

# NINA MAY (PICKEL) OWENS, 1869–1959: ENGLISH QUEBEC’S EARLY “INDEPENDENT” WOMAN/ARTIST<sup>1</sup>

---

**Lesley Tarasoff**  
*Bishop’s University*

*Lesley Tarasoff is a fourth year student of History and Women’s Studies at Bishop’s University. She is the Students’ Representative Council’s Corporation Representative, the President of Bishop’s chapter of the Golden Key International Honors Society, and a key member of the Diversity Coalition. She is currently applying to graduate school in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies.*

*Under the supervision of Bishop’s professors, Dr. Jean Manore and Dr. Cheryl Gosselin, and with the financial support of the Eastern Townships Research Centre, Ms. Tarasoff had the opportunity to delve into the Margaret Owens archival holdings, the Brome County Historical Association archives and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Library and Archives, in addition to having the chance to review archival material collected by Margaret Owens, Nina Owens’ granddaughter. Ms. Tarasoff’s spent a year exploring the life and work of Nina May (Pickel) Owens and it can clearly be seen in the article below that the young 21<sup>st</sup> century student connected and indeed fell in love with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Townships artist.*

—Editor

---

## ABSTRACT

Nina May (Pickel) Owens, one of Canada’s earliest women artists, was born in Bolton Centre, Quebec, on June 16, 1869. Though few have heard her name and seen her work, Nina’s life and experiences as both a woman in the domestic sphere and as an artist provide a wealth of knowledge about women and women artists of her time. Nina is of particular importance because her life and experiences are independent of what is commonly known and believed about women and women artists of late-Victorian and early-twentieth century Canada. Indeed, she employed both her domestic and artistic identities without regret, consequently challenging conventional notions of femininity and the exclusivity of professionalism.

## RÉSUMÉ

*Nina May (Pickel) Owens, l'une des premières femmes artistes du Canada, naît à Bolton Centre le 16 juin 1869. Bien que peu de gens connaissent son nom et son oeuvre, la vie et les expériences domestiques et artistiques de Nina Owens sont particulièrement révélatrices. Elles éclairent non seulement les conditions des femmes et particulièrement des femmes artistes de l'époque, mais sont d'une importance toute particulière puisqu'elles contredisent les connaissances et croyances actuelles au sujet des femmes et femmes artistes au tournant du vingtième siècle. Nina affirmait sans regret ses rôles domestique et artistique, remettant en question par le fait même les notions conventionnelles de féminité ainsi que celles de l'exclusivité de la profession.*

---

Only since the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s have Canadian women artists appreciably found their place in galleries and museums, history books, media, on collectors' walls and on the tips of our tongues. Yet, knowledge of Canadian female artists and exhibitions of their work remains sparse compared to that of male artists and "this is certainly not due to Canada's lack of female artists."<sup>2</sup> One reason for this inequality is found in Canada's art history.

From 1860 to 1940 "the number of societies, institutions, associations, galleries and educational bodies connected with our [Canadian] art increased enormously."<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite the founding of the Women's Art Association of Canada in 1890, well into the twentieth-century "women were denied the all-important recognition of acceptance into the Academy [...] and were given limited access to art education."<sup>4</sup> Though young women soon made up the majority of students, all of Canada's major art institutions were dominated by male teachers.<sup>5</sup> Canada's most esteemed art association, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA), treated women as lesser members up until the 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

Today, Emily Carr is one of the few Canadian women artists recognized as an artist in her own right. Yet it was seemingly interaction with male artists that propelled Carr to fame. As Chadwick (2007) notes: "Carr's strong, brooding paintings of the Pacific Northwest and its Indians went almost completely unnoticed until the 1920s, when she met up with Mark Tobey and the painters of Canada's Group of Seven."<sup>7</sup> Like Carr, the Beaver Hall women did not receive a great deal of public recognition until they organized with A.Y. Jackson, Edwin Holgate and other male artists in the early

1920s to form the Beaver Hall Hill Group, and with members of the Group of Seven to form the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933.<sup>8</sup>

It is generally accepted and celebrated that early twentieth-century Canadian art was dominated by the landscape painting of the Group of Seven.<sup>9</sup> However, the Beaver Hall women believed in creating art for art's sake, rather than espousing the nationalist dogma of the Group of Seven.<sup>10</sup> Instead of emphasizing the Canadian landscape, the Beaver Hall women portrayed the complexities of Canadian life by adding powerful female figures to the geography.<sup>11</sup> Though their subject matter differed, when the Beaver Hall women partnered with male artists their professional status increased. Despite their heightened professional status, even today the works of the Beaver Hall women are rarely shown and few Canadians know their names.<sup>12</sup>

Critical examinations of Canadian art and artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century do exist, yet they scarcely, if at all, mention women artists. With the exception of a few women artists, such as Emily Carr and Anne Savage, early women artists, when mentioned, tend to be treated summarily. Though the literature concerning early women artists is growing, few authors extensively address the vital link between gender identity and professionalism. The works of Farr and Luckyj (1975) and Tippett (1992) are merely starting points for an examination of the challenges for women artists who occupied both a domestic and a professional role, as they too chiefly concentrate on many of the same illustrious and unmarried Canadian woman artists covered in Canadian art history surveys. While Tippett's *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (1992) may be considered the most comprehensive addition to the growing bibliography on Canadian women artists, it nonetheless lacks a critical examination of gender—as well as race and class.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Millar (1996) found that “over two-thirds of the artists mentioned [in *By a Lady*] are listed only by name and birth/death dates or, at best, given two or three lines of text.”<sup>14</sup> Though Meadowcroft (1999) addresses the struggles of the Beaver Hall women with regard to juggling their artistic pursuits and their families, her analysis is limited due to the fact that most of the Beaver Hall women were spinsters, who lived at home with overbearing mothers. Only one of the Beaver Hall women—Lilias Torrance Newton—was married (and divorced twelve years later).<sup>15</sup>

