

CALIFORNIA
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Bulletin





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Front Cover: "Be Patriotic: Sign Your Country's Pledge to Save the Food." (1917) This dramatic color poster was created by pulp fiction illustrator Paul Stahr and published by W.F. Powers Co. Part of the World War Poster Collection, U.S. Government. See article on pp. 12-15.

Back Cover: Red Cross nurses at San Francisco headquarters, 1918. See article on pp. 32-35.

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A Book's Nature

The Book Arts of Peter & Donna Thomas

By Gary E. Strong

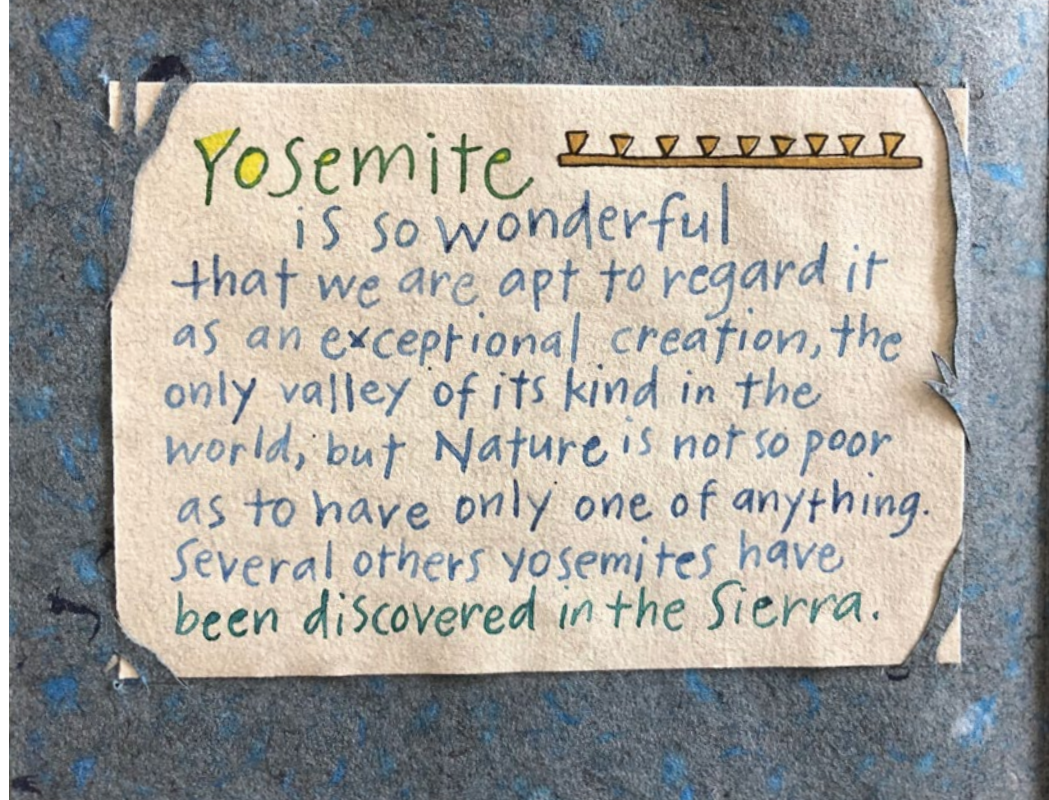


Building a representative collection of books created by Donna and Peter Thomas has engaged me over the last thirty-plus years. Their creative work has been a constant joy as a collector of artists' books and examples of the book arts. As Peter has mastered his papermaking skills and Donna her art, their books represent a significant contribution to California book arts. Beginning as The Good Book Press in 1977, they transitioned to the imprint of Peter and Donna Thomas around 1990. Their early work is highlighted by William Everson's *The Poet Is Dead: A Memorial for Robinson Jeffers* (1987). Title and linocut by Tom Killion. Inspired by Everson, they would later create *The Tarantella Rose* and *The Alder*.

Throughout the years, they produced many books, and many of them, inspired by Glen Dawson, were miniature books. All were created and printed on Peter's hand-made paper; the topics were often reflective of their passion for nature, music, and exploration. They often drew from the inspiration of naturalists, particularly John Muir. They would explore the craft of papermaking, traveling to mills, gathering samples, and doing research. Peter's *Papermaking in the Philippines* is an important contribution to the field of papermaking.

