the immediate inspiration for Thomson's title was probably Lismer's *A West Wind, Georgian Bay*, shown at the O.S.A. in 1916.⁵³ The innovation in Thomson's *The West Wind* lies in the creation of an image which still bears a powerful message of the forces of nature—for those who are able to see and comprehend.

It was said by some that the artist was 'grieved' over the painting.⁵⁴ He seems to have had trouble with the sky, even to the point of re-painting it. An examination of the sky reveals why *The West Wind* canvas will always be a magnificent failure. In his sketch of the subject, Thomson had originally painted a totally different sky, but could not expand its details into the large scale sky appropriate to the major work. He probably looked out of his studio window for the sky in the canvas, since the clouds in *The West Wind* are more characteristic of the early spring, whereas the sketch shows a fall scene.⁵⁵ The clouds blown across the new sky are not in unison with the direction that the wind appears to take in the pine tree in Thomson's original sketch. A subtle disharmony is the result, and Thomson was doubtless aware of it. Sadly enough, the fault was never to be corrected.

1915-1916

1. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, April 22, 1915. MacCC.
2. Dr. R. P. Little, says that *The Artist's Hut* was done in the spring of 1917. He adds that the title is a misnomer 'because the cabin belonged to Larry Dickson, and Tom never lived there,' 'Some Recollections of Tom Thomson and Canoe Lake,' *Culture*, XVI, No. 2 (June, 1955), p. 204. He identified the two figures in the foreground as 'Mrs. Fraser (green) and Mrs. Crombie (red). Mrs. Crombie was the wife of Lieut. Robert Crombie of the Royal Engineers' (*Ibid.*, p. 205). One also notes that the sketch is not stamped, which makes it even more likely that it dates from the spring of 1917. Possibly other sketches dated to these two seasons have been confused as well.
3. Other sketches with the theme of wild cherry trees include a sketch titled *Sunrise* in the McMichael Conservation Collection, on the back of which was written by Dr. MacCallum 'Wild Cherries in Spring—May 1915.' This sketch was dated '1917' in the 1967 catalogue of that collection, n.p., and '1916-17' in their second catalogue, *Canadian Art: Vital Decades* (Toronto, 1967), n.p. However, Dr. MacCallum's careful notation and the material of the work itself—pressed board—suggest that the date of May, 1915, is correct. A related sketch is in a private collection in Ottawa.
4. Thomson wrote 'Burnt Country' on the back of a sketch (No. 67-5) in the Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound (hereafter cited as TTMG).
5. An untitled sketch in the MCC which probably dates from this spring since it is painted on board, seems to show the burnt land in a state of re-growth.
6. Letter from Tom Thomson to J. E. H. MacDonald, July 22, 1915, p. 1. TTMG. Thomson had previously 'taken on' a harvest excursion in 1902 when he was on his way to Seattle. In 1915, he may have been stimulated to think of the West by news of the trip to the Rockies made by A. Y. Jackson and Bill Beatty the previous summer. Thomson intended to go out West in late August so as to 'be back about the end of September and . . . camp from then until about November' because he asked MacDonald to caution Lismer about a trip planned for that fall. (*Ibid.*, p. 2). Thomson's trip to the Rockies never materialized, although there is evidence that it was much on his mind. He told his sisters that winter that he 'was going to try again to enlist, and if they turned him down, he might come west and paint the Rocky Mountains, (letter from Minnie Henry to Blodwen Davies, February 2, 1931, p. 13. BDP). In the last spring of his life, he was still planning this trip. (Letter from Tom Thomson to S. J. Harkness, postmarked April 23, 1917. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound).
7. Letter from Winifred Trainor to John Thomson, September 17, 1917. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
8. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, September 8, 1915. MacCC.
9. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, September 9, 1915. MacCC.
10. P. Ghent, 'Tom Thomson at Island Camp, Round Lake, November 1915', *Toronto Telegram*, November 8, 1949.
11. Mrs. Varley clearly remembers her trip to Algonquin Park and recalls that she and her husband, 'Mr. and Mrs. Lismer and Jackson were all staying at the lodge, and Tom had his tent' (letter of March 15, 1971). She dates the trip as occurring in 1916 or 1917 (letter of April 8, 1971). However, Mrs. Lismer does not remember Mrs. Varley as being in the Park when she herself was there the fall of 1914. Nor does A. Y. Jackson. The answer could lie in the fact that Lismer came to the Park alone in the fall of 1915. His wife would have been packing for their forthcoming move to Halifax (they left Toronto after Christmas). Lismer did remember visiting Thomson in the fall of 1916, and told George M. Thomson of this trip in March of 1932 (George Thomson recorded this information on the back of his sketch, *Northern Sunset*). Lismer was often a year off in his dates, and Tom Thomson had written, inviting him to come up in the fall of 1915 (letter from Thomson to J. E. H. MacDonald, July 22, 1915. TTMG). At any rate, Lismer could not have visited Algonquin Park in 1916, because he was in Halifax and Mrs. Varley distinctly recalls that he was there when she was—even to the jokes he told (letter of July 18, 1971. AGO). The answer seems to lie in a visit in the fall of 1915. On the other hand, when Lismer wrote Thomson in January of 1916, he says in his letter 'Hope you had a good summer & made some sketches' (letter in collection of Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound), which sounds as though he had not seen Thomson that fall, and may indicate a date of fall 1916 for the trip.
12. Letter from Maud Varley, March 15, 1971. AGO.
13. Letter from Maud Varley, May 30, 1971. AGO.
14. Letter from Maud Varley, March 15, 1971. AGO.
15. A letter from Eric Brown to Tom Thomson, June 28, 1916, NGC, asked him for some sketches to illustrate his *Studio* magazine article. Thomson wrote to MacDonald to select the one he gave 'Dr. MacCallum last Xmas or one that Lawren has of some rapids. . . .' (p. 2).
16. *Autumn Colour* (MCC) is dated on the verso '1915' by Dr. J. M. MacCallum.
17. Letter from A. Lismer to Tom Thomson, January 1916. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
18. "Minutes Book," December 1, 1915, p. 95. The Arts & Letters Club, Toronto. (Information courtesy of Hunter Bishop, Librarian, The Arts & Letters Club).
19. B. Davies, *A Study of Tom Thomson* (Toronto, 1935), p. 101, says the destroyed canvas was *The Hardwoods* which was shown at the R.C.A. for that year. I am identifying the lost canvas as *The Birches*. The confusion may have arisen over the fact that birches are hardwoods, too. Certainly, no canvas called *The Birches* appropriate to the stated major price of Thomson's work, seems to exist today.
20. See the catalogue of the *Ontario Society of Artists Forty-Second Annual Exhibition*, March 11-April 15, 1916. Nos. 123-126.
21. A. Bridle, *The Story of the Club* (Toronto, 1945), p. 22.
22. See the catalogue of the *Canadian National Exhibition Department of Fine Arts, Toronto, August 26 to September 11, 1916*, p. 21. The painting was listed as costing \$1,000.
23. It could have been at the Club in the winter of 1915/16 because of the artist's recent exhibition there. Or the canvas could have been there the following winter, on January 3, when E. Wyly Grier, a well-known critic and conservative artist, gave a fireside talk in the Club on 'Tom Thomson and the Spirit of the Canadian Landscape', (Archives, The Arts & Letters Club, Toronto).
24. A letter from Maud Varley, March 15, 1971, AGO, recounts how Mrs. Varley was on Yonge Street in Toronto with Thomson one day 'when we were stopped by a parade of men in uniform and he was really upset, with the idea of what they were going to.'
25. A letter from A. Lismer to Tom Thomson, January, 1916, collection of Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound, says 'I guess you had lots of work to do this summer. I should think that fire-fighting kept you fairly busy during the hot spell.'
26. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. MacCallum, October 4 (1916 ?), p. 2-4. MacCC.

27. *Ibid.*
28. Letter from Edward Godin to Blodwen Davies, November 17, 1930. BDP.
29. This note was written on a letter from Eric Brown to Tom Thomson, June 28, 1916, which Thomson subsequently sent to J. E. H. MacDonald. NGC.
30. For the fact that the Group travelled in early spring to one of the Cauchon Lakes, see L. Harris, *The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto, 1964), p. 19. For the composition of the Group, see the letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to Miss A. L. Beatty, May 14, 1937, AGO.
31. J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North,' *The Canadian Magazine*, L, No. 5 (March, 1918), p. 377.
32. *Spring Woods* (Private collection, Ottawa) had '1916' written on the back in pencil and is a snow scene.
33. Interview with Margaret Tweedale, February 12, 1971.
34. Dr. J. M. MacCallum says *The West Wind* sketch was done at Lake Cauchon (see letter to Miss A. L. Beatty, May 14, 1937, AGO). T. W. Dwight, Professor of Forestry at the University of Toronto, was certain *The West Wind* was done at Achray (see letter to Martin Baldwin, January 14, 1955, AGO). Edward Godin felt that the sketch for *The Jack Pine* was done at Achray, but the sketch for *The West Wind* was done near Pembroke (letter from Edward Godin to Blodwen Davies, November 17, 1930, BDP). Perhaps it is significant that when *The Jack Pine* was first reproduced by H. Mortimer-Lamb, 'Studio Talk,' *The Studio*, 77, no. 317 (August, 1919), p. 125, it was titled *The Jack Pine, Lake Cauchon*.
35. His friend, Mark Robinson, the ranger, thought he saw *The West Wind* sketch before he went overseas in October, 1915, (see O. Addison and E. Harwood, *Tom Thomson: The Algonquin Years* (Toronto, 1969) p. 55. Other sketches in this series include the following works in the MCC: *Pine Island* (dated 1915 in their 1967 catalogue, 1914 in their 1970 catalogue); *Ragged Pine* (dated 1916 in their 1970 catalogue); *The Dead Pine*; and *Windy Day* (which is dated 1916 on the verso by Dr. MacCallum but published as 1917 in the 1967 MCC catalogue and 1916-17 in their 1970 catalogue.)
36. Letter from T. W. Dwight to Martin Baldwin, January 14, 1955. AGO.
37. In the Old Testament (Isaiah 65.22), it is said '... For as the days of a tree are the days of my people...', a phrase which could serve as an epigraph on Thomson's subject.
38. This may be the sketch of which MacCallum writes the artist in the spring of 1917, to tell him that he is depositing to his account \$25 due to Bill Beatty selling a sketch to 'some chap from South River' (letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to Tom Thomson, May 28, 1917, Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound). Truman W. Kidd, who bought this sketch for Riverdale Collegiate Institute, visited or lived in South River at the time (see his letter, November 1963, on file at Riverdale Collegiate Institute). Oddly enough, Kidd remembered buying the work from Beatty but thought he did so after Thomson's death.
39. Letter from J. M. MacCallum to T. J. Harkness, May 6, 1918. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
40. It appeared in the R.C.A.'s 36th Exhibition in November, 1914, and in the C.N.E. Exhibition of the following year, as No. 185 (illustrated on p. 61. of the C.N.E. Department of Fine Arts Catalogue, August 28-September 13, 1915).
41. It was said of Jefferys' *Autumn's Garland* that the 'one yellow tree that seems almost to be something in bloom against the green background is a piece of colour work that will please because it represents nature as the lay eye sees it' ('Wealth of Colour in Art Gallery,' *The Mail and Empire*, Toronto, November 21, 1914, p. 5).
42. H. Charlesworth, 'The R.C.A. Exhibition,' *Saturday Night*, November 28, 1914, p. 4.
43. Letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to Bobby, January 24, 1930. William Colgate Collection, PAO.
44. Letter from M. Robinson to Blodwen Davies, May 11, 1930, BDP.
45. S. E. Road, "Through a Woodsman's Eyes" (an interview with Mark Robinson), p. 3. Unpublished manuscript. BDP.
46. The invitation to this exhibition was in Thomson's possession when he died. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound. Harry Britton had his studio then at 67 Wellesley Street, Toronto (address on the invitation).
47. The sketch for *The Drive* is in a private collection, Toronto, and was probably done at Little Cauchon Lake since the handling of the trees closely resembles *Rocks and Deep Water* (MCC) on the verso of which is written, 'Little Cauchon Lake/1916' by Dr. J. M. MacCallum. On the other hand, the canvas was initially published as 'The Drive, South River' by H. Mortimer-Lamb in 'Studio Talk,' *The Studio* 77, No. 317 (August, 1919), p. 120.
48. See a letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to Mrs. Harkness, January 12, 1926, Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound, in which the painting is described as 'unfinished'—'Tom had just laid it in and not really started to paint it when he went north in the spring.' When the work was sold in 1926, it was still unfinished. Its appearance has somewhat altered today.
49. See A. Lismer, "Tom Thomson: A Tribute," p. 11, unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges.
50. A. Lismer, 'The West Wind,' *The McMaster Monthly* 43, No. 4 (January, 1934), p. 163.
51. By the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876, the 'West Wind' was personified as a slender nymph with hair blowing off her forehead, 'catching with one hand her fluttering kirtle, and fleeing on tip-toe over the leafy sward', E. Straham, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition* 1 (Philadelphia, 1878) p. 296. Such an image was then considered 'careless and American in aspect' as her 'pulse-beats throbbed through a belt of Western stars.' She was indeed a "glad incarnation" (*Ibid.*).
52. J. L. Pickering, *The West Wind's Burden*, *The Studio* 38, (July, 1906), p. 96.
53. See *Ontario Society of Artists Catalogue of the Forty-Fourth Annual Exhibition* (1916), no. 72, p. 16.
54. Winifred Trainor apparently recalled this fact (O. Addison and E. Harwood, *Tom Thomson: The Algonquin Years* (Toronto, 1969), footnote 49).
55. Interview with Leslie G. Tibbles, instructor with the Canadian Meteorological Service, March 26, 1971.

