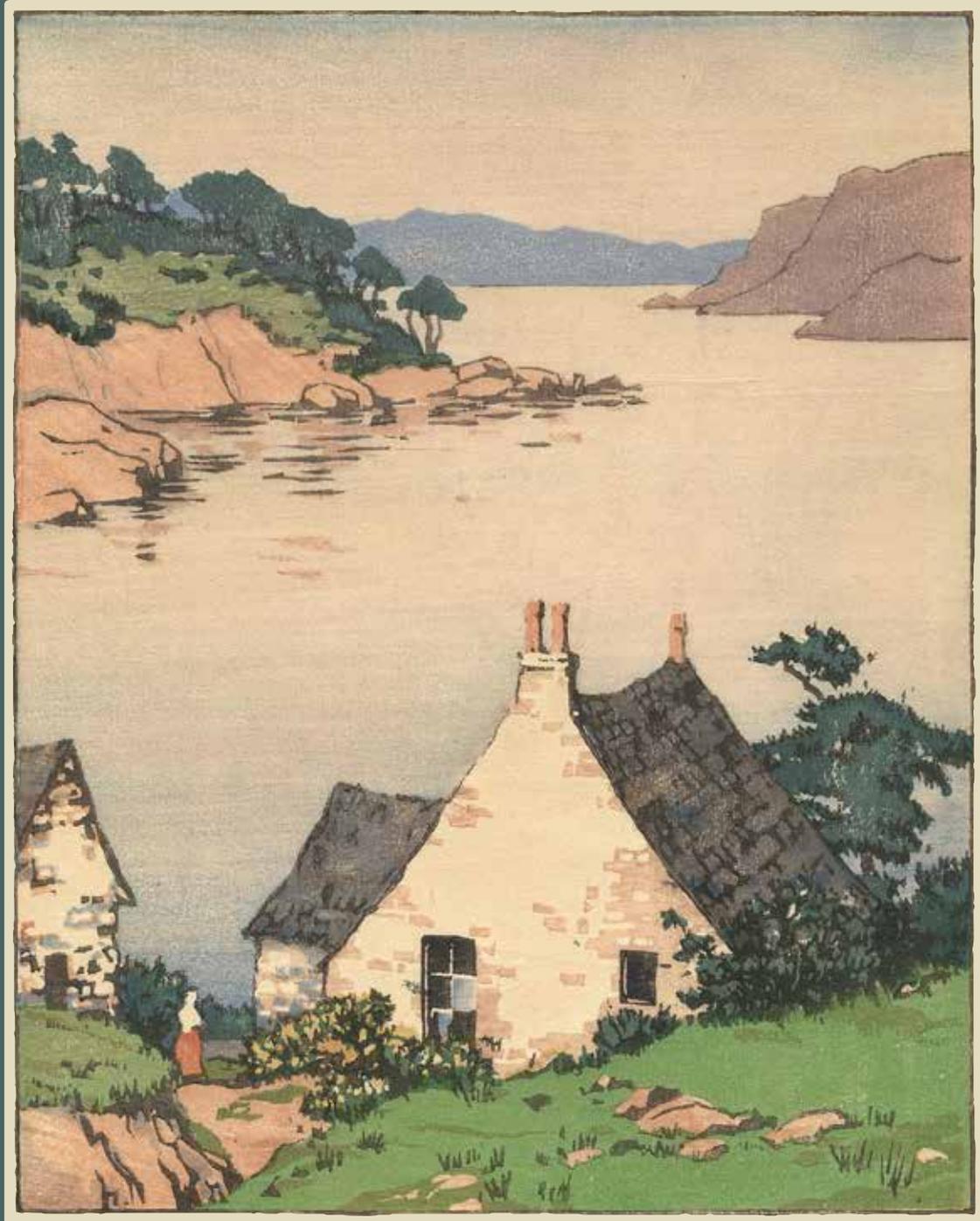
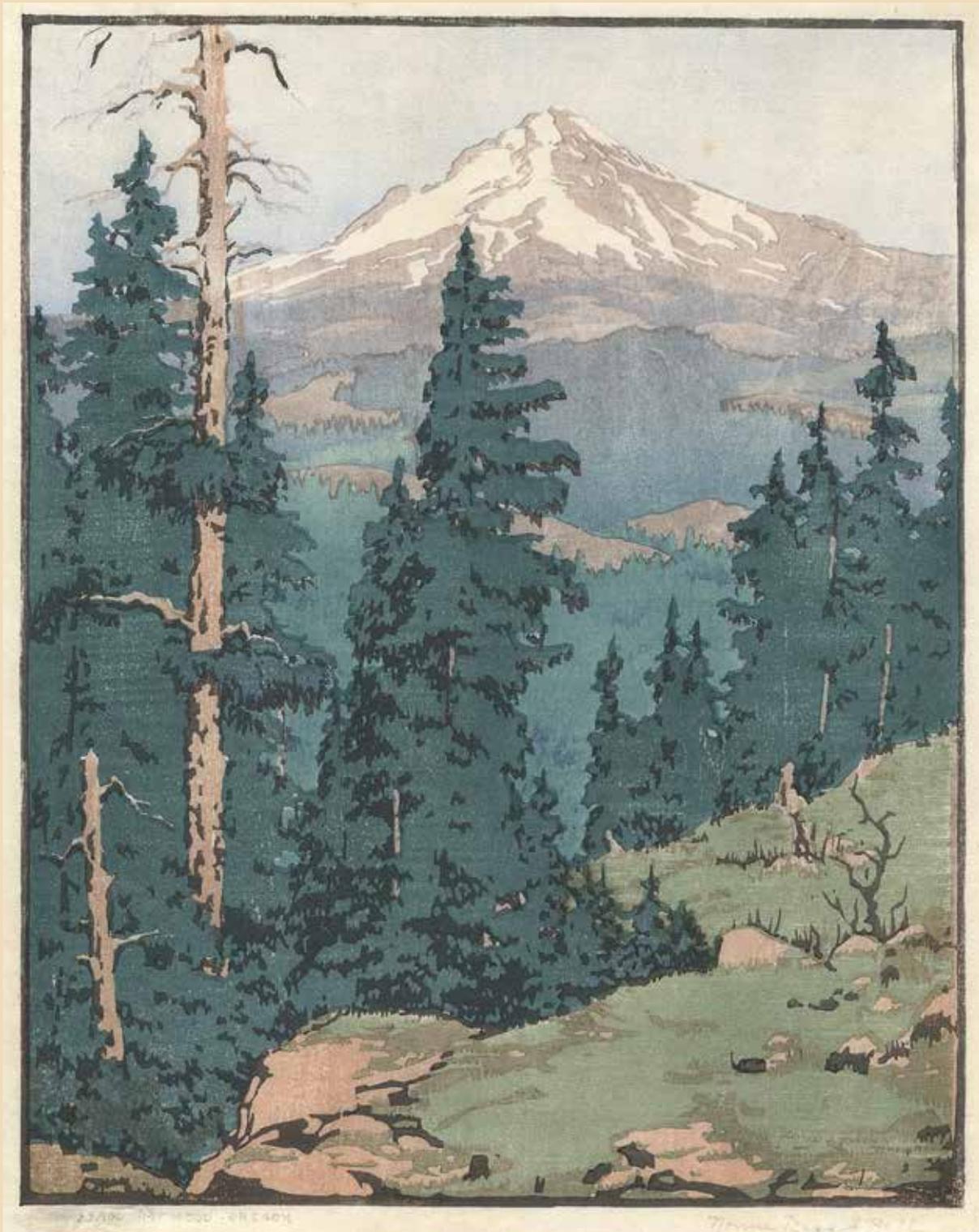


