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Journal of the Canadian Association for Conservation (J. CAC), Volume 37
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Journal de l'Association canadienne pour la conservation et la restauration (J. ACCR), Volume 37
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Early Manufacture of Artists' Materials in Canada: A History of Canadian Art Laboratory

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Canadian Art Laboratory was a notable Canadian manufacturer and international supplier of artists' materials during the early- to mid-twentieth century. Founded in Toronto in the early 1930s by chemical engineer Henry James Goulding Carter, this firm filled a void in the manufacturing sector of artists' materials in Canada. Canadian Art Laboratory flourished for just over twenty years until the company was officially dissolved in 1954. It claims to have pioneered titanium white as an artists' paint in 1932 and manufactured the first watercolours in Canada. The reasons for the demise of Canadian Art Laboratory after such a short period of operation are not entirely clear. This research examines the history and activities of the company and its products in the context of a specific period in Canadian history when Canadian art technique and Canadian-made artists' materials were being recognized and promoted.

Canadian Art Laboratory était un important fabricant canadien et fournisseur international de matériel d'artiste dans la première moitié du XXe siècle. Établie à Toronto dans les années 1930 par Henry James Goulding Carter, un ingénieur chimiste, cette entreprise a comblé un vide dans le secteur de la fabrication de matériel d'artiste au Canada. Canadian Art Laboratory a opéré pendant un peu plus de vingt ans, jusqu'à sa dissolution en 1954. L'entreprise affirme avoir lancé l'utilisation du blanc de titane dans la peinture d'artiste en 1932 et avoir fabriqué les premières aquarelles au Canada. Les raisons de la disparition de Canadian Art Laboratory après une si courte période de fonctionnement ne sont pas tout à fait claires. Cette recherche porte sur l'histoire et les activités de l'entreprise et de ses produits dans le contexte d'une période spécifique de l'histoire canadienne où les techniques artistiques canadiennes et les matériaux d'artiste faits au Canada étaient soutenus et reconnus.

Manuscript received April 2010; revised manuscript received March 2012

Introduction

By the turn of the twentieth century, early itinerant painters who worked in Ontario had been replaced by a new, emerging group of painters who flocked to larger metropolitan centres such as Hamilton, London and Toronto. Even at the height of the Great Depression we find over forty artists listed in the Toronto business directory including painters Wyly Grier (1862-1957), Lawren S. Harris (1885-1970) and John W. Beatty (1869-1941).¹ As artists gathered together in these metropolitan centres, they often shared studio facilities and formed artistic communities; some groups sketched together, both in the studio and *en plein air* (Figure 1).² They also belonged to arts organizations that promoted the advancement of Canadian art such as the Ontario Society of Artists founded in 1872, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts founded in 1880, the Toronto Art Students League founded in 1886, and The Arts and Letters Club formed in Toronto in 1908.³ These professional and social networks facilitated discussions on a variety of philosophical issues pertaining to art but also practical issues of painting. The nature, availability, stability and costs of artists' materials were always important issues for artists, as the quality of their work depended upon them. It is not surprising, therefore, that a Canadian manufacturer of art materials emerged in the early 1930s to supply this growing number of artists with the materials they desired. The name of the company was Canadian Art Laboratory. This research reveals that it was once a successful Canadian manufacturer that distributed artists' materials across the country and abroad for just over twenty years, from the early 1930s through the 1950s. Canadian Art Laboratory contributed to the development of art in Canada by providing artists with the

opportunity to buy uniquely Canadian-made artists' materials and participate in demonstrations of these products by local Toronto artists. At the beginning of one catalogue of Canadian Art Laboratory, it clearly states that through the manufacture of artists' supplies and permanent artists' oils and watercolours, it has the same desire as Canadian artists to "perpetuate and establish a Canadian technique and tradition."⁴



Figure 1. Toronto Art Students League members sketching outdoors [from left to right: C.W. Jefferys, Miss Henrietta Hancock (Mrs. H. Brittain), F.H. Brigden, Miss Stoodley (seated), Miss. J.M.F. Adams (Mrs. C.W. Jefferys), Mrs. Gertrude E. Spurr (Gertrude Spurr Cutts), Miss Hegler], photograph taken between 1886 and 1904. Photograph: Archives of Ontario, F-1066.

The Early Distribution of Artists' Materials in Canada

The importation, distribution and manufacture of artists' materials in Canada has not been widely studied; however, research conducted by Levenson in the 1980s on painters in Quebec City indicates that up to the mid-nineteenth century, artists' materials were primarily imported from countries such as France, Britain and the United States.⁵ The rest of Canada was obtaining its artists' materials primarily from Britain and the United States. Historical evidence of this practice can readily be found in early Canadian newspaper advertisements where, for example, reference is made to British manufactured artists' materials being available in Toronto.⁶ These imported materials were often sold by apothecary shops and through retail and wholesale suppliers of oils, paints and varnishes (**Figure 2**). The 1900 Toronto business directory lists only two entries advertising under the specific heading of "Artists' Materials": The Art Metropole and The E. Harris Co. Ltd.⁷ This lack of reference to specialty shops in such a large metropolitan centre suggests that artists obtained their supplies through a variety of shops not necessarily specializing only in artists' materials and not necessarily advertising in the Toronto business directory.

