



Canadian Bookplates

— from the —

National Gallery of Canada

Exhibition no. 44 • 8 May – 30 August 2013

National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives



Morley Ayearst, bookplate for Viola L. Allen, 1920 [36]

Bookplates, or *ex libris* (from the Latin, meaning “from the books of”), first came into use shortly after the advent of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century. Affixed to the inside cover of books to indicate ownership, they became especially popular among the upper classes in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the use of bookplates proliferated, appealing to a rapidly growing middle class that increasingly had the opportunity to develop personal book collections.

This exhibition presents a selection of Canadian bookplates from the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, beginning with an assortment from the nineteenth century, including those of two former prime ministers, John A. Macdonald [4] and Robert Borden [6]. Most of the early examples shown are known as armorial bookplates, featuring heraldic devices such as crests and shields to denote pedigree. Also on display are works by seven artists who are widely acknowledged as Canada’s leading bookplate designers: William Walker Alexander (1870–1948), Morley Ayearst (1899–1983), Alexander Scott Carter (1881–1968), Stanley Harrod (1881–1954), Alfred Harold Howard (1854–1916), J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932) and Leslie Victor Smith (1880–1952). All were part of the bookplate revival that began in Canada in the 1890s and continued into the 1930s. During that period, as bookplates increasingly favoured pictorial designs that reflected the interests and avocations of their owners, rather than their family history, artists began to play a larger role in the design of such works. The diversity of subjects depicted in pictorial bookplates is evident in the current exhibition, from J.E.H. MacDonald’s design for Dr. James MacCallum [14], which illustrates the site of the owner’s cottage on Go Home Bay in west-central Ontario, to Alexander Scott Carter’s work for Alfred T. De Lury [38], which alludes to the owner’s interest in Anglo-Irish literature.

With the exception of MacDonald, the artists presented here designed both armorial and pictorial bookplates. In their armorial depictions, they generally rejected the standardized forms and layout of earlier works in favour of a treatment that was more detailed and stylized. Carter was especially skilled at adapting armorial elements to modern design concepts, evident, for example, in his bookplate for Sir Joseph Wesley Flavelle [40], dating from 1926. He was equally effective at combining heraldic and pictorial details in a single piece, as demonstrated in his 1913 design for Vincent Massey [37].

As well as being popular with owners of private libraries, bookplates have been used since the mid-nineteenth century by a broad range of private and public institutions in Canada, including clubs, libraries, museums and schools. The exhibition presents several examples, including bookplates for the National Club, Toronto [9]; the National Gallery of Canada [10]; the Toronto Public Library [16]; the Art Gallery of Toronto [42]; and the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, Toronto Branch [52].

In addition to bookplates, the exhibition includes two important Canadian books on the subject. The first, entitled *A List of Canadian Bookplates: With a Review of the History of Ex Libris in the Dominion* [54], is the most extensive catalogue of Canadian bookplates published to date. It began as a list compiled from early sources, such as Phileas Gagnon’s *Essai de Bibliographie Canadienne* of 1895, by the renowned American bookplate bibliographer and collector Winward Prescott. It was then revised, corrected and added to by Stanley Harrod and Morley Ayearst. Published in an edition of 250 copies in 1919, the book includes 36 tipped-in bookplates, many of which were printed from the original copper blocks. The second book, a monograph on Leslie Victor Smith by the art historian William Colgate, represents the only study in Canada devoted to a single bookplate artist [58]. Each of the 200 copies printed includes a random set of twelve original works by Smith.

The National Gallery of Canada’s bookplate collection was started in 1916, with gifts from Sir Edmund Walker (1848–1924), an avid print