Norma Bassett Hall



Catalogue Raisonné of the Block Prints and Serigraphs
Joby Patterson



Mt. Hood—Oregon, 1928–29. Color block print.



Chapter II

Dragon Trees on the Honeymoon Coast: The First Block Prints

Norma recalled that upon meeting Arthur Hall at the Art Institute, “a romance immediately developed at an alarming rate of speed. But like other romances of the period, it was doomed to vicissitudes, for the next spring America entered the World War, and Arthur enlisted in May and went to France the next winter.”¹

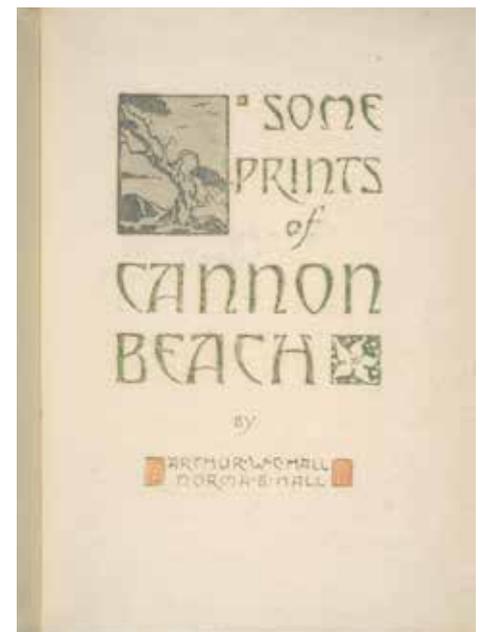
After graduating in the spring of 1918, Norma stayed in Chicago (fig. 6). By September, she had found a job in the drafting department of the Western Electric Company.² In November 1920, Norma returned to Portland to open a studio and teach. During the early 1920s, she designed a poster stamp that advertised the Atlantic-Pacific Highways and Electrical Exposition, which was slated to open in Portland in 1925 but never actually took place.³ The poster stamp image of an Indian fishing at Celilo Falls reflects Norma’s Arts and Crafts training (fig. 7).

SOME PRINTS OF CANNON BEACH

After Arthur’s occasional trips to Oregon to visit Norma, they married in 1922 (fig. 8). On a honeymoon trip to the Oregon coast in late August, the newlyweds developed the idea of celebrating their marriage by jointly creating a set of block prints. They carved, printed, and assembled at least two books of twenty-one prints and titled the collection *Some Prints of Cannon Beach* (cats. 1–7).

THE JAPANESE AESTHETIC AND ARTHUR WESLEY DOW

The character of the Pacific Rim vegetation and Oregon’s coastal waters, hauntingly similar to that of the Japanese coast, must have been seen by the Halls as the perfect subject to interpret through Japanese concepts of design. In the block print of the tree appearing on the title page of *Some Prints of Cannon Beach* (cat. 1). Norma employed a common Japanese device of severe foreshortening, in which the tree form is allowed to dominate the very near foreground, positioned so close that the ends of side branches have been cut out of the image. The diagonal angling of the gnarled trunk with its scruffy foliage emphasizes the cumulative natural force of the wind. This vignette, and the flat, decorative view of the starfish, combined with the Arts and Crafts–style lettering and the contrasting colored stamps of each artist, form a single, unified composition. Other designs of similarly irregular trees and coastline, all placed on large sheets, make up the whole of this book. Although lightly printed, some soft skies and seas show use of the Japanese *bokashi* technique (a graduated blend of colors).