Hence, another explanation for the lack of recognition paid to early female artists may be because many of Canada's early women

artists have been lost and/or forgotten due to the fact that they did not occupy the traditional gender roles assigned to their sex. Specifically, a gap in the historiography concerning early women artists indicates that women artists who also identified as wives and mothers have been forgotten, suggesting that these women artists cannot be considered “professional” because of their domestic identities. One could indeed argue that the rigid definition of professional, “one who earns a living in a given or implied occupation,” is exclusive of women artists who are also wives and mothers.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned, the link between gender identity and professionalism is a much neglected area of study in Canada’s art history. An examination of Nina May (Pickel) Owens’ life (1869-1959) intends to fill this gap. An inquiry into Nina’s life adds a gendered analysis to the literature on early women artists because Nina identified as a wife and mother *and* acted professionally as an artist. Her life demonstrates the reality that many women did not completely adhere to the Victorian ideal of femininity and also unearths the exclusivity of professionalism. Nina unconsciously challenged the ideal of traditional Victorian femininity and subsequently acted as a professional artist despite its rigid definition. Accordingly, Nina’s life differs from or is independent of the historiography about women artists of her time as her gender identity was more flexible than the one assigned to her. As an exploration into Nina’s life reveals gaps in historiography it too opens up the possibility of recognizing more of Canada’s early women artists. By sharing Nina (May) Pickel Owens’ story, the aim of this essay is to bring attention to other early women artists who identified as wives and mothers in order that they too may be recognized as professionals.

In the 1780s, the Pickel family left Albany, New York for Quebec, first settling in Dunham, then Knowlton, and finally in Bolton Centre.<sup>17</sup> Like many Loyalists fleeing the United States around the time of the American Revolution, the Pickel family settled in the Eastern Townships.<sup>18</sup> Irrefutably, the fertile land of the Townships and its “mythically-beautiful rural scenery” was the main attraction for settlers as well as artists in the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> As an artist, Nina was inspired by the scenery of the Townships and perhaps even influenced by the many artists who had illustrated the region before her. For one, Nina’s early depictions of the Townships may indeed have been modeled after William Henry Bartlett’s illustrations in *Canadian Scenery Illustrated, Vol. 2*. (London: G. Virtue, 1842).<sup>20</sup> Bartlett (1809–54), a British artist who visited the

Townships in the 1830s, “was the first to visually draw attention to the natural beauty of such Eastern Townships sites as Lake Memphremagog and Mount Orford.”<sup>21</sup> One of the most popular nineteenth-century Canadian landscapists, Cornelius Krieghoff (1815–72), “painted Owl’s Head Mountain between 1859 and 1861.”<sup>22</sup> Other early male artists who depicted the Townships include the Royal Canadian Academy of Art’s (RCA) first president, Lucius O’Brien (1832-99),



Figure 1: “The Farm”: The Pickel Homestead and St. Patrick’s Anglican Church, Bolton Centre, Quebec. “...a lovely setting for a dream world of my own.” This is one of Nina’s first oil paintings, 1891. Collection of Margaret Nina Owens.

illustrator Henry Sandman, RCA (1842–1910), and John Arthur Fraser, RCA (1846-98), one of the founders of the Ontario Society of Artists.<sup>23</sup> Royal Canadian Academicians Fredrick Simpson Coburn (1871–1960) and Aaron Allan Edson (1846-1888) also painted their native Townships.<sup>24</sup> Less known male artists and art patrons of the Eastern Townships include Sherbrooke Mayor and Bishop’s University Chancellor Richard William Heneker (1832–1912) and banker John Carpenter Baker, who helped finance Aaron Allan Edson’s studies.<sup>25</sup> In 1886 the first public art gallery of the Townships was opened in Sherbrooke by Samuel Morsey.<sup>26</sup>

As the art scene began to develop in the Townships, Jay Theodore Pickel and Anna Eliza (Harvey) Pickel welcomed the birth of their first child Nina May Pickel at “The Farm” in Bolton Centre on 16 June 1869<sup>27</sup> (Figure 1). Before Nina could read and write she was sketching her surroundings.<sup>28</sup> While Nina’s surroundings inspired her, the Reverend F. H. Clayton encouraged her artistic talent; he began privately tutoring her in 1878.<sup>29</sup> Following her education in Bolton Centre, Nina attended Knowlton Academy and then Waterloo Academy, where she trained to become a teacher.

A week or so after taking the matriculation exams at Waterloo I went to Sherbrooke Que[bec] to take exams for model school teacher. Before leaving for home the examiner came to me and told me that in looking over my papers the board had decided to give me a principal's diploma if I were willing to take up trigonometry and go up for an exam in that subject. I thought it over and decided not to. So I thanked him sincerely and forgot about it. I had spent long enough at school for the time being, *I wanted to get out, be independent and paint.* [Emphasis added]<sup>30</sup>

Nonetheless, in the fall of 1889, Nina went to work as a practice teacher in Danville.

Though the limited and dated histories of the Eastern Townships do not recognize the Pickel family as founding members of Bolton Centre, in her writings Nina insisted that her family was "honourable and cultured and stood respected in the community." Nina's parents were much like other couples of the Townships in the late 1800s: "Father was a man of the open fields, and shady woods, very fond of nature, and well versed in that lore. Mother was a lady in every respect, refined and well-educated. She was musical, played and sang and had a wonderful memory for poetry."<sup>31</sup>

In many respects, Nina and her mother fit the mold of a traditional middle-class Victorian woman; "initiated into the 'polite arts' at an early age, [Victorian women] [...] were taught to play a musical instrument, to converse in a foreign language or to paint delicate watercolours."<sup>32</sup> During the Victorian period most women were socially constructed to be feminine, and this definition of femininity included an aptitude for the arts. In fact, since the Renaissance, the decorative arts, those related to textiles as well as painting and sketching, have been seen as "extension[s] of womanliness," as if performing these "polite arts" was part of a woman "fulfilling her nature."<sup>33</sup>