The Last Season 1917

Thomson died sometime between July 8th, when he disappeared, and July 17th, when his body was discovered. He had been in Algonquin Park since the end of March.¹ A letter which he had written to Dr. MacCallum the day before his disappearance, told him that he was 'still working around Mowat Lodge' and had not done any sketching 'since the flies started'.² We know from other letters he wrote that spring, the date when the black flies started: May 24th.³ Therefore, Thomson's last sketches must have been done in the eight weeks from April to May.

Thomson also detailed in his letters the exact nature of the weather: the snow was, 'pretty well cleared off'⁴; there remained, he said, 'just patches in the bush on the north side of the hills and in the swamps', so the artist had now 'to hunt for places to sketch' when he wanted to paint snow.⁵

Apparently, his facility was as great as ever. He told the doctor that he had, 'made quite a few sketches this spring' as well as having 'scraped a few', and considered others as worthy of going 'the same way'.⁶ 'However, I keep on making them', he said.⁷

Thomson completed a very large body of work during this winter season, mostly wintry scenes of bare trees and snow covered landscapes. His diligence may have been due to the fact that he had given up fire-rangin'; as he told his brother-in-law:

*I have not applied for the firerangers job this year as it interferences with sketching to the point of stopping it altogether so in my case it does not pay. In other words, I can have a much better time sketching and fishing, and be farther ahead in the end.*⁸

But he still did a certain amount of guiding—by April 28th, he had taken out a Guide's license.⁹

Assistance in reconstructing this period comes from the usual reliable source: Dr. MacCallum, who came to the Park for a fishing trip with Thomson in May.¹⁰ Having travelled around Canoe Lake, visiting various adjoining lakes for two or three weeks,¹¹ the doctor went home, only to leave immediately for his cottage on Georgian Bay.¹² Following his arrival there, he wrote Thomson, comparing the two areas:

*I quite understood why you prefer to paint up there—the two places are so different. In the Georgian Bay there is in the spring practically none of the brilliant color from the vegetation in the Park—There were really only two soft maples in bud while I was there—the birches had not even begun to change. . . .*¹³

Another eye-witness, the ranger, Mark Robinson, recalled that Thomson told him that he had done a series of 62 oil sketches which he wanted to hang in the Ranger's cabin in order to see them all together. Thomson called them 'records', apparently intending the series to provide a record of the unfolding of spring in Algonquin Park.¹⁴ He said:

*I have something unique in art that no other artist has ever attempted . . . I have a record of the weather for 62 days, rain or shine, or snow, dark or bright, I have a record of the day in a sketch.*¹⁵

Although the forest ranger distinctly recalls that there were 62 sketches, when Thomson's relatives went to collect the artist's work after his death, only approximately 40 were found.¹⁶ It is significant that these works went into the hands of the family, and were thus recorded; his *Spring in Algonquin* (PL. 112) was among them.¹⁷ Because they were done in Algonquin Park at the time when MacDonald created the well-known studio stamp for the sketches in the Shack in Toronto, these works were never stamped, which provides a convenient means for distinguishing this last season of the artist's production.

Another characteristic feature is the use of a birch panel with a coarse, roughened surface, which is left to show through in some of the works. For instance, in *Spring* (PL. 113, on the reverse of which is written, in Dr. MacCallum's handwriting, 'This sketch was painted in the spring of Thomson's drowning') shows the use of this technique: the rough surface of the support gives texture to the sky.

There is apparent, as well, a new expansiveness and breadth of vision with a concomitant serenity and tranquillity unusual to the artist. Abstraction is now central to the artist's conception: he seems to begin with it, as for example, in *Early Spring* (PL. 114), adding the landscape details later.

Thomson's sky studies are continued (see *A Northern Lake*, PL. xvii), as well as his forest interiors in which he studies the nature of shade and shadows (see *Winter in the Woods*, PL. 115), and the pockets of earth which show through the melting snow like mysterious jewels, as in *Thaw: Snow Banks* (PL. 116), and *Snow and Earth* (PL. 117). A new and interesting compositional rhythm is also developed: the picture seems to flow diagonally down from the right hand corner and sweep towards the viewer, recalling the momentum of his winter canvas, *The Drive*.

An earlier idea appears with renewed emphasis in *Snow and Rocks* (PL. 118). The water is swift and

Footnotes to The Last Season

1917

tumultuous, as in *Spring Break-up* (PL. 119), seeming to rush by in a tumble of fluid brush strokes, on the same diagonal plane as that found in his forest interiors, (see *Spring Thaw*, PL. 120). In *Swift Water* (PL. 121) the torrent finally sweeps past the viewer with indifferent haste. It is as though nature, which Thomson had enjoyed as a spectator, looking at it first in the distant hills of the Park, and then closer, emoting with the figure of the tree on the water's edge, had finally passed the artist by and excluded him. While his later studies of the wilderness show evidence of Thomson's increasing concern with abstraction, and demonstrate a growing objectivity in his observation — an ability now to stand off and record the pure rhythm and pattern of its terrain — these torrents of water reveal his unwavering passion and involvement in this strange land. The combination indicates a new emotional maturity in the artist.

Now begin the sketches which seem the most mysterious and transcendental of Thomson's career: the Northern Lights. In *Northern Lights* (PL. 122), the hills appear to tremble in the eerie glow, while in another version with the same title (PL. 123), the hills are firmly silhouetted against the lights, which leap like beckoning fingers into the sky. It is the battle between light and dark which gives these works their power. Light—the irrational element—slowly overcomes that most rational of all elements, the land. Thomson's scientific, precise apprehension of this conflict has set the mystery before us.

Any suspicion of Thomson's death as suicide should be dispelled by these last sketches. They are the best and most trenchant works the artist ever created, and are pervaded with a calm serenity and certitude of mood which no potential suicide could possibly capture. There is, as well, Thomson's remark in a letter written to Dr. MacCallum the day before the one on which he was last seen alive, saying he would be sending down his winter sketches quite soon, to which he added: 'have every intention of making some more. . . .'¹⁸

1. In a letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, April 21, (1917 ?) MacCC., Thomson says that he had been in the Park 'for over three weeks'.
2. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, July 7, 1917, MacCC.
3. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, April 21, (1917 ?), MacCC. The artist says 'the flies are not going properly until about the 24th'. See also letter from Thomson to S. J. Harkness, postmarked April 23, p. 3, in which he says '. . . we have nearly another month before my friends the black flies are here', Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
4. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, April 21, (1917 ?), MacCC.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Letter from Tom Thomson to S. J. Harkness, postmarked April 23rd, p. 2. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
9. His Guide's license, dated April 28, 1917, is in the collection of Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
10. See letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, May 8, 1917, MacCC., discussing the trip, which seemingly was to include Curtis Williamson.
11. See letter from Franklin Carmichael to A. Lismer, n.d. (July 1917 ?), p. 2, MCC, in which Carmichael says 'the Dr. has taken it pretty badly especially when he had just returned about a month or 6 weeks ago from a fishing trip with Tom thru the lakes around Canoe Lake'.
12. See letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to Tom Thomson, May 28, 1917. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
14. See letter from Mark Robinson to Blodwen Davies, March 23, 1930, p. 3, BDP (reproduced in W. T. Little's *The Tom Thomson Mystery* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 223-228).
15. 'Alex Edmison Interviews Mark Robinson', typescript (October 1956) of a tape recording made at Canoe Lake, 1952, p. 13 (reproduced by W. T. Little, *Ibid.*, as 'Mark Robinson Talks about Tom Thomson', pp. 183-210).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
17. See letter from Mark Robinson to Blodwen Davies, March 23, 1930, p. 3, BDP, in which Robinson says 'I think Tom's brothers and sisters got most of them'.
18. Letter from Tom Thomson to Dr. J. M. MacCallum, July 7, 1917, MacCC.

Epilogue

When Thomson died in July of 1917, there seems to have been little official comment. Only the Ontario Society of Artists wished, 'to record its regret at the untimely ending of one whose progress it had watched with something akin to fatherly pride'.¹ Among the artists who were his friends, there was shock, consternation, and immediate recognition of his role and their loss.

Franklin Carmichael wrote to Arthur Lismer:

*It seems a pity such a promising career should be cut short just when we all expected Tom to flower forth into what you felt has been underlying his work in the past 2 or 3 years.*²

But A. Y. Jackson best described the dead artist's central position in the formation of the themes of the Group when he wrote that '...without Tom the north country seems a desolation of bush and rock',³ and added:

*he was the guide, the interpreter, and we the guests partaking of his hospitality so generously given. His name is so often coupled with mine in this new movement that it seemed almost like a partnership and it was, in which I supplied the school learning and practical methods of working, and helped Tom to realize the dreams that were stored up—a treasure trove. While my debt to him is almost that of a new world, the north country, and a truer artist's vision. . . .*⁴

Jackson thus comments on Thomson's job in everyday life—that of a guide—and sees it as his rôle in the Group. But he is aware that Thomson also had the necessary 'dreams'. For Jackson, the debt was substantial. In another letter written to MacDonald, Jackson comments again: '...he has blazed a trail where others may follow, and we will never go back to the old days again'.⁵ Indeed, he felt that if Thomson had lived, he would very likely have become the 'grand old man' of what he called at the time the Algonquin Park school, renamed in 1920 the Group of Seven.⁶

If Thomson had lived, he probably would have left Algonquin Park and gone to the Rockies to seek a new sketching ground, on the trip he had projected for so long. He wrote of it to his brother-in-law in April 1917, saying that he hoped to be out West in July and August 'to paint the Rockies'.⁷ A. Y. Jackson says that he would have travelled even 'further north, perhaps up to the Alaska Highway',⁸ like the other members of the Group.