The sale of artists' materials was to become a continually expanding enterprise in Toronto throughout the twentieth century as the demand for high quality and specialized artists' materials increased. Early twentieth-century directories in Toronto provide insight into the number of firms advertising and distributing artists' materials at that time and clearly reveal the extent of the expansion of this trade on a yearly basis (**Appendix I**). From only two suppliers listed alphabetically under "artists' materials" in 1900, the number rose to seven in 1928 and twelve in 1932.^{8,9} Canadian Art Laboratory was listed in the *Toronto City Directory* for the first time in 1939 along with six additional companies (**Figure 3**).¹⁰ They were a part of the steady expansion of specialized shops in Toronto but they were also the only non-subsidiary, large-scale manufacturer of artists' materials in Canada throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Artists

Use only the celebrated WINSOR & NEWTON Colors, as used by Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family.

Ask your art dealer for them and take no other.

A. RAMSAY & SON, MONTREAL,
Wholesale Agents for Canada

Figure 2. Advertisement in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto (Dec. 10, 1892, p. 20) for imported artists' materials from the London firm of Winsor & Newton.

History of Canadian Art Laboratory

Canadian Art Laboratory was founded in Toronto in the early 1930s by chemical engineer Henry James Goulding Carter (active 1932-1951).¹¹ In later promotional literature, Carter is listed as H. James Carter, B.A.Sc., and he is presumably the "nationally known colour chemist who has made a life study of the fine arts" as described in company catalogues and promotional literature.¹² Little is known of Carter's activities until the incorporation of his business.

On March 28, 1947 the company was incorporated by letters patent to form Canadian Art Laboratory Ltd. In the letters patent, Carter declares that:

For the past 9 years I have carried on business at the City of Toronto under the firm name and style of Canadian Art Laboratory and during the whole of the said period I have been sole proprietor of the said business, no one being or having been associated with me in any partnership whatsoever.¹³

This would indicate that Carter had been in business since 1938, yet advertising material published after incorporation states that the company was in business since 1932 and that it "pioneered" titanium white as an artists' paint in 1932.^{14,15} It is probable that Carter was developing artists' materials and researching paints in the early 1930s under the name of Canadian Art Laboratory but only considered his practice a true business operation from 1938 onward. This logical assumption is supported by the fact that he first advertised his business as a wholesaler of artists' materials in the *Toronto City Directory* in 1939 and information contained in the directory may have been gathered in the previous year.¹⁶ Reasons for incorporation in 1947 may have been that the company required expansion for a wider global market and wished to benefit from the financial and limited liability aspects of incorporation.

Examining information contained in the letters patent provides us with an understanding of how the company intended to conduct its business.

ARTISTS' MATERIALS

Art Metropole The, 36 Adelaide w AD 7241
ARTISTS SUPPLY CO, LIMITED,
35 Wellington West, Phones ADelaide
8351-8352
Candn Art Laboratory, 154-158 Dalhousie WA
8614
Grumbacher M, 55 York WA 2110
Loomis & Toles, 23 Grenville KI 6993
Reeves & Sons (Canada) Ltd, 120 Richmond
w, Telephone EL 0406, Mr E J T Hayes mgr
Tigert Edwd E, 9 Wellington e WA 5139

Figure 3. First advertisement for Canadian Art Laboratory in the *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1939), p. 11.

The objects for which incorporation was sought were:

- (a) To manufacture, process, buy, sell, import, export or in any other manner deal in supplies, appliances and equipment used in the practice, study and pursuit of the graphic arts; and
- (b) Manufacture, process, buy, sell, import, export or in any other manner deal in paints, varnishes, shellacs, stains, oils, lacquers, inks, pigments, dye stuffs and colouring materials of all kinds...¹⁷

In the Companies Information Act document of March 31, 1947, H.J.G. Carter is listed as being on the board of directors, president and chief officer or manager of the newly formed Canadian Art Laboratory Ltd. and a Mary S. Carter is listed as being on the board of directors and secretary-treasurer. Both Carters are listed as residents of Port Credit, Ontario, so it is possible that they were related. Little biographical information is available about the Carters. The permanent directors of the company as listed in the Companies Information Act document were H. J. G. Carter, Mary S. Carter and Thomas Scott.¹⁸

In 1950, Canadian Art Laboratory failed to submit an annual return of information and filing fee to the provincial secretary by the required date, stating that it had undergone considerable re-organization over the past year.¹⁹ This is the first indication that the company was in some managerial and perhaps financial crisis. In March of 1950, director Thomas Scott was replaced by Harry A. Scarlett.²⁰ On July 24, 1951, both Carters and Scarlett resigned and the new directors are listed as John W. Sharp and P.G. Hillhouse of Cowansville, Quebec, and Ross Clarkson of Montreal, Quebec.²¹ The founder of Canadian Art Laboratory, Henry James Goulding Carter, was no longer active as a director.