However, a woman's practice of art was to be limited to the private sphere. Women were encouraged to paint but not to make a living doing it.<sup>34</sup> Young women were only to acquire artistic skills "to occupy their leisure hours and heighten their chance of winning suitors."<sup>35</sup> Once women were domesticated, art was only to be "a means through which they could enhance their 'private happiness' and 'create a healthy domestic environment in which their children could thrive and their husbands could find a refuge.' For the majority of women artists, painting thus remained merely a polite hobby."<sup>36</sup> Thus,

Women artists existed in a contradictory relationship to the prevailing middle-class ideals of femininity. They were caught between a social ideology that prohibited the individual competition and public visibility necessary for success in the arts, and the educational and social reform movements that [debatably] made the nineteenth century the greatest period of female social progress in history. The qualities which define the artist—*independence, self-reliance, competitiveness*—belonged to a male sphere of influence and action. Women who adopted these traits, who turned their backs on amateur artistic accomplishments, accepted as beautifying or morally enlightening, or who rejected flower painting in watercolour for historical compositions in oil, risked being labeled as sexual deviants. Art reviews from the period are full of charges that aspiring women artists risk ‘unsexing’ themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Ironically, while women’s artistic prowess was considered an extension of their femininity, women who pursued the arts publicly or professionally were deemed unfeminine and often accused of “disowning” their sex.<sup>38</sup>

Evidently, due to the fact that Victorian ideology reasoned that “femininity was to be lived out in the fulfillment of socially ordained domestic and reproductive roles, a profound contradiction was established between the identities of artist and woman.”<sup>39</sup> Instead of working to become a “professional” artist, social theorists of the time maintained that “the adult role for which the Victorian middle-class girl was supposed to be preparing herself was that of wife and mother.”<sup>40</sup> Victorian ideology too reasoned that women “were temperamentally different than men and naturally suited to their roles as wives and mothers,” meaning that in addition to being deemed unfeminine, women artists were threatening the family and a woman’s role in it.<sup>41</sup> Thus, “‘artist’ became increasingly associated with everything that was anti-domestic, outsidership, anti-social, and the sublime forces of untamed nature.”<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, many women still endeavored to become professional artists. For the most part, however, only affluent women who had more time and resources than their working-class counterparts could afford to become artists.<sup>43</sup> Yet it was not socio-economic class but the selling one’s artwork that often defined a woman as an artist.<sup>44</sup> Generally, the definition of a professional artist is one who makes a living as an artist. However, because Nina sold very few paintings, she could not be classified as an artist given this exclusive definition. On the contrary, she did not need to sell her artwork to make a living.

As the remaining narrative of her life is revealed, it will become clear that Nina did act professionally in a number of other ways, and therefore deserves to be classified as a professional artist as well as one of Canada's early women artists. Despite her talent and prolific artwork, Nina remains unknown because she seems to have preferred to emphasize her identity as wife and mother rather than as artist. Yet her domestic and professional identities did not conflict but instead complemented each other, and so Nina was able to successfully employ both her domestic and artistic identities. Thus, Nina does not fit the traditional definition of a professional artist or of Victorian woman.

After domestic service, teaching was the occupation that engaged most women in the final decades of the nineteenth century, including Nina.<sup>45</sup> However, "whatever their occupation, women typically left the labour force when they married."<sup>46</sup> Nina's desire to leave the paid work force however had nothing to do with marriage; she wanted to "be independent and paint" long before she tied the knot.<sup>47</sup> Her desire to be independent here meant an independence from an occupation (teaching) that was designated as a particular occupation for women.

After a year in Danville, Nina again found Bolton Centre "confining" and in the fall of 1890 ventured further from home to work as a practice teacher in Montebello.<sup>48</sup> Evidently not giving up on her dream to "be independent and paint," Nina "arrived at Montebello with trunk, easel and paint box" in hand.<sup>49</sup>

By chance however, on her first day in Montebello, Nina met her future husband, Owen Ernest Owens. The two married at Bolton Centre on 16 September 1891 and soon made a home in Montebello.<sup>50</sup> Shortly after settling into married life Nina became a mother.<sup>51</sup> Owen Norreys Harrington Owens was born on 26 August 1895 and Carolyn Myriam Nina Owens was born on 3 May 1904 (Figure 2).

In 1906, the Owens family bought a home in Montreal. While Nina stayed in Montreal with her children during the school year, Owen worked in Montebello. The family then spent the holidays and the summers in Montebello and in the Eastern Townships. The Owens' "lived unpreten-



*Figure 2. Nina with Carolyn and Norreys, 1909. Collection of Margaret Nina Owens.*



tiously, but had service and a certain amount of ceremony."<sup>52</sup> Domestic servants, a sewing woman and a hairdresser frequented the Owens' residence.<sup>53</sup> Nina was very much a woman of the Victorian middle-class; she embroidered, made lace, played the piano, sketched, painted, and rode horse side-saddle. As a woman of the middle-class, with Norreys and Carolyn in private school, Nina did not have a great deal of domestic responsibilities; however, that is not to say that she did not have any at all.

Though Owen was a busy entrepreneur, Nina was able to pursue the arts as she had planned to before she got married – verification that she was indeed serious about becoming an artist and that she did not relinquish her job as a teacher to be a full-time wife and mother like many other women of her time had. In 1909 Nina began her professional art training. Just weeks after Nina had painted a portrait of her husband, on 22 January, 1910, Owen Ernest Owens died of pneumonia. Nina did not stop her art training after her husband's death, but managed the finances to maintain a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, without ever returning to the paid labour force.

Alongside some of the Beaver Hall women, from 1909 to 1920 Nina attended art school at the prestigious Art Association of Montreal (AAM).<sup>54</sup>

The Art Association of Montreal school opened in October 1879. From the beginning, female students were in the majority, partly because men had other options. The Royal Canadian Academy, for example, offered free classes in life drawing, to men only. The Art Association of Montreal charged substantial fees, \$40 a year, and attracted mainly middle-class students.<sup>55</sup>

At the AAM Nina studied under the direction of William Brymner (1855–1925), Canada's first great art teacher.<sup>56</sup> Born in Scotland, but raised in Montreal, Brymner was the first Canadian artist to study in Paris.<sup>57</sup> From 1886 to 1921 Brymner was the director of the AAM and acted as the president of RCA from 1909 to 1917.<sup>58</sup> Though Brymner's personal style was influenced by early nineteenth-century European artists, he encouraged his students to develop their own style.<sup>59</sup> Brymner taught some of Canada's most notable early twentieth-century artists including "Clarence Gagnon, Paul Barnard Earle, James L. Graham, Randolph S. Hewton, H. Mabel May, Lilius Torrance Newton and Charles W. Simpson—sufficient evidence of his skill as a painter and of his influence as a teacher."<sup>60</sup> Judging by Nina's paintings, it appears as though Brymner's personal style and

instruction had a significant impact on her as well.