What might Thomson have produced faced with the awesome Rockies or the snow-shrouded wastes of the frozen north? As it is, his work contains a unique insight, a rare ability to go to a certain landscape and absorb from it the 'freshness deep down things'. Thus, his contribution to Canadian art is a very real and significant one.

It is also possible that Thomson's ability to reduce to abstract forms the raw elements of nature may have proved important, if only as an example, to other artists of the Group of a different way of seeing. One thinks in particular of what Lawren Harris was to do later. From the 1920s on, a mode of abstraction began to appear in this artist's paintings, worked up from sketches made on the north shore of Lake Superior and in the Rockies. But not until about 1936, in works like *Equations in Space*, now in The National Gallery of Canada's collection, did he make a complete commitment to the new style.

However, the abstraction of natural forms found in Harris' work is an intellectual decision and shows a formal analysis which would have been foreign to Thomson. For Thomson, abstraction was a development of, and from, an emotional concern—colour. In some ways, his approach is reminiscent of that found in the Abstract-Expressionism of the fifties.

Yet Harris seems to have found Thomson's pioneering example something to keep in mind. His *In Memoriam to a Canadian Artist* (1950) is a tribute to Thomson.⁹ Harris himself said of the work:

*When I laid in the painting, it suddenly struck me that it could express Tom Thomson, and thereafter it was Tom I had in mind—his remoteness, his genius, his reticence.*¹⁰

The shapes in this work recall the rocky, pointed forms of mountains,¹¹ and Harris said that he felt Thomson's remoteness from him, which, combined with his genius, may have suggested to him that Thomson was like a fiery mountain range (the colours of the canvas are bright), both insurmountable and a landmark.

Other members of the Group, like A. Y. Jackson, seemed initially suspicious of what Thomson was trying to do. In 1914, Jackson wrote to MacDonald that Thomson, 'plasters on the paint and gets fine quality, but there is danger of wandering too far down that road'.¹² Later, Jackson was to wander down the road to abstraction himself.

Thomson's most completely abstract works occur only in the small sketch size and, more specifically, in

FIG. 44

Perce Cuthbert

Illustration (1912)

Pen and water colour on paper, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{9}{16}$ "

Found in Tom Thomson's sketchbox after his death.

Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound



his notes on autumn colours. To Dr. MacCallum, who asked him, 'how do you know that these jabs and dots you are putting down are going to look like a real thing', he replied: 'it looks just like that',¹³ a question-begging answer. Certainly, he 'never painted anything he had not seen'.¹⁴

Perhaps his ambiguous position in Canadian art of that period may best be explained by comparing him to the Russian, Wassily Kandinsky. If Kandinsky had died just after producing the rich, colourful, semi-abstracts of his Murnau period—what then? Had such been the case, only these brilliant and forward-looking sketches would be known: none of the artist's later painting or theorizations on abstraction would exist. Most important, the specific direction of Kandinsky's work would have never been realized.

If the comparison is valid, one should be able to find in Thomson some of the attachment to transcendental literature which illuminated the thought and in consequence the art of both Kandinsky and Mondrian. A parallel does exist: we know that Thomson read Maeterlinck. Though his selection has a typically Canadian pragmatism, he may have been profoundly interested by this mystical writer.

As for artistic statements by Thomson, few exist. He once told his ranger friend, Mark Robinson, '... imperfect notes destroy the soul of music, so does imperfect colour destroy the soul of a canvas'.¹⁵ Today, the words curiously seem to echo a well-known current of nineteenth-century aesthetics. In his sketchbox, Thomson lovingly preserved a water colour done in 1912 by another artist (unknown today), Perce Cuthbert, showing a 'cello-player lost in thought' (FIG. 44). On it the following stanza from a poem (equally unknown) appears:

*Sweet strains rose from the 'cello,
Soft, almost melancholy—mellow.
Vibrating in the memory,
Awakening the very inmost soul.*

Possibly, Thomson may have saved the water colour because he loved music.¹⁶ But perhaps it represented something more to him: he doubtless would have believed in the soul-stirring power of art, and thus of painting. Unfortunately, in the five years of his blossoming into a professional artist, he was remarkably silent on the subject of his work. He probably felt the paintings spoke for themselves.

Memorial exhibitions of Thomson's work began with an exhibition which opened on December 8, 1917, at The Arts & Letters Club.¹⁷ From that time until

today, his paintings have had 'to speak for themselves'. For some, this has led to an emphasis on the Thomson legend rather than his art.

The story of Thomson's personality is founded on truth. In the words of one friend, Arthur Lismer, the beauty of his character is well evoked:

*He was a marvellously sensitive instrument—but refined and delicate. He had a graceful mind—he loved music and poetry. He knew the stars, and the love of woodcraft and the animals.
His hand could carve the most delicate little images and achieve the most perfect lettering and design forms. If we can liken him to anything at all in his world—he was like a sapling, or a deer in the forest.
He was tall, just over six feet, and strong in arms and shoulders. He had the lithe head of an Indian, and he was as tardy in utterance. He had the rare faculty for whimsical humour—and a gift for friendship.
His life was not a triumphant voyage, it was rather a slow unfolding—and when he had eventually arrived at his goal, he rapidly flowered into expression.¹⁸*

What the artist's goal expressed should become our main concern.

Footnotes to the Epilogue

1. *Ontario Society of Artists, Toronto, President's Annual Report for the year ending Feb. 28th, 1918*, p.7.
2. Letter from Franklin Carmichael to Arthur Lismer, n.d. (July 1917 ?), p.2. MCC.
3. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to J. E. H. MacDonald, August 4, 1917. MCC.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
5. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to J. E. H. MacDonald, August 26, 1971. Public Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as PAC).
6. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to J. E. H. MacDonald, April, 1918, p.2. PAC.
7. Letter from Tom Thomson to Mr. S. J. Harkness, post-marked April 23, 1917. Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound.
8. A. Y. Jackson, "The Tom Thomson Film", address by A. Y. Jackson on the occasion of the first showing in Toronto of the Tom Thomson film, *West Wind*, Dr. Jas. MacCallum being present as the guest of honour. Type-script, AGO, December 1943, p.13.
9. Letter from Lawren P. Harris, April 7, 1971, AGO.
10. B. Harris and R. G. P. Colgrove (eds.), *Lawren Harris* (Toronto 1969), p.43.

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Please note that this is a selected bibliography.
For one more complete, see that published
by Dennis Reid, *A Bibliography for The Group of 7*.
(The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1971).

11. *Ibid.*, reproduced p. 42.
12. Letter from A. Y. Jackson to J. E. H. MacDonald, October 5, 1914, p.2. PAC.
13. Letter from Dr. J. M. MacCallum to 'Bobby', January 24, 1930, p. 2. Wm. Colgate Collection, PAO. See also J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine* L, No. 5 (March 1918), p.376.
14. J. M. MacCallum, 'Tom Thomson: Painter of the North', *The Canadian Magazine* L, No. 5 (March 1918), p.378.
15. Letter from Mark Robinson to Blodwen Davies, March 23, 1930, p.2. PAC. (Reproduced as 'Letter to Blodwen Davies' in W. T. Little's *The Tom Thomson Mystery* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 224-225).
16. See letter from Alan H. Ross to Blodwen Davies, June 11, 1930, p.2. BDP, where Thomson is said to play 'cornet and tenor trombone, but only with indifferent success, but later took up and mastered the mandolin'. Thomson also took voice lessons and paid for his sister to do so (interview with M. Tweedale, February 12, 1971).
17. "Minutes Books", The Arts & Letters Club (information courtesy of Hunter Bishop, Librarian).
18. A. Lismer, 'Tom Thomson: A Tribute', p.13, unpublished manuscript in the possession of Marjorie Lismer Bridges.

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Appendix: Thomson's Materials

1912-13 The artist favoured store-bought Birchmore boards, particularly the ones manufactured by George Rowney and Company, London, England (size: 7" x 10"). In the fall of 1913, the panel seems to have had a coarser quality linen on the back.

1914 The use of birch panel on pressed board begins, (size: approximately 8½" x 10½"), and continues until the end of his life. In this year, the artist used a poor quality board which later often developed deep vertical cracks.

1915 In the spring, the artist made his first use of a heavy grey pressed board. Occasionally he covered the recto of his board with an undercoat of terracotta paint (size: 8½" x 10½").

1916 This spring, the artist occasionally covered the recto of his board with an undercoat of ochre paint (size: 8½" x 10½").

1917 This spring, Thomson seems to have been short of materials. He often used the verso of his 8½" x 10½" boards as a sketchpad, drawing on them trees or birds, and occasionally adding colour notes for blue, orange, brown, or old ivory. He also may have done a series of 5" x 7" wood panels this season, which allowed him to utilize his resources to better advantage. For the wood of these small panels, he broke up old cartons of items like Gold Medal Purity Flour.

For materials, see Appendix.

Panel refers to wood, usually birch. Board refers to pressed board or cardboard.

All measurements were taken by the author. 'Sight' measurements are given for works which could not be removed from the mat, and indicate the size of the opening.

All inscriptions were recorded by the author, with the exception of sketches in The National Gallery of Canada, which were recorded by Wayne Ready.

The Tom Thomson Studio Stamp 'TT' with the year, 1917, enclosed in a palette, was designed by J. E. H. MacDonald, about 1919. It was applied to all the Thomson sketches found in the Studio Building after the artist's death. The stamp is usually found on both verso and recto.

Inscriptions on the verso include the following common hands:

Dr. James M. MacCallum, who dated almost all the works of the artist, possibly with Thomson's assistance and usually added his initials, 'J.M.' (The pencil notations, and particularly the dates inscribed by Dr. MacCallum, carry conviction: he was a significant and profoundly interested individual who, after all, was very much part of the scene, since he was, in effect, the artist's dealer as well as patron).

Lawren Harris, who often wrote '1st class';

George M. Thomson, who, when consulted after his brother's death, added his 'O.K. GT';

A. Y. Jackson, who might also add a few comments.

'RAL' refers to R. A. Laidlaw, a later collector of Thomson's work. 'S.B.' stands for the Studio Building. In addition, there may be found one or more numbers from the various lists made by the family members, among them Mrs. Harkness and Mrs. Tweedale (M. Thomson).

AGT 1940 labels refer to an exhibition in the Art Gallery of Toronto, January 1941, *Thomson-Walker Exhibition*.

London and Windsor 1957 labels refer to the exhibition, *Tom Thomson 1877-1917, George Thomson 1868*, shown in the London Art Gallery (July 6-September 6, 1957) and in the Willistead Art Gallery, Windsor, October 6-November 2, 1957.

A Los Angeles 1958 label refers to the *Tom Thomson Travelling Exhibition* (1955-1957) which was exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum (January-June 1958), and was shown throughout Canada.

A NGC 1970 label refers to the *Group of Seven* exhibition shown in The National Gallery of Canada, June 19-September 8, 1970, and in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, September 22-October 31, 1970.