By the time the company dissolved in 1954, the Canadian market was opening up to artists' materials from larger, international firms such as Winsor & Newton, Rowney, Reeves & Sons and Grumbacher. It is understandable that a small enterprise such as Canadian Art Laboratory would find it difficult to compete with these well-established artists' suppliers in the U.S. and U.K. On October 11, 1952, an application to surrender its charter was published in the Ontario *Gazette*. The corporation of Canadian Art Laboratory was officially dissolved on February 22, 1954.²²

Locations and Activities of Canadian Art Laboratory

In the *Toronto Business Directory* of 1939 we see the first listing for Canadian Art Laboratory, located at 154-158 Dalhousie Street in Toronto.²³ The company was likely located at this address in 1938 since, as previously mentioned, directory information may have been collected in the previous year. In the 1942 business directory, Canadian Art Laboratory was listed at 96 Queen Street East (**Figure 4**) in the historic Richard Bigley Building (now 96-98 Queen Street East).²⁴ Again, the company could have been located at this address in 1941 or earlier. In the 1947 business directory (street guide), they are listed as occupying the second and third floor of 98 Queen Street East and they are identified as suppliers of artists' oils and paints.²⁵ This information was likely obtained in 1946 because in the 1947



Figure 4. Location of Canadian Art Laboratory (ca.1942-1947). At centre, the tallest building with the arched window, is the Richard Bigley Building, now 98 Queen Street East. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.

issue of *Canadian Art* they are listed as being located at their new address of 536 Eastern Avenue (**Figure 5**).²⁶ A short time later, Canadian Art Laboratory expanded its operation and head office to 534-536 Eastern Avenue.²⁷ The company remained at this address until it was officially dissolved on February 22, 1954.

Aims and Principles

The aims and principles guiding the Canadian Art Laboratory were laid out at the beginning of their promotional catalogues. Their goals were primarily to supply artists with permanent oil colours using the highest quality materials and to provide advice to artists on technical matters.²⁸ In the introduction to the 1949 Canadian Art Laboratory catalogue, it is stated:

TO YOU
THE CANADIAN ARTIST

We have created, as Color Chemists, Permanent Artists Oils and Permanent Watercolours and attendant Artists supplies



Figure 5. Location of Canadian Art Laboratory (ca.1947-1954). Photograph shows 532-536 Eastern Avenue. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.

with the same desire as you have to perpetuate and establish a CANADIAN TECHNIQUE & TRADITION. We have created our colors with all the old traditional knowledges and have added True Palette Permanency for your most exacting demands.

All our Oils, Watercolors and other Art Color products are MADE IN CANADA AT OUR TORONTO LABORATORY.

We welcome and appreciate your close interest in our development.

H. JAMES CARTER, B.A.Sc.²⁹

Clearly, the company was concerned with demands by artists to produce and supply chemically stable materials. Canadian Art Laboratory claimed in their 1949 catalogue, that their oil colours exceeded the requirements set out by the American Artists' Professional League and the tentative specifications of the American Artists' Professional Association.³⁰

The American Artists' Professional Association was conceived in 1928 by F. Ballard Williams, assistant treasurer of the National Academy of Design in New York, with the aim of establishing a "national organization to meet the increasing interests in traditional realism in American art."³¹ With funding from the Carnegie Corporation Endowment Fund they also established a colour pigment research program which was completed in 1932. This association thus became the leading authority on artists' pigments at that time and was also "instrumental in establishing the U.S. Bureau of Standards original set of government-sponsored standards for artists' colors."³² Canadian Art Laboratory adopted these American standards in the manufacture of their own artists' colours and even designated a permanent palette of colours with the label of GOLD SEAL which represented Canadian Art Laboratory's guarantee of permanence.³³

Marketing of Canadian Art Laboratory Products

Canadian Art Laboratory products may have been promoted through brochures and advertisements in small local newspapers in their early years of operation. They published an advertisement in the first edition of *Canadian Art* magazine in 1943 which would have brought them to the attention of many national and international art professionals (Figure 6).³⁴ In this advertisement, the company was located at its second address which was 96 Queen Street East. The advertisement stated that Canadian Art Laboratory was established in 1932 and that they were specialists in "Fine Artists' Oils, Designers' Gouache Colours, Showcard Colours, Powder Temperas."³⁵ In the following year, they added the slogan "Buy Canadian – Buy the Best" into many of their advertisements, thus appealing to a patriotic response by consumers.³⁶

In a 1944 advertisement Canadian Art Laboratory listed sixteen Canadian cities in which dealers sold their products. These included Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton, Peterborough, Chatham, Sarnia, London, Guelph, Winnipeg, Newmarket, Calgary, Windsor, Ottawa, Fort William, Halifax and Chesley.³⁷