The Thomases celebrated forty years of making books in 2017-18. I sought out the possibility of sharing selections from my collection with the University of Idaho Special Collections. Together we curated an exhibition, (A Book's Nature | Artist Books by Peter and Donna Thomas), of their work in the fall of 2019. I wanted to inspire faculty and students to appreciate the book arts. It was an eye opener for the University of Idaho book community. The library arranged for numerous presentations and engagements during the Thomases October visit to the campus.

As I bring the treasures back home and find places for them once again on my shelves, I am inspired to share a bit about



Their creative work has been a constant joy as a collector of artists' books and examples of the book arts. As Peter has mastered his papermaking skills and Donna her art, their books represent a significant contribution to California book arts.

Donna's "one-of-a-kind" books represented in the exhibit, plus one recently acquired during their visit to our home in Potlatch, Idaho, in October. In some small way this allows the art and the description of these unique books to be shared with a broader audience.

Each of the books herein listed include original watercolors by Donna Thomas and the locations where they were painted have been listed where noted. Each could eas-

ily stand alone on the wall of a California museum, but housed as they are along with text, they create a unique artistic experience for one who follows through the pages of each book. Donna gives one a truly inspiring appreciation for the nature she has represented. While I am listing the original artwork included in each book, some books have drawn maps and in some or all, the calligraphy is artwork in its own right.

Gary E. Strong is the founder of the California State Library Foundation. He is now retired and lives near Potlatch, Idaho but is still active in bibliophilic and local history circles. Before retirement, Strong held positions as University Librarian and Director of the University Library at the University of California, Los Angeles (2003–2012); Director of the Queens Borough Public Library in New York City (1994–2003), and State Librarian of California (1980–1994). In addition, he is a true bibliophile and has avidly collected the works of California fine presses.

When Strong served as State Librarian, the State Library added a number of books designed and printed by Peter and Donna Thomas. They are available for research in the California History Section.



The One-of- a-Kind Books

HETCH HETCHY VALLEY – A GRAND LANDSCAPE GARDEN | Quotes by John Muir. 13 pages. Five original watercolors. 11 x 14 cm. Housed in a clamshell box with spine and front labels. [2011]

Colophon: Donna Thomas: painting, binding, calligraphy | basket designs of Yos. Miwok |

Original watercolors

- Wapama Falls and Hetch Hetchy
- Kolana Rock
- Rancheria Falls
- Tiltill Valley
- O'Shaughnessy Dam

"John Muir's fight to save Hetch Hetchy Valley in the 'people's park' of Yosemite began in 1903. Quotes from this book are from *The Yosemite* published in 1912. Sadly, the battle was lost and the valley was flooded in 1923. Still, Muir inspired the environmental conservation movement worldwide."

SIERRA NEVADA | by Anne Stevenson |
 (for Margaret Elvin, 1963) | Peter & Donna
 Thomas, 2011 | Santa Cruz, Calif. 16 pages.
 Eleven original watercolors. 15 x 21 cm.
 Housed in a clamshell box with original
 watercolor of Mt. Henry '08 on the cover.
 This is an accordion book.

Colophon: The watercolors in this book
 were painted by Donna Thomas in the
 Sierra Nevada between 2004 and 2011. Peter
 Thomas made the cotton rag paper with
 inclusions of sedge and blackberry fibers
 from their garden.

This poem is used with permission from
 Bloodaxe Books. It is from *Anne Stevenson,*
Poems 1955-2005. Published by Bloodaxe
 Books in 2005. Copyright ©1994 by Anne
 Stevenson.

Original Watercolors:

- Mt. Henry. '08. (Cover)
- Silver Peak, Silver Divide, J. Muir
Wilderness. Aug. 2011
- Lodgepole & Jeffrey Pines, Emigrant
Wilderness July 2011
- Potholes, S. Fork San Joaquin, J. Muir
Wilderness Aug. 2011
- Three small watercolors: Kalmia |
Mariposa Lilly | Sky Lupine
- Deer Lake, Emigrant Wilderness. 2011
- Pinecrest Lake, Stanislaus Nat. Forest.
July 2011
- Upper Indian Lake, Sierra National
Forest. Aug. 2011
- Small watercolor | Larkspur