Illustrated as Figures & in Exhibition

3. **After a Day in Tacoma**
(Self Portrait of the Artist)
Water colour on paper
8 $\frac{15}{16}$ " x 5 $\frac{9}{16}$ "
Mr. and Mrs. F. Schaeffer, Toronto
5. **Sketch of a Lady**
Pen, pencil and crayon on paper
4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Gift of Fraser Thomson,
The Tom Thomson Memorial
Gallery, Owen Sound
7. **Gordon Harkness, the Artist's Nephew**
(From the Artist's Sketchbook)
Pencil on paper
8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound
8. **The Bridge**
Water colour on board
10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Private Collection, Toronto
10. **The Farm at Night**
(Water colour from the artist's sketchbox)
Pencil and water colour on paper
5 $\frac{1}{16}$ " x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound
11. **The Artist's Niece**
Water colour and pencil on paper
10" x 8"
Gift of Mrs. F. E. Fisk,
The Tom Thomson Memorial
Gallery, Owen Sound
13. **The Old William McMeen House, Owen Sound**
(Opposite the Thomson farm house)
Pen on paper
6 $\frac{9}{16}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
Private Collection, Toronto
15. **Tom Thomson at Grip Ltd. (1912)**
by Arthur Lismer
Pencil on paper
7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (sight)
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
16. **View from the Windows of Grip Ltd.**
(From the artist's sketchbox)
Water colour on paper
5 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 4"
Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound
17. **Advertisement for Sydenham Mutual Fire Insurance**
Pencil and water colour on paper
11 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound
18. **The Banks of the River**
Pen on paper
12 $\frac{1}{16}$ " x 20"
Mr. Morris Altman, Toronto
20. **Young Fisherman**
Pencil and pen on paper
12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (sight)
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
21. **On the Don River**
Pen on paper
11" x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Rev. Oskar Puhm, Toronto
22. **Quotation from Maeterlinck**
Pen on paper
8 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto
23. **Girl's Head (design for pillowcase)**
Oil on linen
25" x 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto
25. **Design for a Stained Glass Window, Havergal College**
Water colour and pen on paper
13" x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (sight)
Private Collection, Toronto
29. **Tom Thomson, 1912-13**
by Arthur Lismer
Pen on paper
9 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (sight)
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
36. **Deer**
Pencil on paper
4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (sight)
Gift of Thoreau MacDonald
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
38. **Decorative Panel (I)**
Oil on board
47 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 38"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
39. **Decorative Panel, Forest Undergrowth II**
Oil on beaverboard
47 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 33"
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. H. R. Jackman,
Toronto, 1967
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
40. **Decorated Stoneware Bowl**
Oil on white stoneware
8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (diam.) x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (high)
Gift of Mrs. F. E. Fisk
The Tom Thomson Memorial
Gallery, Owen Sound
41. **Decorated Stoneware Bowl (II)**
Oil on white stoneware
7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (diam.) x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (high)
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto
42. **Decorated Enamel Bowl**
Oil on enamel
7 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (diam.) x 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (high)
Acquired, 1936
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
44. **Illustration (1912)**
by Perce Cuthbert
Pen and water colour on paper
9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 6 $\frac{9}{16}$ "
Mrs. F. E. Fisk, Owen Sound

List of Plates: Colour

- (Cover)
Forest, October
 Oil on panel, 8¼" x 10½"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower right, stamped):
 TT Studio
 verso (pencil): 'To Mrs. Newton/
 32 Lincoln Ave., Montreal'
 (stamped): TT Studio
 Donor: The J. S. McLean
 Collection, 1970
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- I **A Northern Lake**
 Oil on canvas, 27½" x 40",
 The Ontario Department of Public
 Works, Toronto
- II **The Morning Cloud**
 Oil on canvas, 28¼" x 39⅞"
 Private collection, Sarnia
- III **Little Falls**
 Oil on canvas, 27¼" x 21½"
 (sight)
 Inscription:
 recto (lower right): signed and
 dated 'Tom Thomson 1913'
 Leon Z. MacPherson, Windsor
- IV **The Woodland Stream**
 Oil on canvas, 20" x 20"
 Private collection, Toronto
Toronto only
- V **Byng Inlet, Georgian Bay**
 Oil on canvas, 28¾" x 30½"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower right):
 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
 Private collection, Toronto
- VI **Soft Maple in Autumn**
 Oil on wood panel, 10¼" x 7"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower left, stamped):
 TT Studio
 verso (pencil): '164 M. Thomson'
 (pen): 'Soft Maple in Autumn'
 (stamped): TT Studio
 Gift of Mrs. J. G. Henry,
 The Tom Thomson Memorial
 Gallery, Owen Sound
- VII **A Rapid**
 Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower right, stamped):
 TT Studio
 verso (pen): 'A Rapid/Tom
 Thomson'
 (Thomson's handwriting)
 (pencil): Loaned by Lawren Harris
 (Stamped): TT Studio
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawren
 Harris, 1927,
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- VIII **Opulent October**
 Oil on canvas, 21¼" x 30¼"
 Mr. and Mrs. F. Schaeffer,
 Toronto
Toronto and Montreal only
- IX **Evening, Canoe Lake**
 Oil on canvas, 16¼" x 20"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower left): 'Tom Thomson'
 (sig.)
 verso (on frame): 'H 27'
 Private collection, Toronto
Toronto only
- X **Woodland Waterfall**
 Oil on canvas, 48" x 51½"
 Private collection, Toronto
Toronto only
- XI **Early Snow**
 Oil on canvas, 17⅞" x 17⅞"
 Inscription: verso (pen):
 'M. Thomson'
 Private collection, Winnipeg
- XII **Decoration: Autumn
 Landscape**
 Oil on canvas, 12¼" x 44½"
 Private collection, Toronto
- XIII **The Pointers**
 Oil on canvas, 40¼" x 45½"
 Purchased by the House
 Committee of Hart House, 1928-
 1929, and from the Print Fund of
 Hart House,
 University of Toronto, Toronto
- XIV **The Drive**
 Oil on canvas, 47¼" x 54⅛"
 University of Guelph, Guelph
- XV **The Jack Pine**
 Oil on canvas, 50¼" x 55"
 Acquired 1918
 The National Gallery of Canada,
 Ottawa
Toronto only
- XVI **The West Wind**
 Oil on canvas, 47½" x 54⅛"
 Gift of the Canadian Club of
 Toronto, 1926
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- XVII **A Northern Lake**
 Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
 Inscription:
 recto (lower left, stamped):
 TT Studio
 verso (pencil): 'Studio Bldg....St.
 Toronto/A Northern Lake/
 G./161.M.Thomson'
 (red pencil): '22'
 (pencil): 'J & H'
 (label): AGT
 (stamped): TT Studio
 Gift from The Reuben
 and Kate Leonard Canadian
 Fund, 1927
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

*All works, on loan from The National Gallery of Canada, were photographed courtesy of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