Sales had clearly expanded across Canada suggesting that there was great demand for their materials. At the same time the company was also adding to the range of materials it produced and by 1945 it was manufacturing twenty-eight gouache colours.³⁸ This appears to be an astonishing number of colours for such a small business. Another innovation was the introduction of "Foundation White" which was an oil-bound zinc oxide paint³⁹ used for grounds and described as having been "scientifically designed in our laboratories to collect and reflect light throughout your painting, adding brilliance to your work!"⁴⁰ They also stated that it formed a permanent white, was non-absorbent, provided good adhesion to oil paint, and would not darken with age.⁴¹ It was well known at this time that the more traditional lead white (Flake White) used in grounds could darken when exposed to hydrogen sulphide in the environment, or when mixed with sulphide containing pigments. Without the benefit of scientific analysis of "Foundation White" it is not possible to establish whether or not Canadian Art Laboratory mixed it with other white pigments to improve the drying properties and poor hiding power of zinc oxide paint.⁴²

Unfortunately, there is no further information on their development of titanium white as an artists' pigment apart from an advertisement which again states that CALAB pioneered titanium white in 1932 and that there are two varieties; titanium white #1 and titanium white #2. It further states that #2 is more fluid than #1 for winter outdoor sketching.⁴³ In their 1949 catalogue they list two varieties for sale; one is simply listed as titanium white and the other is listed as titanium white #2 (softer).⁴⁴

It is the "permanent" aspect of their paint materials that was most often used to differentiate Canadian Art Laboratory and to market themselves as being above the rest of the crowd. In 1946, they claimed to have produced "permanent" artists' oils and referred to themselves as "Artists' Colourmen,"⁴⁵ a traditional designation used in Britain for manufacturers and distributors of artists' materials.



Figure 6. Canadian Art Laboratory advertisement in the first volume of *Canadian Art*, 1943, p. 41.

By 1947, the year of their incorporation, Canadian Art Laboratory placed an ad in *Canadian Art* which advertised a custom designed “CALAB” premier sketch box, which was a further expansion of their range in artists’ materials.⁴⁶ One should note that their CALAB acronym appeared only after incorporation but was used along with the acronyms C.A.L. and CAL over the years. The company was now identified as “Canadian Art Laboratory Limited” and was located at its new facility at 536 Eastern Avenue at the corner of Carlaw Avenue.^{47,48} They also stated that CALAB products were sold throughout the world, indicating a significant change in marketing practice.⁴⁹ The company had extended its operations to include distributors of its products in Vancouver (Clayton’s and then Lush-Jones Ltd.), the British Isles (Arts & Crafts Ltd. in Doncaster) and the United States (Dick Blick Co., Galesburg, Illinois).⁵⁰ This necessitated a substantial expansion of their facilities to include 534-6 Eastern Avenue, although in some advertisements, even after 1948, only their 536 address appeared. Canadian Art Laboratory encouraged artists to visit their facilities for technical consultations and advertised mixed technique demonstrations of their products.⁵¹ Demonstrators included L.A.C. Panton, Director of Art, Northern Vocational School, Toronto, and Carl Schaefer, instructor and artist, Ontario College of Art, Toronto.⁵²

By 1949, international sales of Canadian Art Laboratory products included the United States (Dick Blick Co.), South Africa (C.L. Konings), South America (Joao Muller) and the British Isles (Arts & Crafts Ltd.).⁵³ Little indicates the exact nature of their marketing abroad except for six Canadian Art Laboratory pamphlets (advertisements) held by Blick Art Materials in Galesburg, Illinois, USA.⁵⁴ The pamphlets are identified by date, colour of the Dick Blick Co. catalogue in which Canadian Art Laboratory advertisements appeared, colour of the pamphlet, or are described as posters.⁵⁵ Three of the pamphlets that appeared in Dick Blick Co. catalogues are dated to 1950 and the remaining undated pamphlets date from post 1948 since this is when Canadian Art Laboratory began using Dick Blick Co. as a distributor in the United States. Some of the pamphlets included the reproduction of a handwritten testimonial letter by American artist James M. Sessions (1882-1962) dated 1948.⁵⁶ In this letter, Sessions stated that he had used CALAB oil and watercolours and had found them to be good.⁵⁷ There is also a reproduction of one of Sessions’ paintings in the catalogue and he stated that it was done in CALAB watercolour on Blick’s Watercolour Board.⁵⁸ This advertising strategy harmoniously promoted both companies’ materials by the endorsement of a practising artist.

The range of materials offered to Dick Blick Co. for distribution included oil and watercolour paints, designers’ gouache, sets of oils, and brushes. Many of the advertisements contained “The Ten Points of CALAB Superiority.”⁵⁹ Several of these points promoted the company’s commitment to high standards of manufacture and unequalled quality. Point 9 stated:

Every colour surpasses all known standards and specifications of The Professional Art Societies and Bureaus throughout the world.⁶⁰

It is apparent from this promotional material, that Canadian Art Laboratory was seriously concerned with the quality of its materials and permanency of its products. Canadian Art Laboratory claimed to have released their “CANLAB PERMANENT ARTISTS WATERCOLOUR PAINTS” after three years of testing and stated that these were the first watercolours to have been manufactured in Canada.⁶¹ Unfortunately, no details were found on any of the testing methods used by Canadian Art Laboratory for its products apart from a reference to the use of a fadeometer to test light fastness.⁶² In one of their last advertisements in *Canadian Art* in 1950, they promoted the permanence of their materials in painting by stating:

...but we do know it will last for ever...if the artist used “CALAB” OILS.⁶³

Range of Artists’ Materials

Following incorporation in 1947 and the ensuing expansion of the operation, Canadian Art Laboratory offered a wide variety of artists’ materials. We can find colours listed in their catalogues such as Artists’ Watercolours, Permanent Artists’ Oil Colours, Artists’ Foundation White, Artists’ Dry Pigments, CALAB Designers Colours, C.A.L. Professional Showcard Colours, C.A.L. Dry Tempera Colours, and C.A.L. Student Watercolour Cakes. Additional items offered for sale included palette knives with walnut handles, art papers, artists’ canvas and stretcher pieces, canvas panels called the “High Park Panel,” and other miscellaneous items.⁶⁴ A Canadian Art Laboratory catalogue dated February 1, 1949 is available for study at the National Gallery of Canada and provides important information about these products.⁶⁵ This publication contains illustrations, product information and manufacturing details. Canadian Art Laboratory products listed in the 1949 catalogue were manufactured using domestic and imported ingredients. For example, Canadian Art Laboratory oil colours were made with imported pigments (and possibly some domestic pigments) and cold pressed Canadian linseed oil.⁶⁶ These oil colours were also available in metal tubes with metal sealed tops to keep the paint fresh. The user had to pierce the metal seal with a pin to squeeze out the paint. These specialized metal tubes were first advertised in *Canadian Art* in 1947 stating that “Canadian Art Laboratory now present pin point protection” (**Figure 7**).⁶⁷ They also produced retouching varnish and damar varnish by mixing Singapore damar gum with turpentine, and Canadian Art Laboratory claimed to be the first colour house to offer a new artists’ siccative [sic] which did not contain lead.⁶⁸ Canadian Art Laboratory also offered dry pigments, various binders such as skin glue, and special mixed technique sets which they stated were used in the Banff Summer School (Banff School of Fine Arts) and approved by Canada’s leading artists.⁶⁹ They did not provide specific names of artists who endorsed this product, but the set included materials such as skin glue, whiting and damar crystals so that artists could mix their own size for canvases and make ground preparations and varnishes.

A line of brushes offered by Canadian Art Laboratory was listed as “a new scientific-hand-made-line of Artists brushes” and it stated that they were the result of the “confusion of Post-

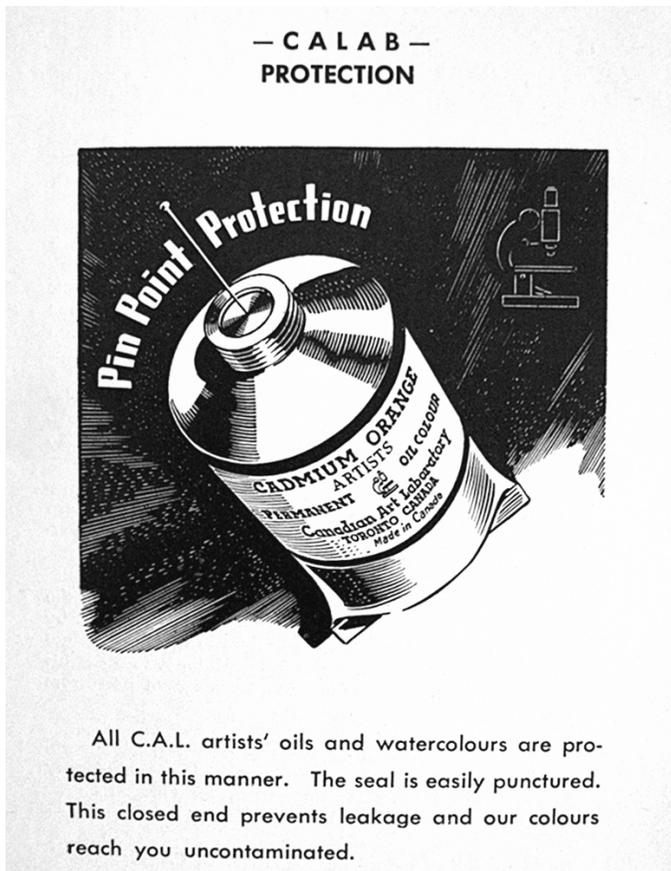


Figure 7. Example of specialized oil tube supplied by Canadian Art Laboratory. Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), inside cover. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCS1 SCHA C351.