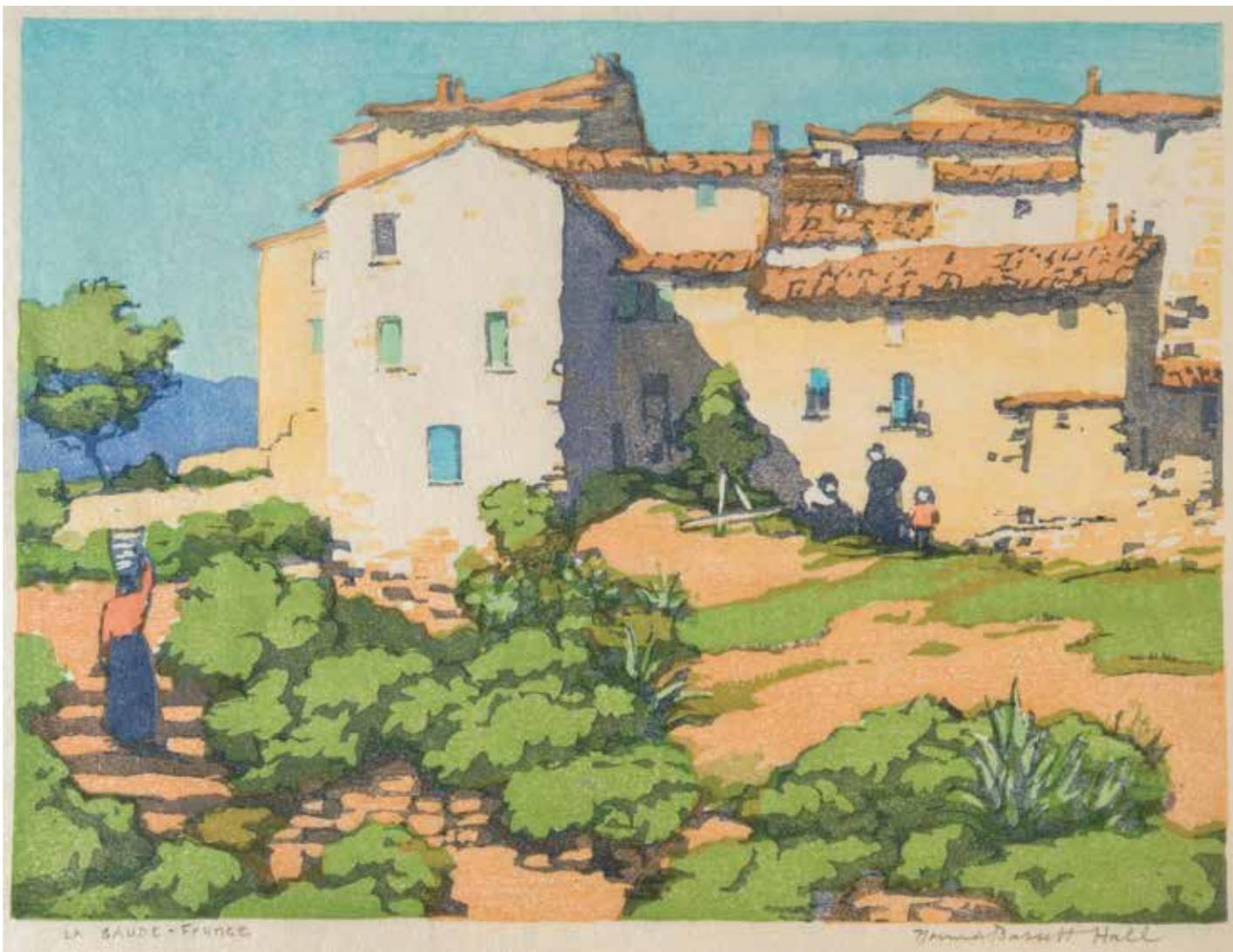
Some Prints of Cannon Beach, title page, 1922–23. Color