I A Northern Lake



II The Morning Cloud



III Little Falls



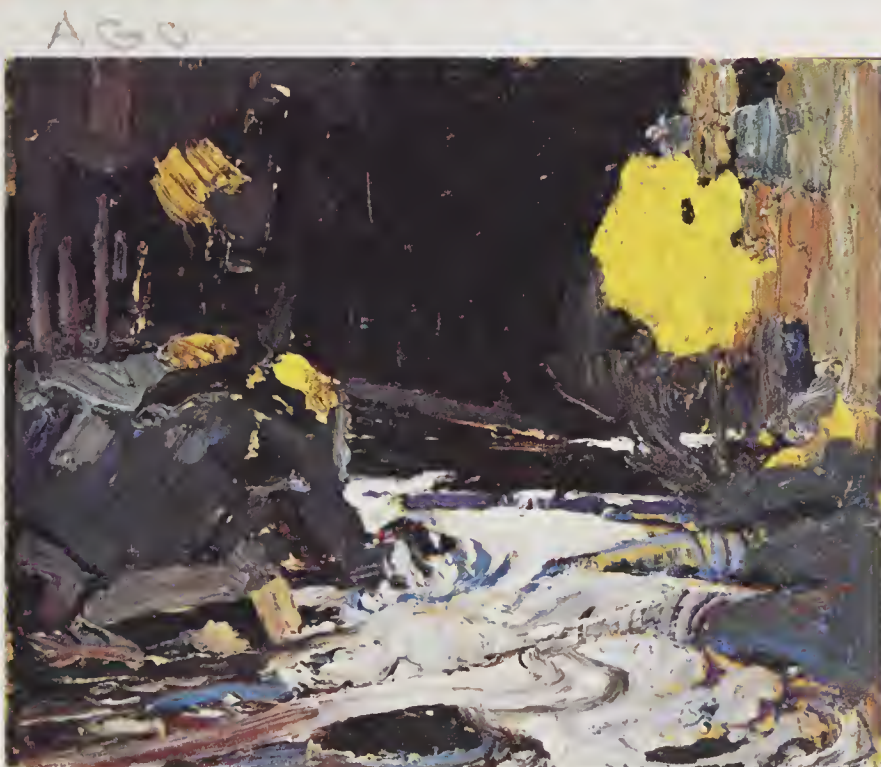
IV The Woodland Stream



V Byng Inlet, Georgian Bay



VI Soft Maple in Autumn



VII A Rapid



VIII Opulent October



IX Evening, Canoe Lake



X Woodland Waterfall



XI Early Snow



XII Decoration: Autumn Landscape



XIII The Pointers



XIV The Drive



XV The Jack Pine

150



XVI The West Wind

150



XVII A Northern Lake



1. Various Drawings



2. Near Owen Sound



5. The Marsh, Lake Scugog



4. Drowned Land



5. Fairy Lake



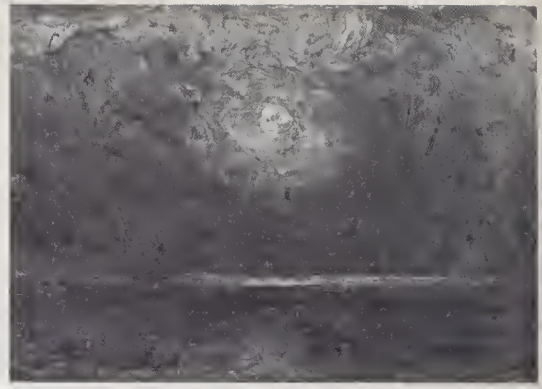
6. Forest Interior



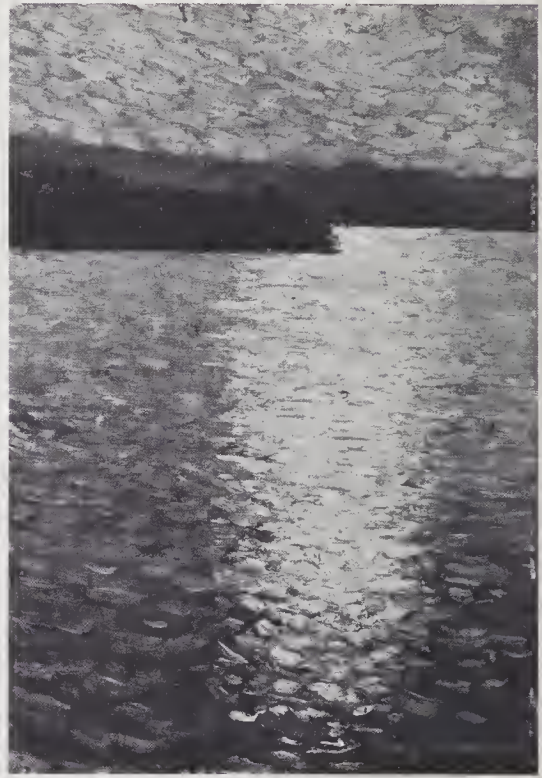
7. A Northern Lake



8. The Morning Cloud



9. Sky (The Light That Never Was)



10. Stormy Evening



11. Northern Lake

A 60



12. The Canoe



13. Moonlight, Early Evening



14. Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park, 1914



15. Petawawa Gorges



18. The Lily Pond



16. Cottage on a Rocky Shore



19. Spring, French River



17. MacCallum's Island



20. Georgian Bay, Byng Inlet



21. Evening—Pine Island



24. Birches



22. Red Leaves



25. Autumn



23. White Birches



26. Hill-side, Smoke Lake



27. Smoke Lake



30. Nocturne, 1914



28. Autumn Tapestry: Tangled Trees



31. The Shack



29. The Red Tree



32. Tamarack Swamp, Dawn



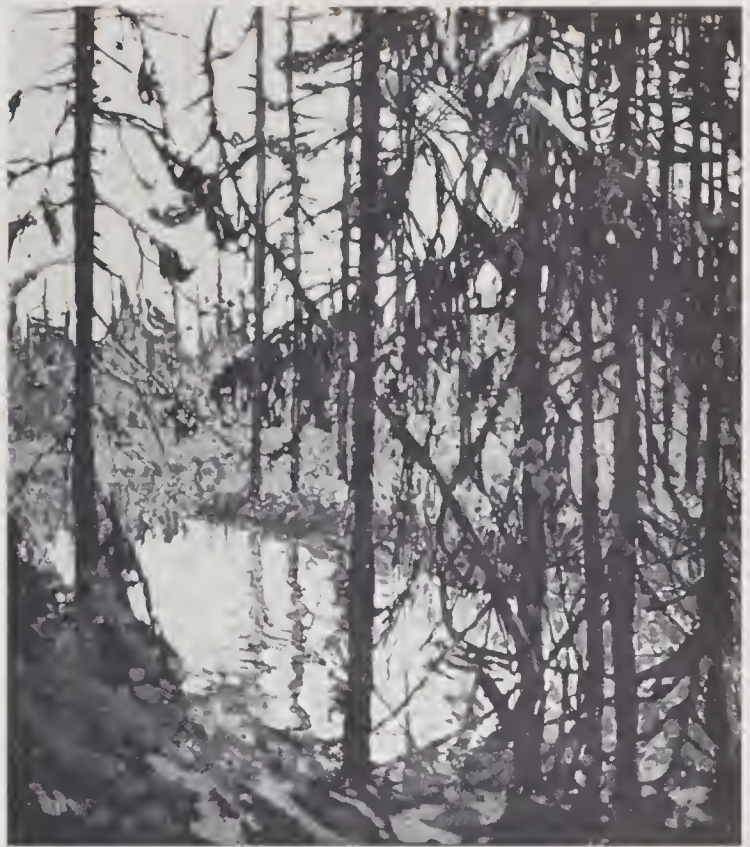
35. Burnt Country, Evening



34. White Frost



35. Sketch for Afternoon, Algonquin Park