War Brush manufacturing.”⁷⁰ According to the explanation in the Canadian Art Laboratory catalogue, imported brushes were described as difficult to obtain and expensive to the artist.⁷¹ These statements in their catalogue can be substantiated by referring to information found on Winsor & Newton’s website where they state that it was difficult for them to attract brush-makers after the Second World War because of the sedentary nature of this job and they ended up looking for a new factory site after the war which had a surplus of labour.⁷² This might account for a general shortage of artist’s brushes in the industry at that time. The hairs which were used for Canadian Art Laboratory brushes were imported and assembled in their factory.⁷³ Sizes were listed as standard numerical sizes and also as “Large English Sizes.”⁷⁴

Among the items offered in the 1949 catalogue was a variety of artists’ boxes some of which were made of maple and plywood.⁷⁵ Boxes were named after artists, such as the Frederick Henry Brigden watercolour box that was developed for junior artists. Brigden, a Canadian watercolour artist (1871-1956), selected the palette of colours for the box.⁷⁶ Also offered was an artist’s sketch box easel that was for indoor and outdoor sketching. It had adjustable legs which allowed the artist to work 42” off the ground and the easel section held four panels from 12” x 16” to 27” by expanding the panel holder. It had a leather shoulder carrying strap and the box was made of white oak and

held a mahogany palette.⁷⁷ The “Laurentian Sketch Box” was said to have been conceived by consulting with fifty leading Canadian artists and it was built by skilled woodworkers. It held two 12” x 16” panels and also held a clear lacquered palette which did not stain.⁷⁸ They also listed a “Georgian Bay Palette” in their catalogue that was made of plywood and weatherproofed with a clear lacquer. The “Ferguson Palette” was described as “revolutionary” and was a pad of fifty sheets of non-absorbent paper which could be changed by tearing off the sheets.⁷⁹ Canadian Art Laboratory was a proud Canadian company that sought to distinguish itself in the world by giving its products names that were taken from Canadian geographic regions, cities or Canadian artists.

Preserved Examples of Products

Examples of Canadian Art Laboratory products have been found in two artists’ paintboxes in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario.⁸⁰ One paintbox is identified as having belonged to Canadian artist J. E. H. MacDonald (1873-1932) (**Figures 8 and 9**). There are three Canadian Art Laboratory products found in this paintbox consisting of two tubes of oil paint (yellow ochre and cadmium red deep) and one bottle of Spirits of Turpentine. It is possible that these items were added after the death of the artist since Canadian Art Laboratory was not established until 1932. The second box is identified as belonging to Canadian artist A.J. Casson (1898-1992) (**Figure 10**) and contains one Canadian Art Laboratory paint tube (cobalt violet) out of a total of nine tubes of paint found in the paintbox (**Figure 11**). Rare examples of Canadian Art Laboratory products can also be found in artists’ materials study collections such as that found within the Art Conservation Program, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, which provide valuable information on the physical nature of Canadian Art Laboratory products. Two Canadian Art Laboratory products in the study collection at Queen’s University include a cardboard container of skin glue (**Figure 12**) and a glass jar of monastral blue oil colour (**Figure 13**). By preserving and maintaining these collections we will be able to study and analyze their contents in the future.

Conclusions

Canadian Art Laboratory was a notable manufacturer and international supplier of artists’ materials during the early- to mid-twentieth century. Founded in Toronto in the early 1930s by chemical engineer Henry James Goulding Carter, this firm filled a void in the manufacturing sector of artists’ materials in Canada.

Canadian Art Laboratory flourished until the company was officially dissolved in 1954. Of note was the purported intense internal scrutiny of their manufacturing processes and quest for permanence of their materials. They published technical information about their products in catalogues such as details on specific ingredients, durability and handling qualities and invited artists to visit their laboratory to discuss technical concerns. The company strived to meet the highest U.S. standards in paint-manufacturing practice; however, they always maintained a Canadian distinctiveness through the naming of their products. No other manufacturer of artists’ materials at that time would



Figure 8. Paintbox belonging to J.E.H. MacDonald containing two tubes of oil paint (yellow ochre and cadmium red deep) and a bottle of Spirits of Turpentine manufactured by Canadian Art Laboratory, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, paintbox A1981.38. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.

have distributed a brush called “Banff Brights” or “Laurentian Rounds.” Their overt nationalistic attitudes mirrored a broader movement to strengthen the Canadian identity that was often loudly expressed in their promotional literature: “Buy Canadian – Buy the Best.” The products manufactured and distributed by this company can be found in a few artists’ paintboxes and artists’ materials study collections. They are a reminder of the exceptional achievement of this early Canadian manufacturer of artists’ materials.

Above all, Canadian Art Laboratory products can be expected to be found in the works painted by Canadian artists and international artists beginning in the early 1930s to the 1950s. Furthermore, it is now possible to begin to draw up an inventory of specific Canadian Art Laboratory artists’ materials, paints, brushes, varnishes, etc., to which samples and descriptive information from Canadian paintings can be compared. A bank



Figure 9. Detail of the label on the Spirits of Turpentine bottle shown in Figure 8. It is an early example of the research microscope logo found on many of their products. The absence of “Limited” on the label does not mean that it was not manufactured after the business incorporated. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, paintbox A1981.38. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.

of knowledge can be assembled which may assist in providing information on the names of individual artists who used these products, and it may be possible to date works of art based on the use of Canadian Art Laboratory art materials. Perhaps in time, we will come to identify the very canvases over which Canadian Art Laboratory colours were brushed by artists to create their works of art.



Figure 10. Paintbox belonging to A.J. Casson at McMichael Canadian Art Collection A1981.4.1-19. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.