At the AAM, the majority of Brymner's students were Anglophone "middle-class girls whose parents considered painting a desirable accomplishment for their daughters, rather than a means of earning a living."<sup>61</sup> As mentioned, some of these middle-class girls included the Beaver Hall women, many of whom grew up in Anglo-Protestant families living in or near Montreal's Golden Square Mile and received formal art instruction while attending Miss Edgar's and Miss Cramp's School before they attended the AAM.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, "Brymner encouraged his female students to adopt a professional attitude toward their work and to complete their training in Paris"—which many of them did.<sup>63</sup>

The Art Association of Montreal was in many ways a protected space. Its high percentage of female students encouraged women to see painting as a normal activity for them. The school was small: the Advanced class usually numbered between 26 and 36, while the total enrolment varied from 60 in 1904, to about 100 in 1920. The atmosphere may have been rather exclusive, however, due to the many upper-middle-class students.<sup>64</sup>

Though Nina's time at the AAM was shared with some of the Beaver Hall women, there is no evidence that she participated in their art collective.

The short-lived (1920–1921) Beaver Hall Hill Group was largely composed of women artists who, like Nina Owens, shared an English-speaking, upper middle class background. Nina did not get involved in this informal and somewhat heterogeneous artists' association, probably because she felt that the group did not offer a compatible artistic environment for her to work in. Certainly, factors of age and marital status, as well as Nina Owens' more traditional approach to subject matter, would have rendered less desirable her association with younger colleagues whose work was leaning towards an 'art for art's sake' modernist attitude.<sup>65</sup>

The closest Beaver Hall woman in age to Nina was Mabel May, who was eight years Nina's junior. Because of her age, 27 years older than Prudence Heward and Anne Savage, Nina may have been regarded as an outcast among her AAM classmates. Moreover, Nina's marital status and identity as a mother may have isolated Nina from her classmates. With the exception of Liliás Torrance Newton, the Beaver Hall women were unattached and childless.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast to Nina, the Beaver Hall women depended on their parents, teaching, and portrait painting to make ends meet.<sup>67</sup> Nina trained and worked as a teacher only before she was married. After marriage and after she was widowed, there is no evidence of Nina returning to the paid work force. However, as previously mentioned, it is doubtful that Nina would have ever sold her artwork, even if it had been deemed necessary.<sup>68</sup> Because Nina was professionally trained, exhibited her work and shared it with others, she can be classified as a professional artist. Nina did engage in professional artistic activities, therefore demonstrating that the definition of professionalism concerning art is exclusive of women artists who occupied domestic roles and chose not to sell their work.

Although it was produced in a limited quantity, which arguably made it difficult to get noticed, Nina's artwork was displayed alongside her classmates' in the Art Association of Montreal's Spring Exhibitions of 1910, 1911, 1913 to 1920, and 1927.<sup>69</sup> Also, in 1918, one of Nina's paintings was selected to be exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. Though Nina was not well recognized within Canada, "she was invited by the Canadian Art Association to send pictures [paintings] to the International Exhibition in Rome, a year or two before the First World War."<sup>70</sup>

In addition to studying at the Art Association of Montreal, beginning in 1921, Nina studied sculpture at the francophone *École des beaux-arts de Montréal*, under the direction of Albert Laliberté (1878–1953), one of Quebec's most celebrated sculptors.<sup>71</sup> Although she never won an award for her work as a painter, in 1926 one of Nina's "modèle vivant" (living model) sculptures won third prize.

A dominant subject of Nina's works featured in the Art Association of Montreal Spring Exhibitions was the Knowlton area: "At Knowlton" (1914), "Knowlton Hills" (1917), "Knowlton Pond" (1918), as well as "Coldbrook Valley" (1918) "Brome Lake" (1919) "Bolton Hills" (1919) - not surprising as Nina spent many summers in Knowlton with her children after her husband's death.<sup>72</sup> While in Knowlton, Nina and her children often visited with the (Henry) Knowlton family.<sup>73</sup> In 1924, Nina created a print, Coldbrook, for the Knowlton family to identify their books; the print was named after their large farm.

Though Nina herself may not have considered these acts of professionalism, Nina produced two sketches to accompany her friend Helen E. Williams' article "Autumn Days in the Eastern Townships" in *The Canadian Century* (October 14, 1911) and a watercolour for Helen's "Yuletide in the Townships: Enjoying Christmas in the

Good, Old-fashioned Style" in *The Canadian Countryman* (December 14, 1912). Nina also created a print block for the Papineau family and illustrated the cover of a children's song book.