36. Northern River



37. Northern River



38. The Foot Path of Peace



40. Pine Island, Georgian Bay



39. Split Rock, Georgian Bay



41. Afternoon, Algonquin Park



42. Melting Snow



45. Burnt Land



43. Decorative Landscape



46. Petawawa Gorges



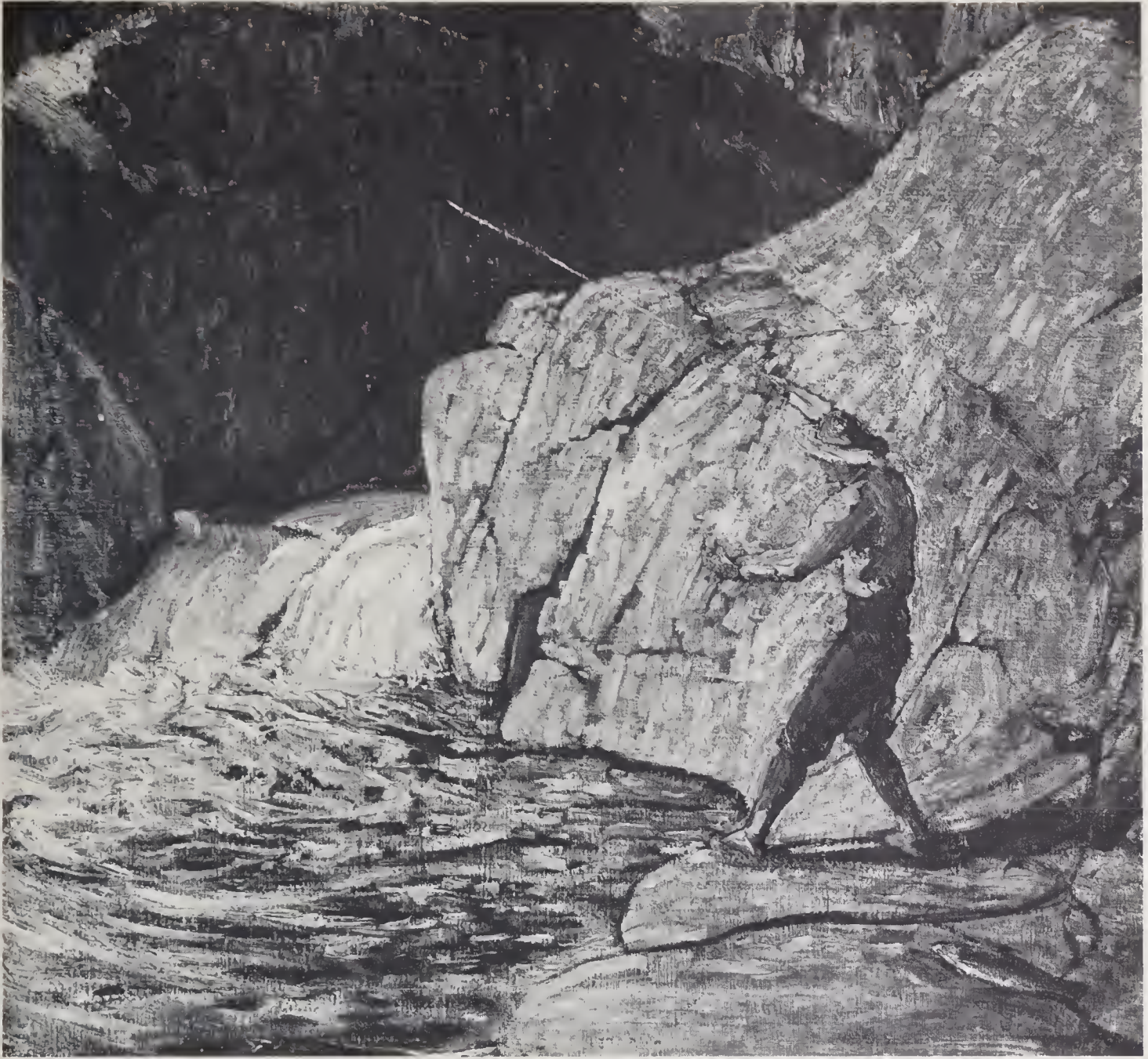
44. Thirty Birches



47. The Silent Lake



48. Lake in Algonquin Park



49. The Fisherman



50. Frost-laden Cedars, Big Cauchon Lake



51. Spring Ice



52. Spring Ice



55. Algonquin Park



53. March, Canoe Lake



56. Wild Cherry Trees in Blossom



54. The Artist's Hut



57. Burnt Country



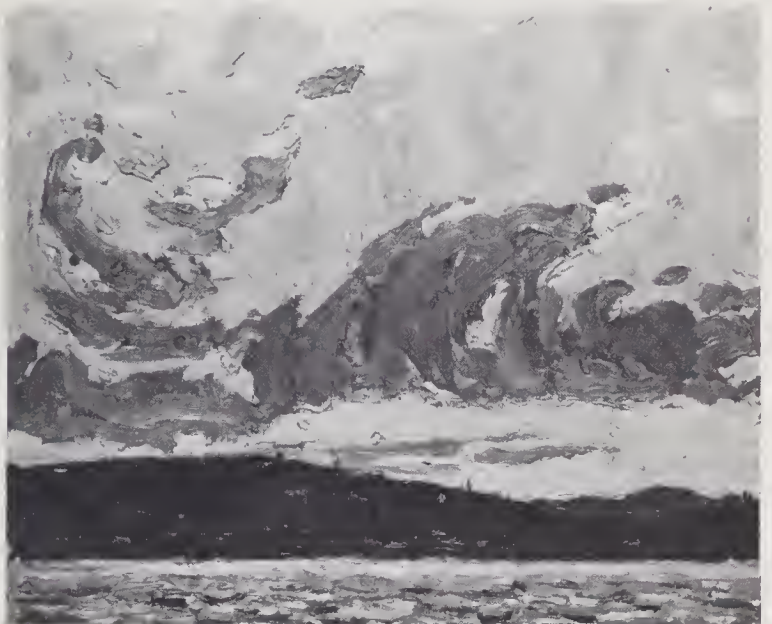
58. Wildflowers



61. Clouds ('The Zeppelins')



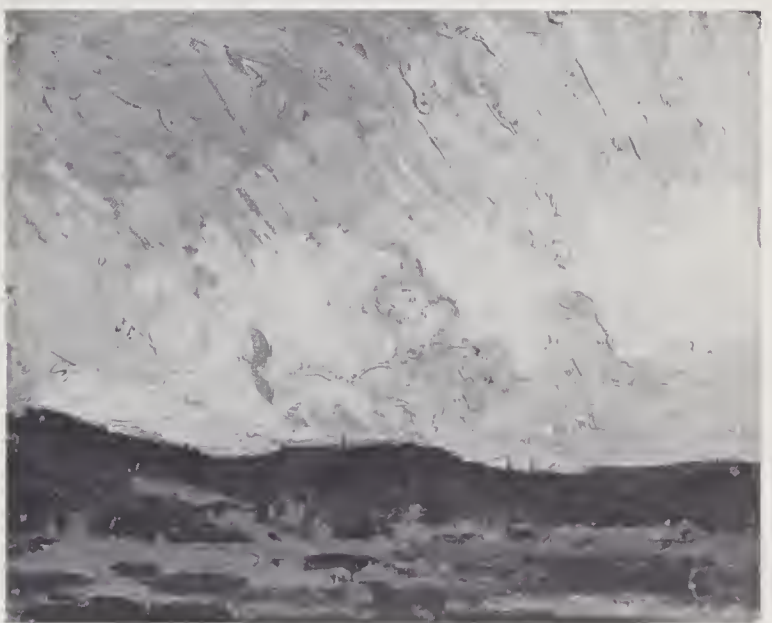
59. Flowers



62. Morning



60. Wild Flowers



63. Blue Clouds, Wooded Hills and Marshes



64. Sunset Sky



67. Birch and Spruce, Smoke Lake



65. Sunset



68. Timber Chute



66. Hot Summer Moonlight



69. Tea Lake Dam

AGO

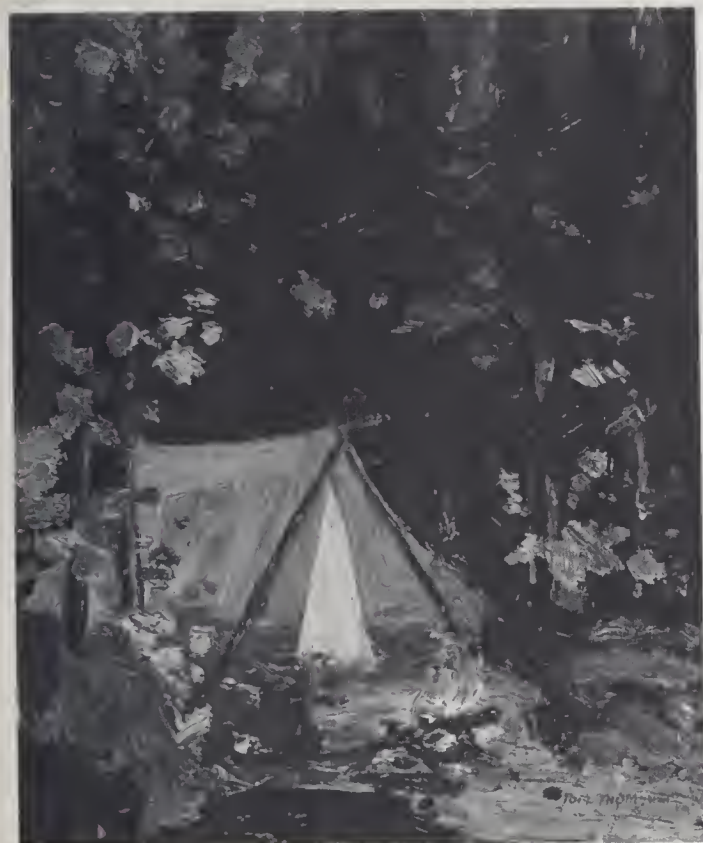


70. Round Lake, Mud Bay

AGO



73. Autumn Foliage

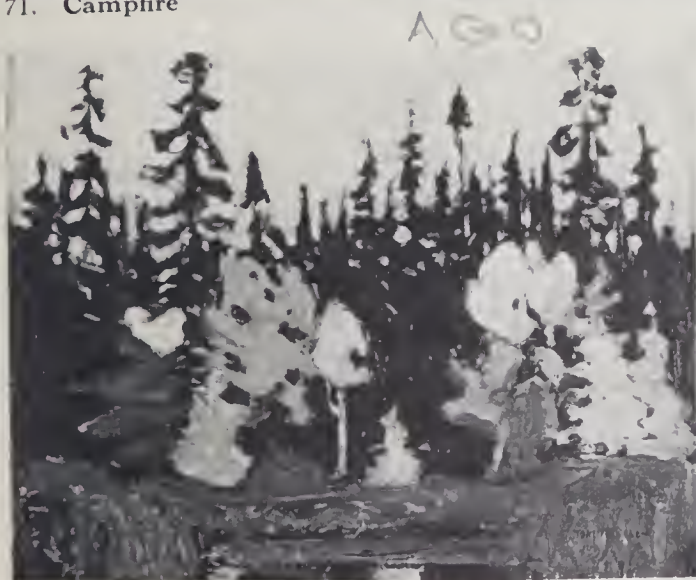


71. Campfire



74. Red and Gold

AGO



72. Black Spruce and Maple



75. Autumn Birches



78. Spring Ice



76. The Waterfall



77. Autumn Colour



79. Moonlight



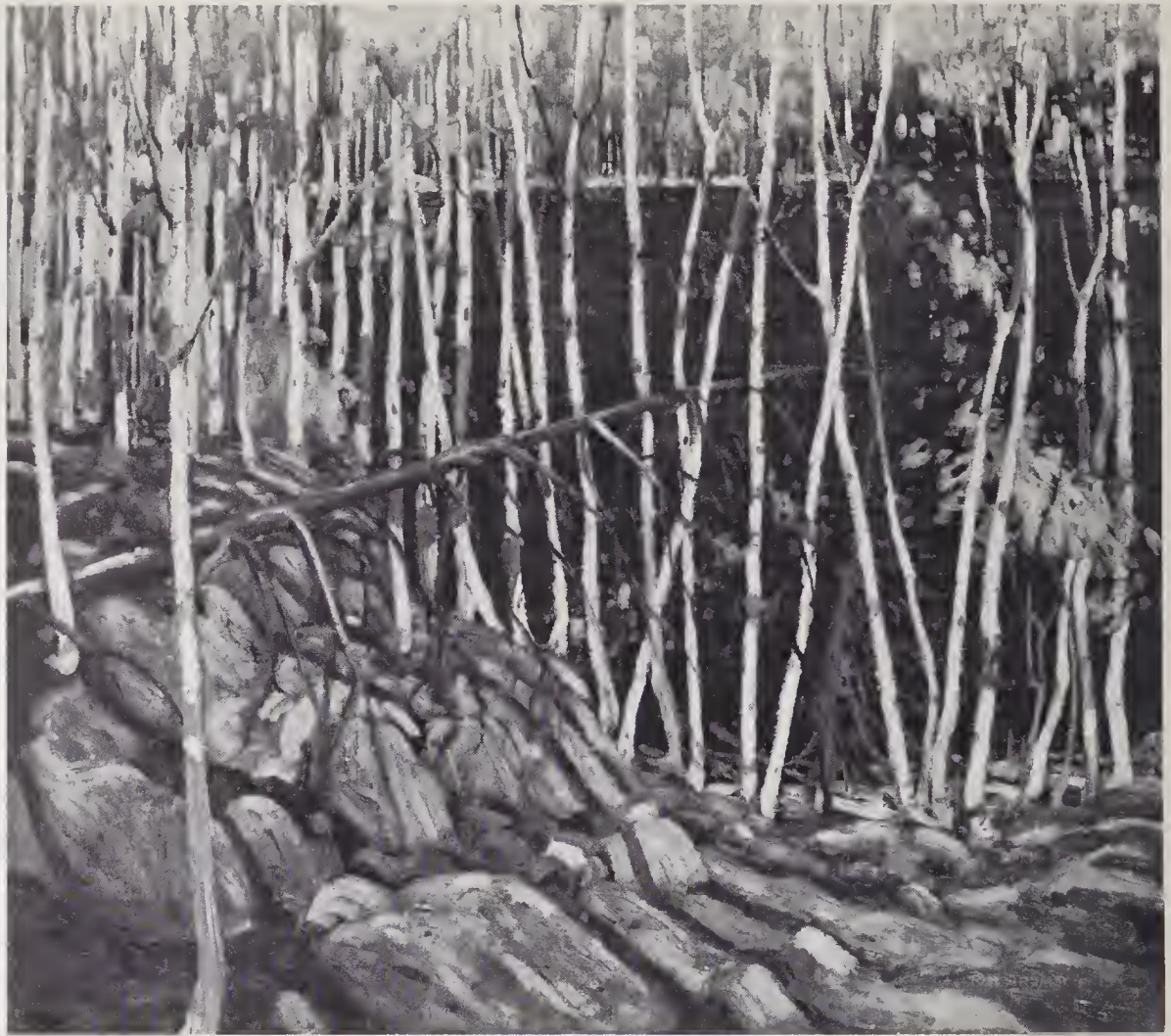
80. October



81. Maple Woods; Bare Trunks



82. Silver Birches



83. In the Northland



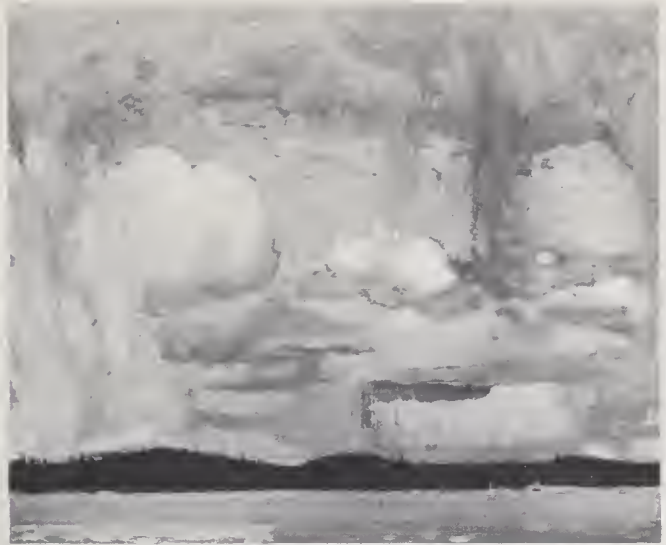
84. Blue Lake ('In the Northland')