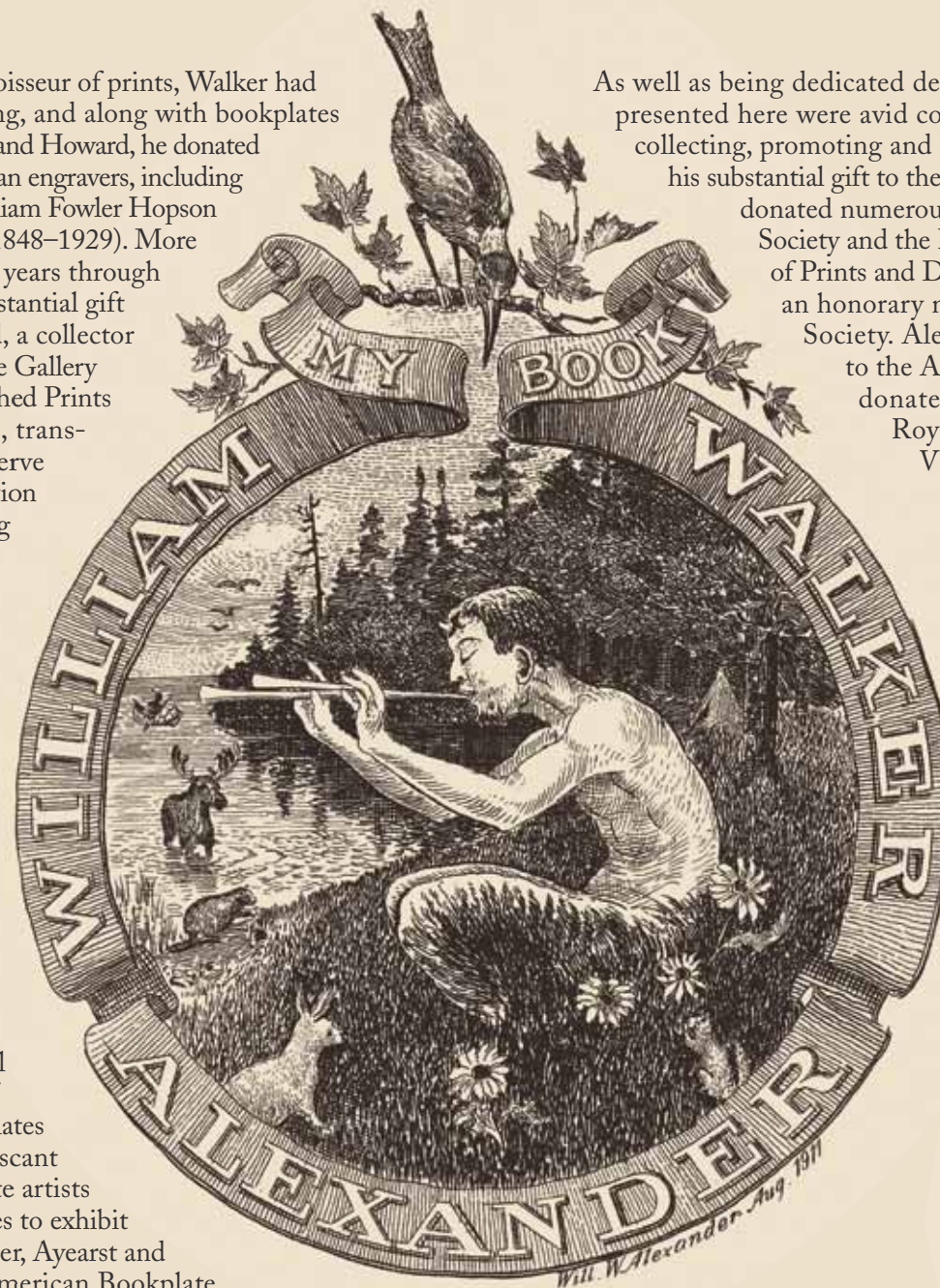
collector and a Gallery trustee. As a connoisseur of prints, Walker had developed a keen eye for skilled engraving, and along with bookplates by the Canadian designers Ayearst, Harrod and Howard, he donated several works by master British and American engravers, including William Phillips Barrett (1861–1938), William Fowler Hopson (1849–1935) and Sidney Lawton Smith (1848–1929). More bookplates were added over the next few years through donations and exchanges, including a substantial gift of 90 items in 1919 from Stanley Harrod, a collector as well as a designer. In the early 1920s, the Gallery moved the collection to the newly established Prints and Drawings department and, in 2002, transferred it to the Library and Archives to serve as study material. The subsequent acquisition of two private collections, each numbering approximately 200 bookplates, and the purchase of a few individual items, supplemented the original selection acquired from Prints and Drawings.