After her professional training, Nina, perhaps on the advice of William Brymner, traveled to Europe. "In middle age, in full possession of her artistic skills and having both leisure and adequate financial means, Nina Owens was finally able to fulfill her adolescent dream of discovering the world."<sup>74</sup> Nina's most memorable and extravagant trips, taken with her daughter Carolyn, include an eight-week guided tour of Europe in the summer 1925 and an eleven-month excursion around Great Britain beginning in November 1936. While "across the pond," Nina sketched and painted, visited galleries, attended gallery openings and art lectures.<sup>75</sup> According to Carolyn's journal, on these trips "Nina was in her element! She sketched like mad, on any available scrap of paper, if notepad was handy, from the boats and out of train windows." While in Europe, Nina copied the masters and noted that some of the architecture there resembled that of the buildings on the Papineau's land. On their second trip to Europe, the women had more freedom. Carolyn drove as Nina sketched and painted: "After lunch did 7 miles in 2½ hours! Mum did 3 sketches."<sup>76</sup>

Despite the fact that Nina was not active in the Canadian art scene like her younger AAM classmates, Nina did play a role in the Canadian art world during both World Wars, and accordingly, did act professionally as an artist. During the First World War, the Canadian War Memorial Fund was launched "to create a 'magnificent and lasting artistic record' of Canada at war."<sup>77</sup> While very few women were officially commissioned to artistically record the Great War, Nina did possess a certificate which allowed her to paint and sketch in Montreal's harbors "for the national purpose of Canada."<sup>78</sup> The Second World War also provided female artists with the opportunity to document war-time activities.<sup>79</sup> In 1946, at the age of 77, Nina was commissioned to paint a cypridium sent over from England for safekeeping during World War Two.<sup>80</sup>

After their travels, Nina and Carolyn had a home built in Rosemere where Nina continued to sketch and paint well into her eighties. At eighty-five, Nina suffered a heart attack and cerebral hemorrhage, yet just weeks before her 86th birthday she finished one of her largest and perhaps greatest works, entitled 'The Wave': "At eighty-five and a half I started a picture – finished just before my eighty-sixth birthday—of a wave which turned out to be the finest I have ever painted..."<sup>81</sup> 'The Wave' was then exhibited at

the Golden Age Hobby Show at the Royal Bank Auditorium in Montreal from June 2 to 4, 1955 (Figure 3).



Figure 3: "The Wave." Nina painted "The Wave" for her daughter Carolyn as a reminder of their 1936–1937 trip to Great Britain. Collection of Margaret Nina Owens.

Nina's "painting was always a solace to her," as was her family.<sup>82</sup> "I really have a wonderful family from the eldest to the youngest", wrote Nina on 6 May 1955. However, Nina's art seemed to be equally important to her. Just weeks after her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, the adventurer, the wife, the widow, the mother, the grandmother, the great-grandmother, and the artist Nina May (Pickel) Owens died in Montreal on 28 June 1959.

An examination of Nina's life indicates that at times she did adhere to the ideal of Victorian womanhood, perhaps suggesting that she was not independent of the literature concerning women and artists of her time, and thus was not able to balance her domestic identity with her artistic pursuits. However, a number of things must be taken into consideration when examining Nina's life and comparing her experiences to other women artists and ideas about women artists. Some considerations include her socio-economic class, her marital status, and her age. Moreover, Nina lived during a time when Canada was growing and evolving politically, economically, and socially, a time when women began to question their political and legal status. Nina experienced "early adulthood in the years when the foundations of the Victorian liberal consensus were crumbling."<sup>83</sup> Though during Nina's youth "Victorian con-

ceptions of femininity and of feminine duty" were being challenged, Victorian ideas about women continued to affect Nina's nature and life choices to varying degrees.<sup>84</sup> It is also important to remember that the ideas about femininity during any time period are generalizations; in reality, there is no actual standard or model of femininity:

Even though femininity was often represented as the unitary, homologous polarity of masculinity, femininity in the second half of the nineteenth century was far from being a unitary category or universal condition inhabited by all women in the same way. A woman's position in and understanding of (her) femininity could alter profoundly in the course of the year or the passage of a lifetime. Femininities were socially, psychically and historically formed; they changed and developed over a half-century fissured by massive social and economic changes. Crises in the state and in the society provoked from the 1880s onwards coincided with the emergence of discourses on the modern... these transformations profoundly restructured artistic practice and identities for the 'modern woman.'<sup>85</sup>

Cherry (1993) sums up the adaptability and variability of women artists well:

Throughout the nineteenth century women practiced as artists in a social formation which constructed certain choices for them as women. They negotiated, often on a daily basis, between their career and marriage, business and household management, between the practice of art and their responsibilities to their home, husband and children. Shaped by changing historical circumstances, the organization of families, marriages and partnerships varied widely, as did women's experiences, expectations and pleasures in relation to a career and a home life, their definitions of domesticity or professional practice. *If for some the two were in conflict, for others they were woven together in productive and enjoyable ways.* [Emphasis added]<sup>86</sup>

Thus, an examination of Nina's life suggests that there are varying definitions of femininity and professional, and, accordingly, the historiography concerning early Canadian women and women artists is incomplete.

As Nina's life has demonstrated, historiography often limits definitions and understandings of what people were and should be; Nina does not fit comfortably into the boxes that the available historiography provides. Nina is independent of the Victorian ideal of femininity and the exclusivity of professionalism, and thus the lim-

ited historiography concerning women artists of her time. When we deconstruct rigid definitions and ideals, we find that in her own way Nina was a professional artist. Nina May (Pickel) Owens was a revolutionary Canadian woman and artist because she was able to employ both her domestic and professional identities, and consequently challenged conventional notions of Victorian femininity and the exclusivity of professionalism.

## NOTES

1. This work was funded by the Eastern Townships Research Centre (ETRC). This article would not have become a reality without the generosity of Margaret Nina Owens, who shared her grandmother's story, artwork, and journals, and supervisors Dr. Jean Manore and Dr. Cheryl Gosselin for creating this opportunity. The author also extends thanks to Monique Nadeau-Saumier and to my family for their patience.
2. Joyce Millar, Review of *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*, by Maria Tippett; *New Perspectives on Modernism in Canada: Kathleen Munn and Edna Taon*, by Joyce Zeman, Elizabeth Burrell; Elizabeth Hunter, *Woman's Art Journal* 16, No. 2 (Autumn, 1995-Winter, 1996): 47.
3. Mayo Graham, *Some Canadian Women Artists*, Exhibition Catalogue (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975): 67.
4. Paula Gillett, *Worlds of Art: Painters in Victorian Society*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1990): 133; Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*, (Toronto: Viking, 1992): 40; The National Council of Women of Canada, comp., *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, At the request of the Hon. Sydney Fisher for distribution at the Paris International Exhibition (1900): 216.
5. Tippett, *By a Lady*, 39.
6. Dorothy Farr & Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada*, Exhibition Catalogue (Kingston, Ont.: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, December 12, 1975–February 1, 1976): 3; Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, (London: Routledge, 1993): 65; Robert J. Belton, "Important Moments in Canadian Art History: 1868-1918," *UBC Okanagan: Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies* (Last updated on November 10, 2005) <http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/creative/links/timeline/1918.html>. For more information about the RCA's early treatment of women see Tippett, *By a Lady*, 38-39; Newton MacTavish, *The Fine Arts in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillian Company of Canada, 1925): 25-26; *The National Council of Women of Canada*, 217.

7. Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society, Fourth Edition*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007): 307.
8. Named after the studio space they shared at Beaver Hall Hill in Montreal in the early 1920s, the women today known as the Beaver Hall women include Henrietta Mabel May (1877-1971), Emily Coonan (1885-1971), Mabel Lockerby (1882-1976), Liliás Torrance Newton (1896-1980), Nora Collyer (1898-1979), Ethel Seath (1879-1963), Sarah Robertson (1891-1948), Kathleen Morris (1893-1986), Prudence Heward (1896-1947), and Anne Savage (1896-1971). [As noted in Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting, Second Edition*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988): 191; Sandra Gwyn, *Women in the Arts in Canada*, Catalogue No. Z1-1967-1-1-7 (Ottawa: Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1971): 12; Anne Newlands, *Canadian Art: From Its Beginnings to 2000*, (Willowdale, Ont.: Firefly Books, 2000): 345; Alison Gillmor, "Quebec's Group of Seven: Remembering the Canadian art collective Beaver Hall Group," *cbc.ca*, January 9, 2006. <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/artdesign/beaverhall.html>]. The Canadian Group of Painters, though short-lived, was co-founded by Prudence Heward and nearly one-third of its members were women (as noted by Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 128; "Prudence Heward," *Women Artists in Canada*, Reference and Information Services Division, Library and Archives Canada, October 2, 2000, Updated April 12, 2005. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/002026-512-e.html>).
9. Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975): 21.
10. "Art for Art's Sake," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. <http://etext.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv1-18>: "The phrase 'art for art's sake' expresses both a battle cry and a creed; it is an appeal to emotion as well as to mind. Time after time, when artists have felt themselves threatened from one direction or another, and have had to justify themselves and their activities, they have done this by insisting that art serves no ulterior purposes but is purely an end in itself. When asked what art is good for, in the sense of what utility it has, they have replied that art is not something to be used as a means to something else, but simply to be accepted and enjoyed on its own terms."
11. Graham, 59; Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 77; Natalie Luckyj, *Visions and Victories: 10 Canadian Women Artists, 1914-1945*, Exhibition Catalogue (London, Ont.: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983): 22; Farr and Luckyj, 1. The humanity presented in the work of women artists can be interpreted as a reaction to women's exclusion in the art world. After centuries of discrimina-



- tion, including being denied the opportunity to study from the nude figure, many women artists turned “to their own sexual reality as a source and subject” (Chadwick, 315).
12. Despite the increased presence of women artists in Canadian galleries, in *Painting Friends* (1999) Meadowcroft notes that “the National Gallery, which has a large collection of Heward’s paintings, seldom exhibits more than one work at a time. The same is true of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Most Canadians could name the Group of Seven, but few people outside of Montreal have heard of Prudence Heward or Anne Savage” (17).
  13. Millar, Review of *By a Lady*, 47; Kate O’Rourke, Review of Review of *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*, by Maria Tippett, *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn, 1993): 252–253.
  14. Millar, Review of *By a Lady*, 48.
  15. “Lilias Torrance Newton,” *Women Artists in Canada*, Reference and Information Services Division, Library and Archives Canada, 2 October 2000, Last updated 12 April 2005. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/002026-517-e.html>.
  16. “Definition of professional,” *Yahoo Education*. [http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/professional;\\_ylt=AoPhzFyyDSDgE.Y32sly66OsgMMF](http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/professional;_ylt=AoPhzFyyDSDgE.Y32sly66OsgMMF).
  17. The Pickel family history, as recorded by Nina and updated by her granddaughter Margaret Nina Owens, dates as far back to the time of Archibald Campbell, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Argyll, who was the first Scottish noble to adopt and promote Protestantism. In Reverend Ernest M. Taylor’s *History of Brome County Quebec: From the Dates of the Grants of Land therein to the Present Time, with Records of some of Early Families, Vol. 2*. (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, Ltd., 1937) he notes that a Jacob Pickel was sold West Brome in or around 1815 from Ebenezer Collins, the brother of Brome’s first settler Henry Collins (p. 18). It is quite possible that this Jacob Pickel was Nina’s great-uncle (1757–1842).
  18. George McAleer, *Reminiscent and Otherwise: Life in the Eastern Townships of the Province of Quebec, Canada, Fifty Years Ago*, (Worcester, Mass.: Lucius P. Goddard, 1901): 4; John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec, Second Edition*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993): 72. For more information on the settlers of the Eastern Townships see Catherine Matilda May, *History of the Eastern Townships, Province of Quebec, Dominion of Canada, Civil and Descriptive, In Three Parts*, (Montreal: John Lovell, 1869); Philip James Handrick, *Institutions, Ideology and Power: Social Change in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan State University/University