Figure 11. A tube of cobalt violet oil paint manufactured by Canadian Art Laboratory, right-hand tube (detail of A1981.4.1-19). Photograph: Barbara Klempan.



Figure 12. Cardboard container of granulated skin glue in the study collection at Queen's University. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.



Figure 13. Glass jar of monastral blue oil paint in the study collection at Queen's University. Photograph: Barbara Klempan.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the following people who generously contributed their time to make this research possible: Cathy Stewart, formally the conservator at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, who gave me full access to the museum's collection of paintboxes; Robert Buchsbaum and Lanny Rosenbaum, Dick Blick Art Materials, who kindly sent me archival documents relating to Canadian Art Laboratory; and Gilbert Gignac for his assistance during the writing process.

Notes and References

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2. Silcox, David, *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson* (Richmond Hill: Firefly Books Ltd., 2003), p. 125.
3. Lord, Barry, *History of Painting in Canada* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), pp. 78-79, 116, 120-21. Note: The Ontario Society of Artists was founded in 1872 and not in 1873 as published in this reference.

4. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), inside cover. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
5. Levenson, Rustin, "Materials and Techniques of Painters in Quebec City 1760 – 1850," *Journal of Canadian Art History*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1983, pp. 9-16.
6. *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Oct. 30, 1886, p.16.
7. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1900), p. 912.
8. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1928), p. 1715.
9. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1932), pp. 2223-24.
10. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1939), p. 11.
11. Letters Patent (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch, March 28, 1947), TC 32572.
12. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 2. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
13. Letters Patent (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch, March 28, 1947), TC 32572.

14. *Canadian Art*, vol. 1, no. 1, Oct/Nov 1943, p. 41.
15. *Canadian Art*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1948-49, p. 130.
16. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1939), pp. 11, 216.
17. Letters Patent (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch, March 28, 1947), TC 32572.
18. The Companies Information Act, Information and Particulars, as of March 31, 1947 (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch), TC 32572.
19. Letter from Canadian Art Laboratory to the Provincial Secretary, January 2, 1950 (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch), TC 32572.
20. Correspondence (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch), TC 32572.
21. Ibid.
22. Letter to Canadian Art Laboratory from the Provincial Secretary informing them of the official date of Corporation Dissolution which was February 22, 1954 (Toronto: Ministry of Consumer Business Services and Companies Branch), TC 32572.
23. *Might's Toronto Buyers' Guide and Classified Business Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1939), p. 11.
24. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1942), p. 10.
25. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1947), p. 410.
26. *Canadian Art*, vol. 4, no. 2, Feb/Mar 1947, p. 89.
27. *Canadian Art*, vol. 6, 1948-49, p. 34.
28. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 2. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
29. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), inside cover. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
30. Ibid.
31. The American Artists Professional League, 47 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003, <<http://www.americanartistsprofessionalleague.org>>. Accessed December 2012.
32. Ibid.
33. *The Canadian Art Laboratory, A Statement of its Aims and Principles*, n.d. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
34. *Canadian Art*, vol. 1, no. 1, Oct/Nov 1943, p. 41.
35. Ibid.
36. *Canadian Art*, vol. 1, no. 4, Apr/May 1944, p. 176.
37. *Canadian Art*, vol. 2, no. 1, Oct/Nov 1944, p. 46.
38. *Canadian Art*, vol. 2, no. 2, Dec 1944/Jan 1945, p. 91.
39. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 8. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
40. *Canadian Art*, vol. 3, no. 1, Oct/Nov 1945, p. 45.
41. Ibid.
42. Kühn, Hermann, "Zinc White," in: *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics*, vol.1, edited by Robert Feller (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1986), p. 171.
43. *Canadian Art*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1948/49, p. 130.
44. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 4. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
45. *Canadian Art*, vol. 3, no. 4, Jul 1946, p. 179.
46. *Canadian Art*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1947, p. 177.
47. Ibid.
48. The term "limited" is used only after incorporation but some products produced after that date appear without the term "limited."
49. *Canadian Art*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1947, p. 47.
50. *Canadian Art*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1948, p. 34.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), front cover. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSI SCHA C351.
54. A total of six photocopied pamphlets were received from Dick Blick Co. in 2006. Three were identified by the colour of the Dick Blick Co. catalogue which contained the Canadian Art Laboratory advertisement, one was described by the pamphlet colour and two were identified as posters:

1950 Dick Blick yellow catalogue, pp. 96-97; 1950 Dick Blick purple catalogue, pp. 76-77; 1950 Dick Blick yellow catalogue, pp. 96-97; blue pamphlet – n.d.; poster, n.d., no page; poster size, n.d., no page, (Galesburg, IL: Dick Blick Co. archives).

55. Ibid.

56. CALAB advertising pamphlet, blue pamphlet, n.d., (Galesburg, IL: Dick Blick Co. archives).

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. CALAB advertisements, 1950 Dick Blick purple catalogue p.77; blue pamphlet – n.d.; poster, n.d., no page; poster size, n.d., no page.