block print.



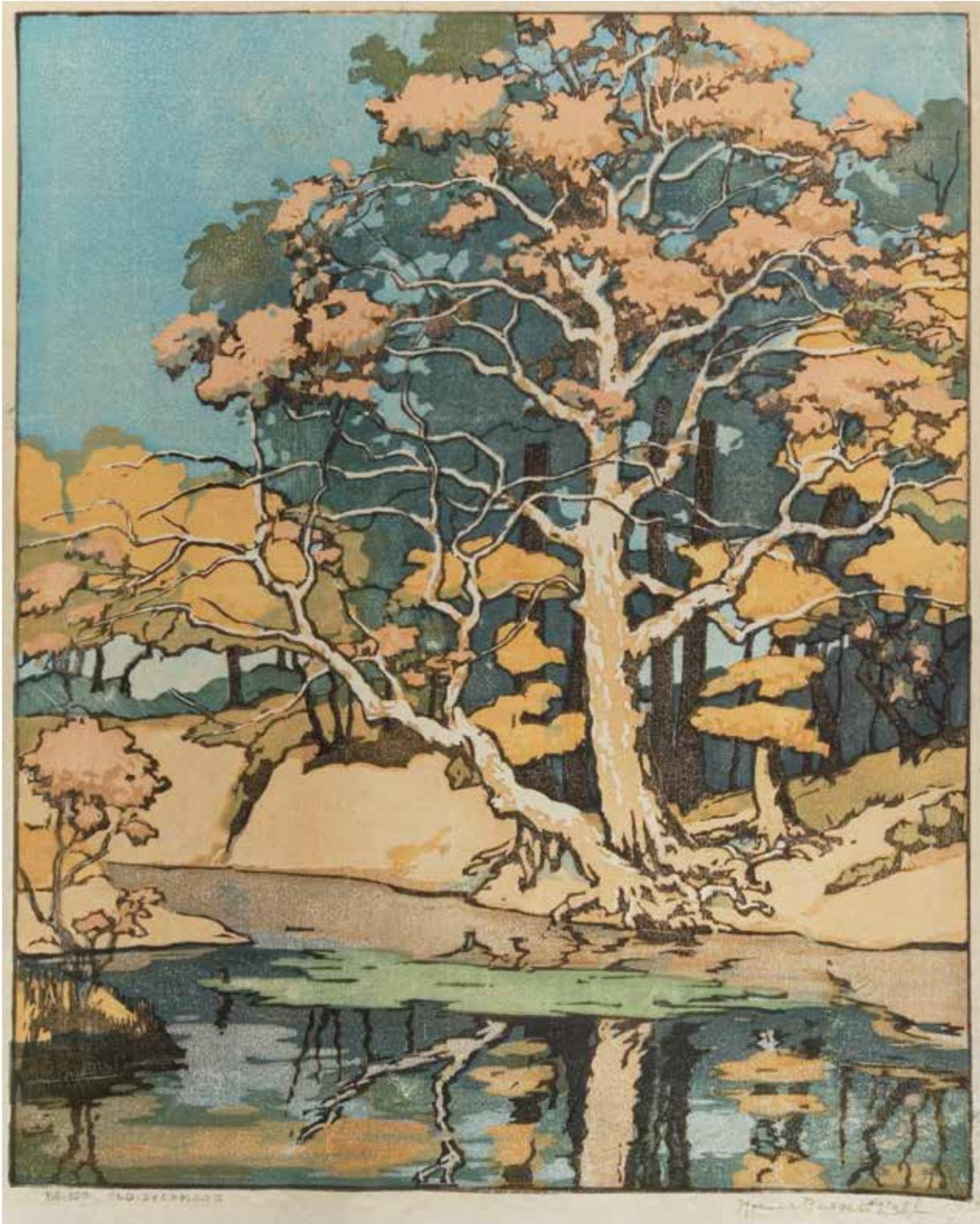
Iris, 1924–25. Color block print.