- Microfilms International, 1984); J. Derek Booth, *Summary of the Historical Geography of Brome County 1800–1911* (1966); J.I. Little, *State and Society in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838–1852*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); J.I. Little, *The Other Quebec: Microhistorical Essays on Nineteenth-Century Religion and Society*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
19. Victoria Baker, “Establishing a sense of Community: Early Representations of the Eastern Townships,” *The Journal of Eastern Townships Studies* 14 (Spring 1999): 21, 27.
  20. Baker, 23; Charles P. deVolpi & P.H. Scowen, *The Eastern Townships: A Pictorial Record*, (Montreal: Dev-Sco Publications Ltd., 1962): 1.
  21. Baker, 24–25; “William Henry Bartlett (1809–1854),” *Townships Heritage WebMagazine*.  
<http://www.townshipsheritage.com/Eng/Hist/Arts/bartlett.html>.
  22. Baker, 25.
  23. Baker, 26–27; “About RCA Members,” *Royal Canadian Academy of Arts*. [http://www.rca-arc.ca/en/about\\_members/since1880.asp](http://www.rca-arc.ca/en/about_members/since1880.asp).
  24. deVolpi & Scowen, 1; Baker, 26; “Frederick Simpson Coburn (1871–1960),” *Townships Heritage WebMagazine*.  
<http://www.townshipsheritage.com/Eng/Hist/Arts/coburn.html>.
  25. Eva Major-Mahorty, “The Private Side of a Public Family: The Heneker Album and Diary,” *The Journal of Eastern Townships Studies* 2 (Fall 1993): 43–44; George W. Brown, David M. Hayne, Frances G. Halpenny, & Ramsay Cook, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XI, 1881 to 1890*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966): 296.
  26. Baker, 29. It is possible that Nina visited Samuel Morsey’s gallery while in Sherbrooke for her teaching examinations.
  27. It is believed by Nina’s granddaughter Margaret that Nina’s mother gave Nina the middle name ‘May’ after her friend Clementina Trenholme Fessenden, the one-time organizing secretary of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire and mother of the radio pioneer Reginald Fessenden. Today, Clementina is most famously remembered as the founder of Empire Day [now Victoria Day] in Canada. According to Carolyn Owens’ family history, Nina was a member of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. Reginald Fessenden was born in East Bolton in 1866 and it is believed that he was a friend of Nina’s, particularly as a number of undated paintings indicate that Nina spent time in Bermuda, where she was believed to have stayed with Reginald Fessenden, who had a large home (and died) there.

28. (Mrs. O. E.) Nina M. Owens, "Arts and Crafts and You," *Northern Beacon*, February 1956: "My first masterpiece was done at the age of two years, according to my dear grandmother, who cherished and preserved it for me. It is a chicken with a few feathers, legs far apart, a scared look, and running for dear life, I had copied it from a picture which took my fancy. That was eighty-five years ago. Although drawing, painting and modeling in clay have been and still are the joy and comfort of my life they have brought me little fame or fortune but they are giving me a better fuller life..." Though in 1956 Nina recalled having created her first sketch at age two, Nina's journals and her granddaughter Margaret informed me that she was four years old when she sketched the running chicken.
29. Nina's first try at portraiture was of Dr. William Henry Drummond (1854–1907). The Irish-born Canadian physician, professor and poet was a friend of Nina's father. According to Nina's journal, Dr. Drummond "was the life of the party." For more on William Henry Drummond see Brown et al., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XI, 1881 to 1890*, 284–287.
30. Written in a number of Nina's journals reflecting her life course. These are arguably Nina's defining words.
31. As written by Nina.
32. Tippett, 9.
33. Rozsika Parker & Griselda Pollack, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981): 58.
34. Personal correspondence with Monique Nadeau-Saumier.
35. Tippett, 9
36. Ibid.
37. Chadwick, 176–177.
38. Gillett, 133.
39. Parker & Pollack, 99.
40. Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982): 101.
41. S.J. Wilson, *Women, Families, and Work, Third Edition*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1991): 18; Alison Prentice, et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1988): 142–143; Ramsey Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., *The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society* (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1976): 6.
42. Parker & Pollack, 99.
43. Farr & Luckyj, 1; Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, (London: Women's Press, 1987): 3.

44. Nunn, 36.
45. Prentice, et al., 129.
46. Ibid., 17.
47. See quote/note 31.
48. Nina received her Teacher's Certificate on May 6, 1891.
49. See quote/note 31.
50. The Owens' bought some of their land in Montebello from Louis-Joseph-Amédée Papineau and Joseph-Napoléon-Henri Bourassa (1888), the son of artist Napoléon Bourassa and the grandson of Louis-Joseph Papineau. In 1890 Henri Bourassa became mayor of Montebello.
51. With motherhood came heartbreak, however; Nina lost two of her four children as infants. Tragically, it was not uncommon for women of Nina's time "to speak in the same breath of the number of children they had raised and the number they had buried" [Jane Lewis, *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 3; Françoise Noel, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003): 144].
52. According to Carolyn Owens' Family History, her father Owen Ernest Owens, her grandfather Thomas Owens, and her great-uncle William Owens together owned "several mills, at least 10 farms in and near Montebello, about 30 houses and nearly one quarter of the village." Margaret Nina Owens however suggests otherwise; according to Margaret, the Owens' owned only one mill and seven farms. Nonetheless, the Owens' were fairly well-off. The Owen E. Owens' "family lived in Montebello in the house ... across the lane from the Owens' office and store. The home farm stretched behind the house and the store with stables and barns well out of sight. On the far right side of the house was a large garden and badminton court." According to Nina's writings, their home in Montebello "was an old log house, large for its kind. There were 9 rooms, and running water and a bathroom had been added." Owen was asked to act as Mayor of Montebello and was even asked to sit in parliament in Ottawa but refused because he preferred to stay out of the limelight. Owen's uncle William Owens (1840-1917), however, was an MPP (1881) and became a Senator in 1895.
53. Carolyn Owens' Family History.