60. CALAB advertising pamphlet, 1950 Dick Blick purple catalogue p. 77. (Galesburg, IL: Dick Blick Co. archives).

61. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 3. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

62. *The Canadian Art Laboratory, A Statement of its Aims and Principles*, n.d. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

63. *Canadian Art*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1950, p. 131.

64. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 26. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

65. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

66. Ibid, p. 6.

67. *Canadian Art*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1947, p. 89.

68. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 7. Note: from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

69. Ibid, p. 17.

70. Ibid, p. 10.

71. Ibid, p. 10.

72. Winsor & Newton, “The Winsor & Newton Story” (1832-2007) <<http://www.winsornewton.com>>. Accessed December 2012.

73. *Canadian Art Laboratory Catalogue* (Toronto, Feb. 1, 1949), p. 13. Note: from the collection of the National

Gallery of Canada, catalogue no. SCSi SCHA C351.

74. Ibid, pp. 10-15.

75. Ibid, pp. 18-19.

76. Ibid, p. 19.

77. Ibid, p. 25.

78. Ibid, p. 25.

79. Ibid, pp. 26, 29.

80. The source or mode of acquisition of paintboxes in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is not always indicated in their records.

Appendix I: An Overview of Advertisements for Artists' Materials in Toronto (1900-1933)

The *Toronto City Directories* included in this research listed business firms, private citizens, classified businesses, and eventually the *Toronto Buyer's Guide*. It should be noted here that submissions to the directory may have been obtained for publication a year before printing. Headings in the business directories for suppliers of art materials changed throughout the twentieth century and we sometimes find suppliers listed under “Artists' Materials,” “Painters' Supplies,” “Paints, Oils and Varnish,” “Artists' Supplies,” “Canadian Artists” and even “Art Goods & Bric-A-Brac.”

In the *Toronto City Directory* of 1900, there is one heading for “Artists' Materials” and only two companies are listed: Art Metropole located at 131 & 133 Yonge Street and The E. Harris Co. Ltd. located at 44 King Street West. In the alphabetical listing of the 1902 *Toronto City Directory* we find George Ridot & Co. listed as manufacturers' agents located at 75 York Street. By 1903, George Ridot is one of four suppliers of artists' materials advertising in the city directory under Artists' Materials (the other three suppliers are: The Art Metropole, T. A. Crowley, and E. Harris Co. of Toronto Ltd.) and he is located at 77 York Street, Toronto. He later shared this address with Artists' Supply Co. Two of the four suppliers listed under “Artists' Materials” in 1903 are again listed in the same directory of 1903 under the heading of “Painters' Supplies” and one company is listed for a third time under “Paints, Oils, etc.,” suggesting that these are general categories for both suppliers of artists' materials and general paint materials.

In 1906 there are four entries under “Artists' Materials”: Art Metropole, 149 Yonge Street; Castrucci Co. (plaster casts), 423 Yonge Street; and Harris E. Co. of Toronto Ltd., 71 King Street East, along with the first entry for Artists' Supply Co. which is located at the same address as George Ridot – 77 York Street. George Ridot & Co. is not listed in the 1906 directory although he appears in the directory again in later years. It appears as though George Ridot & Co. and Artists' Supply Co. shared a space at 77 York Street between 1906 and 1911. In 1911, there are five companies listed in the directory under “Artists'

Materials”: The Art Metropole, 149 Yonge Street; The Artists’ Supply Co. at 77 York Street; Harris E. Co. of Toronto Ltd., 71 King Street East; George Ridot & Co. at 77 York Street; and Thompson P. Co. at 136 Victoria Street. George Ridot & Co. does not appear in the business directory after 1911.

In 1913 we find the first entry for Canadian Art Studio and Stationery Store in the directory under the heading of “Artists’ Supplies.” It is located at 479 Yonge Street and it specialized in ceramic decorating, but also advertised as being dealers in art and artists’ materials, ceramic supplies, and artistic picture framing. It is not unusual to have stores selling a variety of different art products to the consumer. In nineteenth-century advertisements placed in *The Globe and Mail*, artists’ materials were sold along with chemicals, spices, drugs and dye stuffs.¹ Even as late as 1931, under the heading of “Paints, Oils and Varnish” in the *Toronto Business Directory* (“Wholesale”), there is an advertisement for James W. Paton (James F. and Charles E. Paton), importer of and dealer in paints, oils, window glass of every description, brushes, artists’ tools, painters’ materials, etc. located at 20 Temperance Street, Toronto.²

By 1928 there are seven companies listed under “Artists’ Materials” and for the first time we see an entry for the firm of Reeves & Sons (Canada) Ltd. located at 60 Front Street West.³ The American company of Max Grumbacher, founded in New York in 1905, is listed for the first time in the 1933 directory and is located at 55 York Street.⁴ Subsequent directories have numerous suppliers of artists’ materials including subsidiaries of American and British companies.

1. *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Oct. 28, 1858, p. 3.
2. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1931), p. 2414.
3. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1928), p. 1715.
4. *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1933), p. 2260.