85. Decorative Landscape, Birches



86. The Pool



88. Snow Pillars in the Sky



87. Spring



89. March



90. Algonquin Park



91. In the Sugar Bush



92. Cranberry Marsh



93. The Enchanted Stream,
Midnight



94. Bateaux



95. Petawawa Gorges



96. Moose at Night (Moonlight)



97. Little Cauchon Lake



98. Pine Tree



99. The West Wind (sketch)



100. Thunderhead: Pink Cloud over Lake



101. Ragged Oaks



102. Wild Geese



103. Red Sumac



104. Autumn Scene



105. Snow-Covered Trees



106. Snow in October



107. Autumn's Garland



108. Maple Saplings, October



109. Golden Autumn



110. Chill November



111. The Birch Grove, Autumn



112. Spring in Algonquin

AGO



115. Winter in the Woods

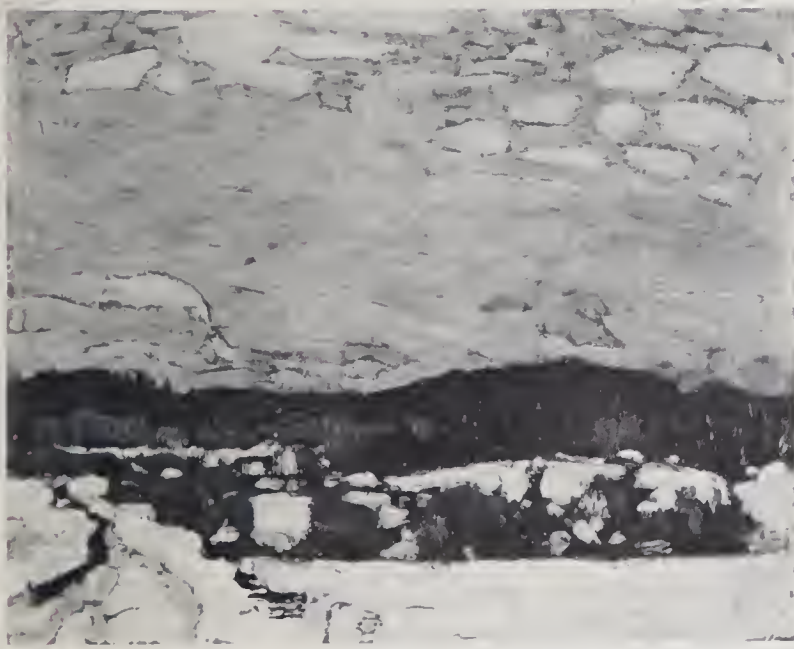


113. Spring

AGO



116. Thaw: Snow Banks



114. Early Spring



117. Snow and Earth



118. Snow and Rocks



119. Spring Break-up



120. Spring Thaw



121. Swift Water



122. Northern Lights



123. Northern Lights

List of Plates: Black and White

1. **Various Drawings**
(from a sketchbook)
Pencil on paper
Gift of Fraser Thomson,
The Tom Thomson
Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound
2. **Near Owen Sound**
Oil on panel, $5\frac{7}{8}$ " x $8\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
verso (pencil):
'Near Owen Sound/Nov. 1911'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944,
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
3. **The Marsh, Lake Scugog**
Oil on canvas, 11" x 17"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'T.T.'
According to a letter from Mr. Kemp,
November 21, 1934:
'The picture is not his preliminary
sketch but a later painting from the
sketch.'
Purchase, 1934,
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
4. **Drowned Land**
Oil on canvas board, $6\frac{7}{8}$ " x $9\frac{13}{16}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
Purchase, 1937,
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
5. **Fairy Lake**
Oil on board, $6\frac{15}{16}$ " x 9"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): signed and dated
(scratched in) 'Tom Thomson/'12'
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
6. **Forest Interior**
Oil on linen board, 10" x $6\frac{7}{8}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
Private collection, Toronto
7. **A Northern Lake**
Oil on linen board, $6\frac{15}{16}$ " x 10"
Inscription: verso (pen):
'Authenticated by/J. W. Beatty/
Jany/27'
Dr. and Mrs. H. H. Rosenberg,
Toronto
8. **The Morning Cloud**
Oil on linen board, $6\frac{7}{8}$ " x $9\frac{7}{8}$ "
Gift of Mrs. Doris Huestis Speirs,
1970
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
9. **Sky (The Light That Never Was)**
Oil on canvas board, $6\frac{7}{8}$ " x $9\frac{7}{8}$ "
Inscription:
verso (pencil): 'Thomson saw this
in early morning—Had spent all
night in his canoe out on the lake
because of the flies—
1913 MacCallum'
(pencil): 'The light that never was/
nor is, by land or sea'
Acquired, 1946,
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
10. **Stormy Evening**
Oil on canvas board, 10" x $7\frac{7}{8}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
11. **Northern Lake**
Oil on canvas board, $9\frac{7}{8}$ " x 7"
Inscription:
verso (pen): 'Given to me by
Tom Thomson 1915 or 19.
Thoreau MacDonald' (stamped):
TT Studio
Private collection, Montreal
12. **The Canoe**
Oil on canvas, mounted on panel,
 $6\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10"
Inscription:
verso (pencil):
'tom thomson (sic) 1914'
Said to depict the artist's own canoe
Donor:
The J. S. McLean Collection, 1970
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
13. **Moonlight, Early Evening**
Oil on canvas, $20\frac{3}{4}$ " x 30"
Acquired, 1914
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
14. **Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park,
1914**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10"
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Klinkhoff,
Montreal
15. **Petawawa Gorges**
Oil on canvas board, $8\frac{7}{8}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (pencil):
'Petawawa Gorges/1914?'
'Spring Ice' (crossed out)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
16. **Cottage on a Rocky Shore**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
17. **MacCallum's Island**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped):
TT Studio
verso (pen):
'MacCallum's Island—1914'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1914
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
18. **The Lily Pond**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (stamped): TT Studio
(label): 'The Lily Pond, 1914/35/
James MacCallum'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1914
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
19. **Spring, French River**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (pen): 'Spring-French River
Tom Thomson/June 1, 1914'
(stamped): TT Studio
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
20. **Georgian Bay, Byng Inlet**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped):
TT Studio
verso (stamp): TT Studio 1917
(pencil): 'Georgian Bay—June 1914,
Behind Giroux light at/entrance to
Byng Inlet'
The Roberts Gallery, Toronto
21. **Evening—Pine Island**
Oil on panel, $10\frac{3}{8}$ " x $8\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped):
TT Studio
verso (pencil):
'Evening—Pine Island/1914'
(pencil): 'OK/GT'
(stamped): TT Studio
Private collection, Toronto
22. **Red Leaves**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
23. **White Birches**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (pencil):

- 'To Mr. and Mrs. Cousins/
from Tom Thomson'
Gift of Dr. Clare S. Sanborn, 1968
The Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor
24. **Birches**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10⅝"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): '1914'
(pencil): 'Birches;/Tom Thomson/
25.00'
(stamped): TT Studio
The Vincent Massey Bequest, 1968
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
*Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal and
Charlottetown only*
25. **Autumn**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): 'TT
Studio'
verso (pencil): 'Minnie Henry/
William Henry'
(stamped): 'TT Studio'
(pencil): '1915'
Private collection, Toronto
26. **Hill-side, Smoke Lake**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
verso (label): '42. Hillside-Smoke
Lake James MacCallum'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
27. **Smoke Lake**
Oil on panel, 8⅝" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (label): Roberts Art Gallery
(label): AGT Dec. 28/40
(stamped): TT Studio
(pencil): '137 M. Thomson'
R. S. McLaughlin, Oshawa
28. **Autumn Tapestry: Tangled
Trees**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
29. **The Red Tree**
Oil on panel, 10½" x 8¼"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (label): 'T. 31/M. Tweedale'
(pencil): '1914'
(pencil): 'OK/GT'
(stamped): TT Studio
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto
30. **Nocturne, 1914**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): 'Nocturne 1914'
(pencil): '80.M.Thomson'
(stamped): TT Studio
Private collection, Windsor
31. **The Shack**
Oil on panel, 8⅝" x 10⅝"
Inscription:
verso (pencil): 'Tom Tomson's (sic)
Shack
in the/North Country/Tom
Tomson' (sic)
(pen): 'The property of A. J.
Boughton'
Gift from the Fund of the T. Eaton
Company Ltd. for
Canadian Works of Art, 1953
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
32. **Tamarack Swamp, Dawn**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT
studio
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
33. **Burnt Country, Evening**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (label): 'Burnt Country-
Evening/40/James MacCallum'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
34. **White Frost**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): 'White Frost'
Ex. Collection Dr. J. M.
MacCallum, Toronto
Acquired 1918
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
35. **Sketch for Afternoon,
Algonquin Park**
Oil on panel, 8⅝" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (stamped): TT Studio
(pencil): 'Tom Thomson/Studio
Bldg./Severn St. Toronto'
Private collection, Toronto
36. **Northern River**
Water colour on cardboard,
10½" x 11¾"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (stamped): TT Studio
(label): 'AGT date Dec.30/40 . . .
from Carl Hunter'
Private collection, Toronto
37. **Northern River**
Oil on canvas, 45" x 40"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
Purchase, 1915
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
38. **The Foot Path of Peace**
Pen on vellum, 8¾" x 11⅞"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
(pencil): 'Pen sketch, Property of
Thomson Estate'
(Fraser Thomson's writing)
(pen): 'Margaret Thomson
Tweedale/Tom's pen sketch of
a Christmas/gift
to his mother and father.'
Mrs. Margaret Tweedale, Toronto
39. **Split Rock, Georgian Bay**
Oil on canvas, 36" x 45"
Gift of Mrs. S. J. Williams, Mrs.
Harvey Sims, Mrs. T. R. Cram and
Mrs. Geneva Jackson, Kitchener,
Ontario, 1943
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
40. **Pine Island, Georgian Bay**
Oil on canvas, 60¼" x 50¼"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
41. **Afternoon, Algonquin Park**
Oil on canvas, 25¼" x 30⅞"
Inscription:
verso (label): 'Canadian Artists/
Patriotic Fund/Exhib. 1915' (sic)
(label): 'Studio, Severn St.'
(label): AGT Dec.30/40 Miss
Marion Long
(label): NGC (1970) Ex. # 54 as
'In Algonquin Park 1914'
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
Toronto and Montreal only
42. **Melting Snow**
Tempera on silk, 14¼" x 22"
Inscription:
recto (lower right):
'Tom Thomson/authenticated
and signed by/J. E. H. MacDonald,
A.R.C.A.'
Private collection, Toronto
43. **Decorative Landscape
(Quotation from Ella Wheeler
Wilcox)**
Water colour on paper, 11¼" x
14⅞"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)

- verso (label): 'Design by Tom Thomson/about 1916/from Dr. J. M. MacCallum Collection/Thoreau MacDonald, Thornhill' Mr. and Mrs. Max Merkur, Toronto
44. **Thirty Birches**
Oil on canvas, 25½" x 21¼"
Private collection, U.S.A.
45. **Burnt Land**
Oil on canvas, 21½" x 26"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (labels): London and Windsor (1957); Los Angeles (1958)
Acquired 1937
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
46. **Petawawa Gorges**
Oil on canvas, 25¼" x 32"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa *Toronto only*
47. **The Silent Lake**
Oil on canvas, 15⅞" x 19⅞"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
48. **Lake in Algonquin Park**
Oil on canvas, 28¼" x 40¼"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
49. **The Fisherman**
Oil on canvas, 20⅞" x 22⅜"
Inscription:
verso: 'The Fisherman/by/Tom Thomson/
(Title and signature on painting/by Geo. Thomson)
(on frame): 'TT 36'
E. E. Poole Collection,
Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
50. **Frost-laden Cedars, Big Cauchon Lake**
Oil on canvas, 12" x 15"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
51. **Spring Ice**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
(lower right, stamped): TT Studio
- verso: 'Canoe Lake/breaking up of the ice'
Sketch for Spring Ice
(No. 1195, National Gallery of Canada)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
52. **Spring Ice**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto: 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (pencil): 'Percy Robertson'
Private collection, Toronto
Toronto and Montreal only
53. **March, Canoe Lake**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10¼"
Comments:
The locale which appears is supposedly Hayhurst Point, Canoe Lake, across from Mowat Lodge. The birches at the extreme left would therefore be on the site of Thomson's memorial cabin. Buttercups appear in the foreground.
This sketch was a gift from Thomson to a friend of his who worked as a guide in the Park during the summers of 1906-14.
Mr. and Mrs. Cooper Campbell, Toronto
54. **The Artist's Hut**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Acquired, 1918
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
55. **Algonquin Park**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'Algonquin Park/1915'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift of Mrs. J. G. Henry
The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound
56. **Wild Cherry Trees in Blossom**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10⅞"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'No. 96. Mrs. Harkness'
(pencil): '1915'; 'first class'; 'J & H'
(pen): 'Property of Harkness'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift from The Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
57. **Burnt Country**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (pencil): 'Burnt Country/
Basement Studio Bldg'
(A. Y. Jackson's writing)
(pencil): '10/M. Thomson'
(pencil): 'J & H'
Gift from The Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
58. **Wildflowers**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '1915'
Acquired, 1918
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
59. **Flowers**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (pencil):
'20'/'Study of Wild Flowers—Tom Thomson'
(Thomson's handwriting)
(paint): 'Not for sale/J. E. H. MacDonald'
(pen): 'Property of J. L. Lawson/
Emmanuel College'
(label): 'Marguerites—Wood Lily/
and Vetch/ Not for sale 20'
Gift from the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, 1941
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
60. **Wild Flowers**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'Wild flowers'
(pencil): 'design'; 'Tom Thomson'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift from Mrs. J. G. Henry
The Tom Thomson Memorial Gallery, Owen Sound
61. **Clouds ("The Zeppelins")**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10⅜"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'The Zeppelin—Fall of 1915—
Algonquin Park/MacCallum'
(label): AGT Dec. '40
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
62. **Morning**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto: (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pen): 'Morning/Tom Thomson'
(Thomson's handwriting)
(pen): 'T-T-39'
(pencil): 'No. 21. Mrs. Harkness'
(pencil): 'A.Y.J.'; 'S.B.'
[A. Y. Jackson] [Studio Building]