Since their inception, bookplates were intended to be pasted into books, but, beginning in the late nineteenth century, collectors sought them as art objects. That interest led to numerous scholarly studies on bookplates and to the formation of such organizations as the Ex Libris Society in London, England, in 1891 and the American Bookplate Society, New York, in 1913. In Canada, groups including the Ontario Society of Artists, the Canadian National Exhibition and the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts occasionally featured bookplates in their exhibitions, but they were given scant attention. As a result, Canadian bookplate artists looked to other countries for opportunities to exhibit their designs and exchange ideas. Alexander, Ayearst and Harrod were particularly active in the American Bookplate Society, which, in 1916, had implemented an annual exhibition of contemporary bookplates with entries limited to works produced over the past twelve months. The Society's annual exhibition in 1920, first presented at the prestigious Grolier Club in New York before travelling to cities throughout the United States, featured 130 designs by fifty-three artists. Among the Canadian entries were eight by Harrod [including 28 and 29], four by Ayearst [including 34 and 35] and three by Alexander.

Also important with respect to exposure in the United States was the Book Plate International Association, founded in Los Angeles, California, in 1925. Alexander was an honorary vice-president of the organization and contributed numerous bookplates to the group's annual exhibitions, alongside works by Ayearst, Carter, Harrod and Smith. The 1926 exhibition included a significant number of Canadian bookplates, with fifteen by Alexander, six by Ayearst, five by Smith and two by Carter. Further afield, the First International Exhibition of Bookplates, held in Sydney, Australia, in 1933, awarded Smith the George Cowie Prize for best line engraving for his armorial bookplate for Scott Lynn. Bookplates by Alexander for L.V. Redman [21] and by Carter for Vincent and Alice Massey [41] were also included in that exhibition.

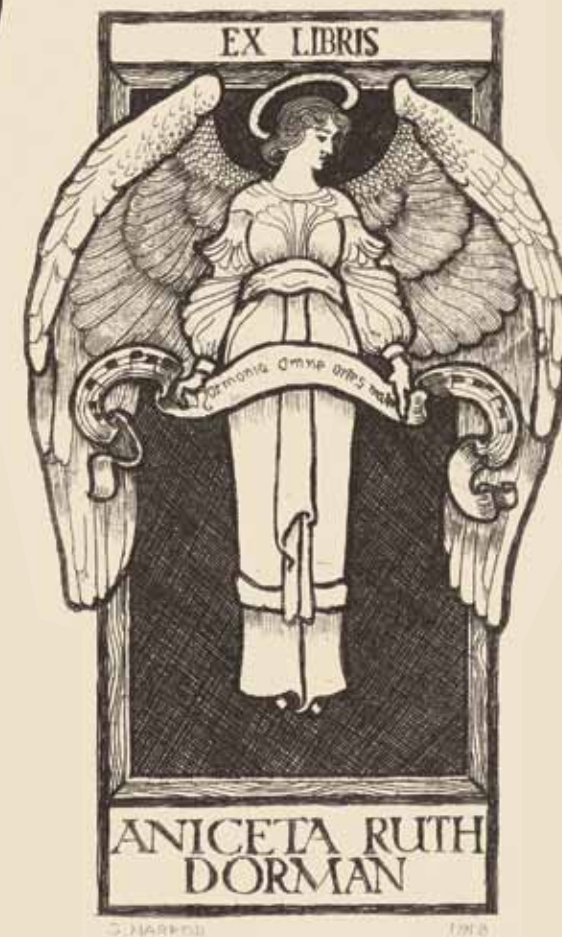
As well as being dedicated designers of bookplates, four of the artists presented here were avid collectors. Harrod was particularly active in collecting, promoting and disseminating bookplates. In addition to his substantial gift to the National Gallery of Canada in 1919, he donated numerous items to both the American Antiquarian Society and the British Museum, where the Department of Prints and Drawings was headed by Campbell Dodgson, an honorary member of the American Bookplate Society. Alexander also frequently sent bookplates to the American Antiquarian Society, and Ayearst donated a segment of his collection to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1976. Leslie Victor Smith amassed some 15,000 bookplates during his lifetime, but their location is currently unknown.

