

Sale Name: Hodgins - Spring 2025 Fine Art

LOT 90 - David Brown Milne



Estimate \$ 15000-20000

Description

David Brown Milne

Canadian CSPWC, CGP, CSGA [1882-1953]

SPORTS ARENA (BANCROFT); 1951

watercolour on paper

14.25 x 21.5 in. (36.2 x 54.6 cm)

titled and dated verso;

inscribed on the gallery label verso: "Nov 10/69 This W.C. was viewed by David Milne Jr. / He said it was Bancroft / 'Sports Arena' written on back in his father's hand writing" and "Early Feb. 1951 this date is written on the back of the watercolour in Douglas Duncan's hand writing"

Reference: David Milne Jr. and David P. Silcox, "David B. Milne: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings" Volume 2: 1929-1953, cat. no. 503.2

Provenance: Douglas Duncan, Picture Loan Society; Kelly Galleries, Vancouver BC, 1954; Roberts Gallery, Toronto ON, 1969 (label verso); Art Emporium, Vancouver BC, 1977; Masters Gallery, Calgary AB, 1991 (label verso); Estate of Carolyn Tavender, Calgary AB, by descent to family

Exhibited:

Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (Toronto ON), 1952; Nickle Arts Museum (Calgary AB), "Sight and Site: Location and the Work of David B. Milne", August 8 - November 2, 1997 (label verso)

From the late 1940s until he stopped painting in 1952, David Milne focused much of his final artistic effort on the landscapes surrounding Baptiste Lake and Bancroft, Ontario.

Milne had spent much of his life moving from place to place, seeking inspiration from natural surroundings and often solitude in which to paint. In the late 1930s, after a separation from his first wife, Milne and his second wife, Kathleen, moved from Toronto to Uxbridge, Ontario. Their son, David Milne Jr., was born there shortly afterward, and life was busy, though Milne still painted regularly.

By 1947, however, Uxbridge had lost its artistic appeal for Milne, and he was restless and uninspired. In the fall of that year, he embarked on a solo, month-long trip to Baptiste Lake, near the southeastern edge of Algonquin Park, to concentrate on his work. He found a spot near the water where he enjoyed camping, and shortly thereafter, he bought the land from the government for the grand sum of ten dollars.¹

Working independently and without assistance, Milne built himself a log cabin on this land, taking a short break from painting to do so. Once the cabin was complete, he resumed his artistic practice in 1949 and painted there for the remainder of his life. Here, he could live in solitude and focus on his work, with his wife and son joining him periodically.

The small town of Bancroft, Ontario, located approximately 15 kilometers from Baptiste Lake, is the location of the scene depicted in this work "Sports Arena, Bancroft". The Bancroft Arena was the first covered sports facility in the community, and though it was demolished in 1970, it was still relatively new when Milne painted it in 1951. Like Milne's cabin, it was also built in 1948, on the west side of the York River, which runs through the town. It served as a community hub for "broomball, figure skating, racing tournaments, and free skating every Sunday."² As in most Canadian towns, however, hockey remained the main attraction.

Milne's work at this stage of his life holds a loose and confident elegance, forged over 40 years of painting. As David Silcox wrote: "There was one common aspect to these last paintings. Milne would prepare carefully, map out in his mind the sequence of the work, charge his various brushes with the exact amount of pigment and then, in the manner of the Zen masters, would paint the work in a few minutes."¹

The entire Milne family moved to Bancroft in 1952, as the artist's health began to deteriorate. After a series of strokes, David Milne passed away there a year later, in December 1953, at the age of 71.

References:

1. David Silcox, *David Milne: An Introduction to His Life and Art*, pp. 58-59
2. Orland and Syliva French, "North of 7...and Proud of It!: A parade of Memories from North Hastings," 2003, p. 185

See the [Legacy Obituary](#) for more information on Carolyn Tavender.

Quantity: 1

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