

PRESS RELEASE: Museum acquires notable painting in advance of unique exhibition (for immediate release)

The Brockville Museum is thrilled to announce the recent acquisition of a piece of art by the late Ruth Eliot (1913-2001). The oil painting depicts a shoreline scene as viewed from the family cottage at Fernbank.

The Eliot cottage was located next door to a cottage owned by the Heward family. The Hewards were members of the Montreal establishment, but were related to the prominent Brockville Jones family. Prudence Heward (1896-1947) was a member of the distinguished Beaver Hall Group of painters based in Montreal, but she spent her summers at the family cottage at Fernbank and was friends with the Eliots.

Although Prudence Heward is best known for her portraits, which she painted from her studio in Montreal, a number of her paintings depict Brockville and area scenes, including the Blue Church at Maitland, the Black Church near Athens, and the Brockville rail yards, among others. Her friends, including Group of Seven artist, A.Y. Jackson, would visit her at Fernbank in the summer for “painting picnics”, creating their own works of the area. Neighbour Ruth Eliot would often join Prudence and her friends on these painting picnics, and is recognized to have studied under both Jackson and fellow Group of Seven member, F.H. Varley, among others.

The Brockville Museum will be celebrating Prudence Heward’s Brockville connection with a very special exhibit, “Painting Picnic with Prudence Heward” in summer 2020. The exhibition will include works by Heward (and Jackson) that feature Brockville and area scenes. The Brockville Museum does not have any Heward paintings in its collection, but will be borrowing works from both private collectors and other museum institutions to assemble this unique story. The recently acquired Eliot painting will also be included in this exhibition.

The Brockville Museum wishes to extend a sincere thanks to Evelyn Walters for the donation of the Eliot painting to the museum’s collection and for her assistance in locating Brockville-related Heward works for the purpose of this exhibition. Walters is the author of “The Women of Beaver Hall” and “The Beaver Hall Group and Its Legacy”.

Interested in supporting the Brockville Museum’s “Painting Picnic with Prudence Heward” project? The museum is looking for exhibition sponsors and supporters to help cover the costs of the required loans, shipping, and exhibit fabrication. Contact the museum for more information.

Prepared Monday, May 27, 2019/1:30 p.m.