Philip Dombowsky
Assistant Archivist



< William Walker Alexander,
bookplate for William Walker Alexander,
August 1911 [17]

∨ Alexander Scott Carter,
bookplate for Ralph Dilworth,
c. 1935 [45]



^ Stanley Harrod,
bookplate for Aniceta Ruth Dorman,
1918 [25]

Checklist

Unless otherwise noted, all items are from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

1. Bookplate for Sir James Stuart, 1840s
2. Bookplate for John George Howard, c. 1850
3. Bookplate for the Reverend Edwin Gilpin, c. 1850
4. Bookplate for John A. Macdonald, c. 1850
5. Bookplate for William G. Storm, c. 1870
6. Bookplate for Robert Laird Borden, c. 1890
7. Alfred Harold Howard, bookplate for J.W. Baillie
8. Alfred Harold Howard, bookplate for Herbert A. Bruce
9. Alfred Harold Howard, bookplate for the National Club, Toronto, c. 1907
10. Alfred Harold Howard, bookplate for the National Gallery of Canada, 1914
11. J.E.H. MacDonald, bookplate for Isabel Nairn, c. 1914
12. J.E.H. MacDonald, bookplate for Edward Everett Norwood, c. 1915
13. J.E.H. MacDonald, zinc plate for Edward Everett Norwood bookplate, c. 1915
14. J.E.H. MacDonald, bookplate for Dr. James MacCallum, c. 1919
15. J.E.H. MacDonald, drawing for Toronto Public Library bookplate, 1919
16. J.E.H. MacDonald, bookplate for the Toronto Public Library, 1919
17. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for William Walker Alexander, August 1911
18. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for Sir John Craig Eaton, 1918
19. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for the John Ross Historical Collection of Canadiana, Toronto Public Library, 1919
20. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for Joseph J. Murphy, 1921
21. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for L.V. Redman, 1928
22. William Walker Alexander, bookplate for Norman M. Keith, 1939
23. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for Newton MacTavish, 1918
24. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for Frederick William Perry, 1918
25. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for Aniceta Ruth Dorman, 1918
26. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for Sir Edmund Walker, 1919
27. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for John William Chester, 1920
28. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for Stanley Harrod, 1920
29. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for the Bank of Montreal, 1921
30. Stanley Harrod, bookplate for T.F. McIlwraith, 1927
31. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for Morley Ayearst, 1917
32. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for John and Alma Ayearst, 1918
33. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for Walter McMichael, 1920
34. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for May Hurd Skinner, 1920
35. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for George Ridout, c. 1920
36. Morley Ayearst, bookplate for Viola L. Allen, 1920
37. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Vincent Massey, 1913
38. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Alfred T. De Lury, 1915
39. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Sproatt and Rolph, Architects, 1915
40. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Sir Joseph Wesley Flavelle, 1926
41. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Vincent and Alice Massey, 1928
42. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for the Art Gallery of Toronto, 1932
43. Alexander Scott Carter, drawing for Ralph Dilworth bookplate, c. 1935. Courtesy of the Arts and Letters Club, Toronto
44. Alexander Scott Carter, copperplate for Ralph Dilworth bookplate, c. 1935. Courtesy of the Arts and Letters Club, Toronto
45. Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Ralph Dilworth, c. 1935
46. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for Leslie Victor Smith, 1928
47. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for the Royal York Hotel, 1929
48. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for Leslie Victor Smith, 1929
49. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for Grace Lister Curle, 1932
50. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for the University Schools, University of Toronto, 1939
51. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for Frederick S. Challener, 1944
52. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, Toronto Branch, 1945
53. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for the Alice Magee Brunot Collection, St. Mary's Dominican College Library, New Orleans, 1947
54. Winward Prescott, Stanley Harrod and Morley Ayearst. *A List of Canadian Bookplates: With a Review of the History of Ex Libris in the Dominion*. Boston: Society of Bookplate Bibliophiles, 1919
55. *Yearbook 1936 of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers* 14 (1936). Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for Edith Ellis Smith, 1929
56. *Yearbook 1939 of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers* 17 (1939). William Walker Alexander, bookplate for Elsie Doolittle Alexander, 1928
57. *Yearbook 1942 of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers* 19 (1942). Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Marion Eva Stimson, 1939
58. William Colgate. *The Bookplates of Leslie Victor Smith*. Weston, Ontario: The Old Rectory Press, 1947. Leslie Victor Smith, bookplate for William G. Colgate, 1942

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380 Sussex Drive, P.O. Box 427, Station A
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 9N4

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Cover: Alexander Scott Carter, bookplate for Vincent and Alice Massey (detail), 1928 [41]