54. The Art Association of Montreal is now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Included in Margaret Nina Owens' collection of her grandmother's (Nina's) work are sketches of the AAM classmates Emily Coonan (dated November 29, 1909), Henrietta Mabel May (dated March 6, 1911), and Mabel Lockerby (dated January 26, 1913).
55. Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 38.
56. Gwyn, 12; "William Brymner," *Horizons: Canadian and Russian Landscape Painting (1860-1940)*, *Virtual Museum of Canada*. <http://virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Horizons/En/bio-406.html>. Also included in Margaret Nina Owens' collection of her grandmother's (Nina's) work is a sketch of William Brymner (dated November 14, 1910).
57. Reid, 93.
58. Evan H. Turner, Introduction to *Eleven Artists in Montreal, 1860-1960*, Exhibition Catalogue (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, September 8-October 8, 1960): 2; Reid, 105; MacTavish, 56; Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 38, 46; Newlands, 57; Albert H. Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1932): 82. Also see Janet Braide, *William Brymner 1855-1925: A Retrospective*, (Kingston, Ont.: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1979).
59. Turner, 2; J. Russel Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History, Second Edition*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977): 212; H.O. McCurry, Introduction to *Memorial Exhibition: Prudence Heward, 1896-1947*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1948): 7.
60. William Colgate, *Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943): 132-133.
61. Barbara Meadowcroft, *Retrospective Exhibition: Liliás Torrance Newton (1896-1980)*, Exhibition Catalogue (Montreal: La Galerie Walter Klinkhoff, September 9-23, 1995): 2.
62. Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 21-22. Today the Beaver Hall women are most celebrated for their figure painting and portraiture. For example see Prudence Heward's *Girl on a Hill*, *Dark Girl*, *Sisters of Rural Quebec*, and *At the Theater*, Liliás Torrance Newton's *Self-Portrait*, *Portrait of Louis Muhlstöck*, and *Nude in a Studio*, and Emily Coonan's *Girl in Dotted Dress*.
63. Meadowcroft, *Retrospective Exhibition: Liliás Torrance Newton*, 2; Reid, 191. Though there is no evidence of Nina continuing her professional training in Paris, she did visit many galleries in Paris.
64. Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 42.

65. Monique Nadeau-Saumier, *Nina M. Owens (1869-1959)*, Exhibition Catalogue (Sherbrooke, Quebec: Musee des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke, 1992): 25.
66. Mary Macdonald Trudel & Chantal Généreux, *The Beaver Hall Group*, Exhibition Catalogue (2007): 27; Meadowcroft, *Retrospective Exhibition: Lilies Torrance Newton (1896-1980)*: 1; "Lilies Torrance Newton," *Women Artists in Canada*.
67. Macdonald Trudel & Généreux, 3; Millar, 4.
68. Nina sold very few paintings in her lifetime, and those that she did sell brought very little money; Nina's artwork did not contribute to her financial situation. In fact it seems that Nina was independently wealthy, living off of the money made by her late husband. And even after the stock market crash of 1929 Nina continued to live comfortably, as noted by daughter Carolyn: "the crash did not affect Nina's financial standing very much."
69. Evelyn de R. McMann, *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Formerly Art Association of Montreal: Spring Exhibitions 1880-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988): 416. Throughout her career as an exhibiting artist, the greatest number of Nina's pieces exhibited at once was six in 1919. Nina's most expensive piece exhibited was worth \$75 (in 1920), whereas Emily Coonan's most expensive was tagged at \$300, Mabel May — \$500, Prudence Heward — \$700, and William Brymner — \$1000.
70. According to Carolyn Owens' Family History, Nina had to refuse this invitation because she could not afford to have the paintings framed properly at the time.
71. Officially founded in 1922, the provincially-funded École des beaux-arts de Montréal merged with other institutions in 1969 to create Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). "Alfred Laliberte (1878-1953)," *Townships Heritage WebMagazine*. <http://www.townshipsheritage.com/Eng/Hist/Arts/laliberte.html>: Laliberté was a native of the Eastern Townships.
72. Pages from AAM Spring Exhibition catalogues in Margaret's collection; McMann, 291. Though the titles of the rest of her exhibited works are vague, it is likely that a number of Nina's other exhibited works also depicted the Townships. Nina was not the only artist at the AAM school whose subject was the Eastern Townships; many of the Beaver Hall women also painted the Eastern Townships—See Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 77; Joyce Millar, "The Beaver Hall Group: Painting in Montreal, 1920-1940," *Woman's Art Journal* 13, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1992): 3; Evelyn Walters, *The Women of Beaver Hall: Canadian Modernist Painters*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press Ltd., 2005): 25.

73. If Baker (1999) is correct in considering art as a legitimate tool “in the historical construction of an identity for the community of the Eastern Townships,” Nina’s art adds to the history of the Eastern Townships (p. 20).
74. Nadeau-Saumier, 29.
75. In addition to the pursuit of art, Nina’s journal notes that one of the reasons she and Carolyn went to Great Britain in the mid-1930s was to witness the Coronation of Edward VII. However, Edward VII quickly abdicated and in May 1937 they arrived bright and early to witness the Coronation of King George VI: “Wednesday May 12, 1937. Coronation Day. At last! The Great day is here... Dressed at 4 am and breakfast came up at 5:30. We were off about 6 ... We walked on in a glorious dream of splendid reality. Colour, music, acute but restrained excitement filled the loving air while happy humanity covered every inch of available space (or allowable) on sidewalks... The procession was 2 ½ miles long! We listened intently to the age old consecrations and ceremonies reverently with hearts full of thankfulness...” Nina was very interested in the European royal families. She kept extensive notes in her journals detailing the royal family trees as well as newspaper clippings of featuring the royals’ visits to Canada.
76. January 11, 1937, Carolyn Owens’ Journal (1935–1938).
77. Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends*, 49-50; Tippet, 55; Graham, 57; Walters, 19; Belton. For more information concerning women’s involvement with the Canadian War Memorial Fund see Maria Tippet, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
78. Nina’s Canadian Registration Board certificate states the following: “This is to certify that Mrs. Nina M. Owens residing at 26 Summerhill Ave, Montreal, was duly registered for the national purpose of Canada this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June 1918.” Farr and Luckyj, 5; Sharon Ann Cook, Lorna R. McLean, & Kate O’Rourke, eds., “The Road Less Taken – The Single Woman as Artist,” In *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2001): During the First World War, Henrietta Mabel May was commissioned to paint women working in munitions factories (66).
79. Luckyj, 19.
80. Full name: Phragmipedilum Macrochilum Gigantuem. A cypripedium is a flower belonging to the orchid family.
81. (Mrs. O.E.) Nina M. Owens, “Arts and Crafts and You,” *Northern Beacon*, February 1956.

82. Carolyn Owens' Family History.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Cherry, 10.
86. Ibid., 19-20.