The Golden Maple, 1935. Color block print.



La Gaude—France, 1943. Color block print.



Old Sycamore, 1941–42. Color block print.

Norma Bassett Hall

Catalogue Raisonné of the Block Prints and Serigraphs

NORMA BASSETT HALL (1888–1957) spent the eventful years between the two world wars as a printmaker in Oregon, Kansas, New Mexico, Virginia, and Europe. The end of the Great War brought a decade of renewed inspiration and prosperity that drove prints to all-time high values, the Depression left artists almost penniless, and World War Two brought about a near market collapse and a complete revision of taste. This upheaval pushed Norma and her artist husband, Arthur William Hall (1889–1981), to adapt and create despite such unpredictability.

Wherever she lived, Norma interpreted the geographic richness of North America and Europe. From the windy coast of Oregon to the rocky pastures of heartland Kansas, from the Indian pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona to the idyllic inlets of Scotland and the hamlets of France, Norma found a wealth of material to depict on the woodblock. Her color prints capture village walls of rosy warmth, violet skies at transitional hours, and figures in markets, at the wash, or on village streets.

Nearly all the prints composing Hall's graphic oeuvre—linoleum cuts, woodcuts, and serigraphs—have been located, studied, and represented here in more than 110 illustrations. Whether of landscapes or figures, American or European, her prints express a brief moment in place and time—a temporal vignette through which we can glimpse the past.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOBY PATTERSON is an art historian specializing in early twentieth-century American printmaking and the author of *Bertha E. Jaques and The Chicago Society of Etchers*. She lives in Eugene, Oregon.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Published on the occasion of the exhibition titled *Chipping the Block, Painting the Silk: The Color Block Prints and Serigraphs of Norma Bassett Hall* held at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene. The exhibition will run August 23 through October 12, 2014, with a reception and opening to be held on August 23, 2014, at 2:00 p.m. Other exhibitions to be scheduled through early 2015.

FRONT COVER: *Portree Bay*, 1929.
Color block print, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 7 in. (22.5 x 17.8 cm).



ABOVE: Norma Bassett Hall with *La Gaude—France*, 1943, Prairie Print Makers, Presentation Print brochure. Photographer unknown. Courtesy John Hall collection.

184 pp., 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 10 in.

Smyth-sewn casebound, with jacket
26 black-and-white photographs
108 color and 16 black-and-white reproductions by Norma Bassett Hall and her contemporaries

Includes Artist Biography, Catalogue Raisonné, Appendixes, Bibliography, and Index

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