- (pencil): 'Not for sale'
D. I. McLeod Bequest, 1967
The Tom Thomson Memorial
Gallery, Owen Sound
63. **Blue Clouds, Wooded Hills and Marshes**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pen): 'AM'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
64. **Sunset Sky**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
Acquired 1918,
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
65. **Sunset**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (label): 'Sunset/34/James
MacCallum
(34 scratched out—33 instead)
(labels): London and Windsor (1957)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
66. **Hot Summer Moonlight**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (pencil):
'Moonlight—Hot Summer night'
(label): 'James MacCallum'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
67. **Birch and Spruce, Smoke Lake**
Oil on panel, 10¼" x 8¼"
Inscription:
verso: '1915'
Private collection, Winnipeg
68. **Timber Chute**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10¾"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): '1915-Fall-Timber
Chute-JM'
(pencil): 'RAL'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift from The Reuben and
Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
69. **Tea Lake Dam**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10¾"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
- verso (pencil): 'NG/Tea Lake Dam
1915'
(Stamped): TT Studio
Acquired 1918,
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
70. **Round Lake, Mud Bay**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, signed and dated):
'Tom Thomson/15' (scratched in)
verso (pen): 'Round Lake, Mud
Bay/painted as the First Flock of
of (sic)/geese flew back from the
south North (sic)/painting by the
World's Best Artist/"Tom
Thomson" 1915. He was Drowned
at/Algonquin Park July 8th, 1916
(sic)
(label): AGT J. S. McLean
The J. S. McLean Collection, 1970
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
71. **Campfire**
Oil on panel, 10½" x 8½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
72. **Black Spruce and Maple**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (pencil): 'Property of Lawren
Harris';
'Not for Sale'; 'Loaned by Lawren
Harris'
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawren Harris, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
73. **Autumn Foliage**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '1915'
(pencil): 'J & H'
(pencil): 'No. 4 Mrs. Harkness'
(pencil): 'reserved/Studio Bldg.'
(Stamped): TT Studio
Gift from The Reuben and Kate
Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
74. **Red and Gold**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): 'reserved/Studio
Bldg./Lawren Harris'
(pencil): 'Tom Thomson/Not for
Sale'
(Stamped): TT Studio
Mr. P. G. McCready, Toronto
75. **Autumn Birches**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
- verso (pencil): 'Property of Lawren
Harris';
'Int. warm'; '1915'
(Stamped): TT Studio
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawren Harris,
1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
76. **The Waterfall**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso: 'Tom Thomson/The
Waterfall/from the
collection of Fred S. Haines, R.C.A.'
The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver
77. **Autumn Colour**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT
Studio
verso (pencil): '1915 JM'
(Stamped): TT Studio
Gift of R. A. Laidlaw
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
78. **Spring Ice**
Oil on canvas, 27¾" x 39¾"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson'
(sig.)
Acquired, 1916
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
Toronto only
79. **Moonlight**
Oil on canvas, 27½" x 34½"
Mr. Frank Sobey, Halifax
80. **October**
Oil on canvas, 32" x 38"
Private collection, England
81. **Maple Woods; Bare Trunks**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
82. **Silver Birches**
Oil on canvas, 16" x 17¾"
Inscription:
verso (pen): 'Birch Glade Evening/
(Canoe Lake)
Tom Thomson sketch 18 1915/82.
Mrs. Thomson/Sketch owned by
Mellors—
Laing Galleries 1914'
(label): Mellors Fine Arts
Gift of Col. R. S. McLaughlin,
The McMichael Conservation
Collection, Kleinburg
83. **In the Northland**
Oil on canvas, 40" x 45¾"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, signed and dated):
'Tom Thomson '15'
Purchased by Subscription, 1922
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

84. **Blue Lake ('In the Northland')**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
verso (pencil): '1915'
(label): 'Blue Lake '38, James MacCallum'
(label): The Art Gallery of Toronto, Dec. 31/40
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
85. **Decorative Landscape, Birches**
Oil on canvas, 30" x 28¼"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
86. **The Pool**
Oil on canvas, 30" x 32¼"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
87. **Spring**
Oil on canvas, 40" x 24"
Inscription:
verso: 'Spring Decoration'; 'Tom Thomson' (George Thomson's handwriting)
Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton
88. **Snow Pillars in the Sky**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10¾"
Inscription:
verso (label): 'Snow Pillars in Sky/39/James MacCallum'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
89. **March**
Oil on panel, 10½" x 8½"
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
90. **Algonquin Park**
Oil on board, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
(stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '1916'; 'Algonquin Park/J. MacCallum'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift from The Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
91. **In the Sugar Bush**
Oil on board, 10½" x 8½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (inscribed: 'In a (sic) Sugar Bush'
- (label): Shannon Fraser/Canoe Lake where TT Boarded
(label): AGT. 1953
(pencil): '1916'
(stamped): TT Studio
J. S. (Shannon) Fraser, one time postmaster of Mowat, and his wife, kept Mowat Lodge, a former boarding house for lumbermen, on Canoe Lake in Algonquin Park, Thomson's headquarters 1914-17. Gift from the Fund of the T. Eaton Co. Ltd. for Canadian Works of Art, 1954
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
92. **Cranberry Marsh**
Oil on panel, 8⅝" x 10⅝"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (ink): 'Make frame light gold to accentuate blue water—also to make hill slope gradually back' (MacCallum)
(pencil): '1916 Cranberry Marsh and Hillside/on Ragged Lake going over into Crown Lake/Callighen says Island Lake (MacCallum)
(pencil): 'No. 39. Mrs. Harkness'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
93. **The Enchanted Stream, Midnight**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (label): 'The Brook-Night' (?) James MacCallum (erased)
(label): 'The Enchanted Stream Midnight
Dr. James MacCallum ca. 1916'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
94. **Bateaux**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
(on stretcher, pencil): '5 Bateaux Rouges 48. Harkness' (?)
verso (stamped): TT Studio
(pencil): 'No. 48 Mrs. Harkness' (red pencil): '46'
(label): AGT
Gift from The Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
95. **Petawawa Gorges**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10¼" (sight)
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'Tom considered this sketch/. . . His best & intended/. . . t a large picture./J. MacD.
- (pen): '1916, Petawawa'
(MacCallum)
Private collection, Ottawa
96. **Moose at Night (Moonlight)**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10⅝"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil) 'NG Winter 1916 at Studio J. M. Tom Thomson'
Acquired 1918
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
97. **Little Cauchon Lake**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): 'Little Cauchon Lake 1916'
(label): 'James M. MacCallum 1916?' (crossed out)
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
98. **Pine Tree**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '86. M. Thomson' (Stamped): TT Studio
Gift from The Reuben and Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
99. **The West Wind (sketch)**
Oil on panel, 8¾" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
verso (lower left, stamped): TT Studio
(ink): 'Dr. James MacCallum'
(label): 'Original sketch of/West Wind'
Donor: The J. S. McLean Collection, 1970
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
100. **Thunderhead: Pink Cloud over Lake**
Oil on panel, 8½" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
101. **Ragged Oaks**
Oil on panel, 8⅞" x 10½"
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '134. M. Thomson'
(label): 'Ragged Oaks/Not for Sale/16'
(stamped): TT Studio
Mr. and Mrs. F. Schaeffer, Toronto

102. **Wild Geese**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{3}{8}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pencil): '... w ducks 1916';
'1st class'
(label): 'Wild Geese'
Gift of F. B. Housser Collection,
London Public Library and Art
Museum, London, Ontario
103. **Red Sumac**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso (pen): 'Sumac in Autumn'
(stamped): TT Studio
Gift of Mr. T. J. B. Henry
The Tom Thomson Memorial
Gallery, Owen Sound
104. **Autumn Scene**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (pen): 'Property of Toronto
Board/of Education/
Toronto, Ont./H. C. Dierlam/
J. Beatty'
(stamped): TT Studio
Riverdale Collegiate Institute,
Toronto
105. **Snow-Covered Trees**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
recto (lower right, stamped): TT Studio
verso: oil sketch 'Rainbow' dated
upper left 1916
The Vincent Massey Bequest, 1968
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
106. **Snow in October**
Oil on canvas, $32\frac{1}{4}$ " x $34\frac{1}{4}$ "
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
107. **Autumn's Garland**
Oil on canvas, 48" x 52"
Acquired 1918,
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
108. **Maple Saplings, October**
Oil on canvas, $35\frac{1}{4}$ " x $39\frac{1}{4}$ "
Private collection, Quebec
109. **Golden Autumn**
Oil on canvas, $28\frac{1}{4}$ " x $30\frac{1}{8}$ "
Inscription:
verso (pen): 'Yellow and
Gold/James MacCl./ #39.'
Power Corporation of Canada,
Limited, Montreal
110. **Chill November**
Oil on canvas, 36" x 42"
Inscription:
recto (lower right): 'Tom Thomson' (sig.)
- Sarnia Public Library and Art
Gallery, Sarnia
111. **The Birch Grove, Autumn**
Oil on canvas, 40" x 46"
Gift of Roy G. Cole, Esq., in memory
of his parents Matthew and
Annie Bell Gilmore Cole, 1967
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton
112. **Spring in Algonquin**
Oil on board, 8" x 10" (sight)
Inscription:
verso: 'Toronto/January 28 - 1928/
This is one of Tom's pictures/which
was given to me by Father/today at
Owen Sound. It was one/of the
pictures taken by Father from/
Mowatt Lodge, Algonquin Park, in
1917/when Tom died, and it was
painted in/the spring of 1917. I
asked Dr. MacCallum of/Toronto
over the telephone today whether it
would/be possible to have Tom's
seal affixed to this sketch./He
suggested writing the above
to establish its authenticity./ G. W.
Thomson
15/3/47 Above copied from original
back cover.
George M. Thomson, Brantford
113. **Spring**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{7}{16}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (pencil): 'This sketch was
painted/in the spring of
Thomson's drowning/J.
MacCallum'
(pencil): 'J & H'
(pencil): 'No. 3 Mrs. Harkness'
(in red): '21'
(in black): 'S.B.'
In L. Harris' handwriting, under
label: 'Lawren Harris'
Gift from The Reuben and
Kate Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
114. **Early Spring**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{7}{16}$ " x $10\frac{9}{16}$ "
Inscription:
recto (on frame): '2, Early Spring'
verso (pencil): 'Lawren Harris/
Studió Bldg.'
(under label)
(pencil): 'J & H'
(pen): 'S.B.'
(pencil): '14/M. Thomson'
(pencil): 'painted the early spring
before Thomson's death'
Gift from The Reuben and Kate
Leonard Canadian Fund, 1927
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
115. **Winter in the Woods**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{3}{8}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (label): AGT '40
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
116. **Thaw: Snow Banks**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (label): AGT Dec. 31/40
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
117. **Snow and Earth**
Oil on wooden panel, 5" x $7\frac{1}{4}$ "
Private collection, Toronto
118. **Snow and Rocks**
Oil on panel, $10\frac{1}{2}$ " x $8\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (stamped): TT Studio
(pencil): studies of trees
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
119. **Spring Break-up**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{7}{16}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (ink):
'Given to A. Lismer 1919 by Dr.
MacCallum'
(ink): 'Painted in Algonquin Park
Spring of 1917'
Private collection, Montreal
120. **Spring Thaw**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Jennings Young, Toronto
121. **Swift Water**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{3}{8}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso (label):
'Dr. James MacCallum/The
Rapids—last year'
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
122. **Northern Lights**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x $10\frac{1}{2}$ "
Inscription:
verso: oil sketch
Bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum,
Toronto, 1944
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa
123. **Northern Lights**
Oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{4}$ " x $10\frac{1}{4}$ "
Inscription:
verso: 'Sketch # 4; 'J.M.'; 'Mrs.
Harkness'
(pencil): '# 1665 Northern Lights'
'Tom Thomson'; '# 65'
Private collection, Ottawa
- Not Illustrated*
Tom Thomson's Sketch Box
Acquired, 1946
The National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa

