

IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK NEWSLETTER

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"...because people read t-shirts."

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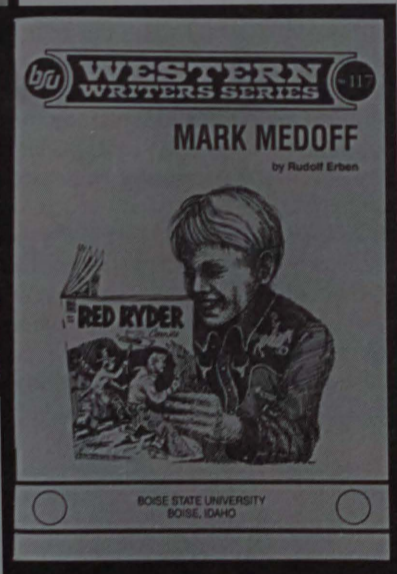
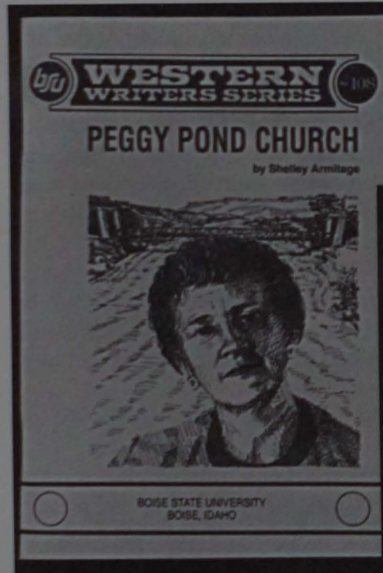
Silkscreened t-shirt biblio history sequence, courtesy, Kathleen Peterson, Boise

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- May 2-25 **James Castle Exhibition**
—Books and prints at J. Crist
461 W. Main, Boise, ID 83702
Telephone 208.336.2671
- May 7-17 **Books by Boise Public School Children**
—at the Idaho Center for the Book
- May-July **Summer Courses**
—American Academy of Bookbinding
POB 1590, Telluride, CO 81435
Telephone 970.728.3886
- July 1-6 **Turning the Page**
—Entry dates for international book arts competition and October exhibition
Honolulu Printmakers
1111 Victoria St., Honolulu, HI 96814
Telephone 808.536.5507
- August 27-30 **Sun Valley Writers' Conference**
—P.O.B. 957, Ketchum, ID 83340
Telephone 208.726.6670

A DIFFICULT DREAM James H. Maguire

Since 1972, Boise State University's Western Writers Series (WWS) has published 116 fifty-two-page booklets that provide brief critical introductions to the lives and works of authors who have made a significant contribution to the literature of the American West. At the invitation of the editor of *Scholarly Publishing: A Journal for Authors and Publishers*, I wrote a thumbnail history of the WWS, "Publishing on a Rawhide Shoestring," which appeared in the January 1991 issue of the journal. That historical sketch focused on the travails and triumphs of two editors and a business manager who had to raise revenues and chart the course of a publishing venture that, although university-dependent, was definitely not a university press or even part of such a press. What you are about to read is a chronicle of greater interest to friends of the Idaho Center for the Book: namely, the saga of conceiving, designing, and producing over a hundred booklets in what is supposed to be a uniform series.



Our story begins in 1970, when Boise State's Wayne Chatterton asked James W. Lee, editor of the Steck-Vaughn Southwest Writers Series, whether he would consider giving him an assignment to write a study for the series. "Sorry," Jim wrote back; "but we're ending the series." He suggested, however, that Wayne get an assignment by starting his own series. And, after gaining my consent to serve as its co-editor, that's just what Wayne did—with start-up funds from the Idaho State Commission on the Arts and Humanities and with the assurance of continuing support from Boise State's administration. We had the idea for the series; we had the encouragement of someone who had edited a similar series; and we had, just barely, the financial wherewithal we needed. Now what kind of books were we going to publish?

In answering that question, we hit upon the first principle that shaped the WWS. That principle is what Dr. Johnson said is the sincerest form of flattery: imitation. We decided that the WWS would serve as a virtual continuation of the Steck-Vaughn Southwest Writers Series and the University of Minnesota American Writers Series (both defunct by the mid 1970s). To that end, we planned a format that would fit within the 5 " x 8" booklets, a format that would include roughly half a dozen to a dozen pages of biographical information, followed by (or interspersed with) summaries and critical

analysis of the subject's works, and concluding with a Selected Bibliography of both primary and secondary works. So far, so good. But our campus print shop did not then have the resources to print the booklets for the new series.

Mothered by the necessity of our finding a printer who could do the required work, our second guiding principle became: seek the voice of experience. We turned for help and advice to the Caxton Printers, long-time publishers in Caldwell, Idaho, some twenty miles west of Boise. Jim Gipson and Dick Pead gave us hours of good advice, including suggesting we follow most of the wording in the contributor-publisher contract used by Steck-Vaughn. Dick also showed us the range of choices in paper and cover stock and helped us to decide what would be best for the WWS.

We found no cover stock identical to that used by Steck-Vaughn, so we picked what came closest. We chose a type style recommended by Dick Pead. The paper stock we selected did seem identical to Steck-Vaughn's. Now all we needed was a printer and something to print. When we put the job out for bids, Caxton's submitted the best bid and was awarded the printing contract for the first five titles. We solved the problem of what to print by writing the first two booklets ourselves and by soliciting others from members of the Western Literature Association.

Our first year of publication, 1972, rolled around; and before the year ended our first five titles were in print, and we were satisfied that we had managed to create what we had aimed for—a virtual continuation of the Steck-Vaughn and Minnesota series. We had added to our booklets, however, a distinctive touch that the booklets in the two earlier series didn't have: cover illustrations. Most of the illustrations were drawings by Amy Skov, a professor in Boise State's Art Department; if the subject of the booklet had happened to be an artist as well as writer, we used a drawing by the subject. For the ink on each cover, we chose the color that seemed most appropriate to the cover illustration.

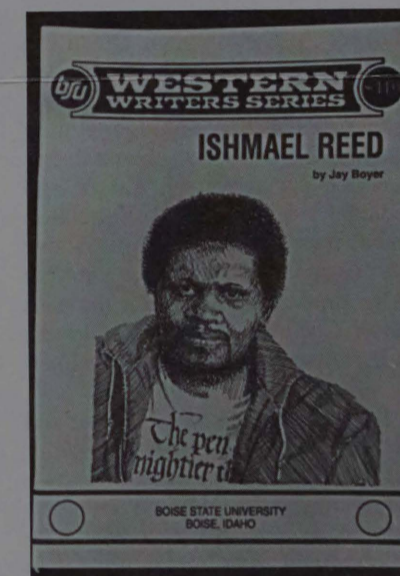
For the next four or five years, we didn't think much about the look of the booklets in the series. Each year, we published five new titles; each year, Caxton was awarded the printing contract; and each year, we asked that the type style, the paper stock, and the cover stock be identical to that used for the earlier titles so that we could maintain a uniformity of appearance.

Then, slowly but surely, events began to force changes in the appearance of the booklets. After the first five years, Caxton's could no longer find cover stock identical to that which we had used up to that point. We picked another stock that came close in appearance, but someone with a sharp eye could spot the difference. Then came the day when Caxton lost the contract. Wayne had always insisted that the type be set by linotype, because he was convinced that you couldn't get legible proofs by using the new computer typesetters. (A publisher of one of his books had sent him a batch of smudged and illegible proofs from a computer typesetter.) Since Caxton had one of the few remaining linotypes in Idaho, they had managed to keep the contract. By the end of the 1970's, however, even Caxton had decided to abandon the linotype; and when we could no longer specify typesetting by linotype, the contract went to J&D Printing of Meridian, Idaho, midway between Boise and Caldwell.

Although J&D Printing managed to keep the contract for three years, they weren't really set up to print books. They couldn't find cover stock at all like that which Caxton had been using; and the substitute they came up with clearly didn't come very close to matching the old stock. Even my myopic eyes could tell the difference. Nor did J&D quite manage to match the type style. Add to those changes quality control problems that resulted in blurred print, and you'll understand why our titles of the early 1980s don't quite resemble our earlier publications.

By then, fortunately, BSU's Printing and Graphic Services had acquired the technology needed to print WWS booklets; and since 1983 they have been the WWS's printer. They have tried their best to maintain the uniformity of appearance that we requested; but we've had to choose new cover stocks several times since then, and new computer technology has necessitated a slightly different type style.

In 1990, after twenty years of working on the WWS, Wayne and I decided it was time to enlist a younger editor. Wayne had retired



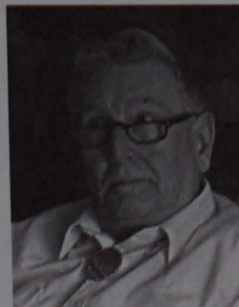
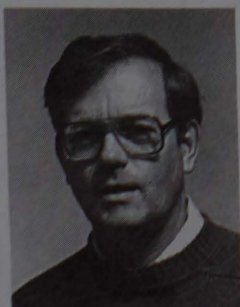
from teaching in 1983, but he had continued to serve the WWS in a general advisory capacity. Although twenty-three years younger than Wayne, I wanted to work on other publishing projects. Unfortunately, Wayne died in 1993,

only a year before the Department of English hired co-editor: John P. "Sean" O'Grady.

The series Sean joins is a series that Wayne and I tried to keep uniform in appearance. But looking at the 116 titles on my bookshelves, I can tell from the different color tones and textures of the covers that uniformity was something we only managed to approximate. None of our readers—and not even any of our eagle-eyed reviewers—ever complained about those slight shifts of color and type style. Maybe none of them ever noticed; and if they did, I doubt that it mattered much to any of them.

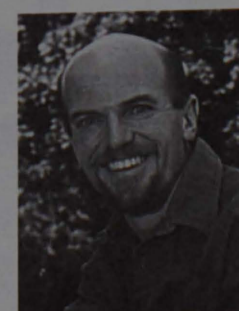
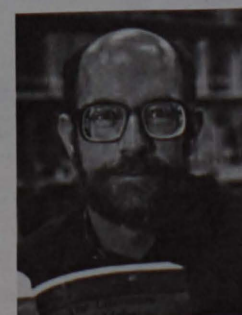
Why, then, were we so determined to achieve uniformity? We thought that it would give our series more of a professional look. When readers violated the old adage and judged our books by their covers, they would see stability, realizability, uniformity—qualities that would inspire confidence and that would encourage them to buy more titles in the series. I suppose it gave us a straw to cling to, too: if ever we made a bad choice of a manuscript to publish, at least the finished product would look respectable.

Now that even staid old scholarly journals such as PMLA and American Literature have abandoned the old look of uniformity, our impossible dream seems hardly worth pursuing any more. Readers like some variety. I'm encouraging Sean to consider changing the look of the booklets in the WWS. Whether he feels the force of old habit as strongly as Wayne and I did will remain to be seen. I'll bet anybody a dozen WWS booklets, though, that if we try to maintain a perfect uniformity, we'll still find it a difficult—if not an impossible—dream.



WWS Illustrator Skov, Editor Chatterton (left),

Editors Maguire and O'Grady (right)



THE CAXTON PRINTERS, LTD.
A Tree of Knowledge & Industry

by Pam Hardenbrook

(continued from Vol. 2, No. 2)

VIGOROUS NEW GROWTH

Caxton publishing has always struggled for survival. It was forty years before a book for general sale showed a profit. Until World War II, Caxton's sustained a loss on almost every title it published. Still, J.H. Gipson felt repaid in producing "at least a book or two which have a fair chance of gaining a place in the permanent literature of our country" and stated "while we've lost, in all probability, \$100,000 in bringing out our books, we've had one million dollars worth of fun."

During the nineteen-forties, the company was surprised to find its publishing department showing a substantial profit. Garett Garret's, *The Revolution Was* (an analysis of the "New Deal") came off the press about this time, and went on to become a best seller.

In 1969 the 3M Company gave its coveted award for international excellence to the Caxton book, *Steens Mountain*. It placed first over some 2,000 entries from thirty-seven different countries. Several honors have come to Caxton books. In 1969, *Gold Rushes and Mining Camps of the Early American West*, by Vardis Fisher and Opal Laurel Holmes, won the Golden Spur Award of the Western Writers of America for the best non-fiction western book published that year. The Western Heritage Center and National Cowboy Hall of Fame, in Oklahoma City, annually awards prizes to books in various categories. Three times these awards have gone to books published by Caxton. The most recent award-winner was *Owyhee Trails*, written by Mike Hanley and Ellis Lucia. Reprint rights to other Caxton titles have been sold to paperback houses, such as New American Library and Bantam House, with sales into the hundreds of thousands of copies, in some cases.

OFFSHOOTS

James Herrick Gipson was the heart and soul of Caxton in its first sixty years of existence, but his life was not contained within the walls of a printing establishment. He received his formal education in Caldwell Public Schools, and at the University of Idaho. On June 18, 1907 (his twenty-second birthday) Jim married Esther Sterling. Four children were eventually born to them: Douglas (who died as a baby), Amy, Jim Jr., and Gordon. During the WWI, the young husband and father left home to serve in the American Red Cross with the Three Hundred Thirty-Fourth Division in Europe.

Gipson was in civic affairs, as well as state and national politics. Because of Jim's friendship with Teddy Roosevelt, he became State and Regional Chairman of the Bull Moose Campaign. The births of Jim and Esther Gipson's two sons coincided with his political activities. In September of 1912, Jim Gipson Jr.'s birth was announced with an article in the local paper:

New Bull Mooser—State Chairman J.H. Gipson of the Bull Moose party received word while he was in Salt Lake that Mrs. Gipson had presented him with a nine-pound son. He says he does not know whether to name the new head of the family Theodore Roosevelt Joseph Dixon Gipson, or just plain Theodore Joseph Gipson.

Two years later, October 1914, the following item ran:

The Bull Mooseherd received another addition on Sunday, when a boy arrived at the home of State Chairman J.H. Gipson. Last campaign time the same thing happened in the Gipson family, so it is evident that in time, at least, the Bull Moosers will get a clear majority in Idaho.

The Gipson boys grew up in the shadow of the Caxton plant. When Jim Jr. was about twelve years old, his father told him, "You're big enough to come to work." His younger brother, Gordon, started about a month later. The boys swept floors and ran errands on their bicycles. Throughout their careers, Jim Jr. and Gordon worked almost exclusively in their father's book business—aside from military service during World War II; and before that, for a period during the country's depression. In those lean years the boys worked away from home as farm hands for as little as one dollar a day, walking the ten to fifteen miles to work, boarding at the farm during the week, and walking back home on weekends. Later, the sons came back to work at the family enterprise: Gordon, to the work he loved: book publishing; his older brother, Jim Jr., to the printing side of the business.

The brothers worked alongside their father for nearly two decades, and learned from him. Especially during the last five years of his life, James Herrick Gipson, Sr. concentrated on turning the business over to his two sons. After his father's death in 1965, Jim Gipson, Jr. inherited the president's chair at Caxton, and brother Gordon became Vice President. The brothers worked in tandem for over twenty-seven years, taking pride they never had an argument working together.

The Gipson brothers' partnership ended in 1991, when James Herrick Gipson, Jr. succumbed. When Gordon Gipson took over as president, however, he was not without familial support. His nephew (Jim Jr.'s son), David Gipson stepped into the vice presidential role, with grandnephews Ron and Scott joining the company's leadership team in recent years. Currently the third, fourth, and fifth generations of the Gipson family manage the company and its sixty-or-so employees.

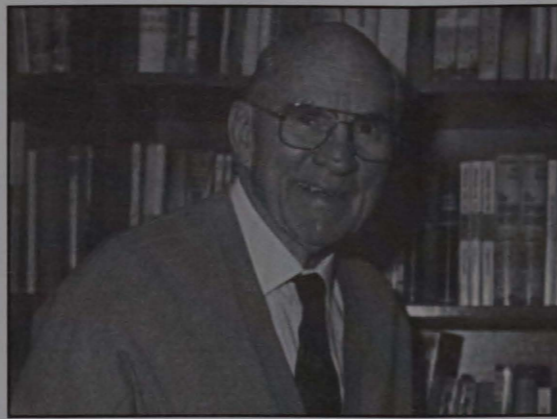
DEEPLY ROOTED

The Gipson family has watched their company grow from a business that was ridiculed for its rural western location, to one that has won international acclaim. Today, The Caxton Printers, Ltd., is going strong. Lists increase annually, and include a complete library of Western Americana. Caxton's print shop and bindery are among the most respected in the country. The office and school supply department has attained high regard. The school text division provides the best educational resources for the children of Idaho, whether educated in public or private schools, or at home.

Through hard times, fire, and war, J.H. Gipson's dream of book publishing has never dimmed. His philosophy still permeates the business, and his words fairly echo in the click of the keypads, the hum of the press-room, and the whir, thump, and clank of the bindery:

Books to us never can or will be primarily articles of merchandise to be produced as cheaply as possible and to be sold like slabs of bacon or packages of cereal over the counter. If there is anything that is really worthwhile in this mad jumble we call the twentieth century, it should be books.

After almost 100 years on Idaho's soil, Caxton is firmly, deeply rooted in the local economy. Like their orchardsman founder, the company's executives carefully tend and nurture the business, pruning when necessary, to assure vigorous growth and production for decades to come.



Gordon Gipson

**LIMBERLOST PRESS: LETTERPRESSING
THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRIBE**

by Rick Ardinger

(continued...)

Harry Duncan devoted his life to printing the works of now-famous poets, most notably William Carlos Williams. He published a small chapbook by Williams in 1944 entitled *The Wedge*, under his Cumington Press imprint. The book included a poem titled "A Sort of Song," which contained a line that became the inspirational dictum for a generation of poets a few years later: "No ideas but in things."

In his final presentation, Duncan wandered around his presses, demonstrating how they worked and answering questions from a handful of folks who showed up for the lecture. He sipped at a cup of wine, his white mane combed back behind his ears and long over his collar. He preferred non-electric presses, he told me, platens that operated with a sewing machine-like treadle. He didn't like his work to be dependent upon any power but himself.

I learned later, listening to a taped interview with Duncan, that even the few copies he'd printed of Williams' *The Wedge* had to be remaindered in New York bookstores because they didn't sell. At the time, Duncan was broke and living in Upstate New York in a house without heat. The thought of these now-priceless little volumes getting dog-eared and dusty in remainder bins at the conclusion of World War II is a sad vision of contemporary poetry. Passed over, picked over, Williams drove his "*Wedge*" into the "*lang-wedge*" with Duncan's help, despite the lack of an immediate audience's approval. That determination—by Duncan even more than the good Dr. Williams—gives me hope. The collaboration of poet and publisher earned the book—and Williams' voice—a place in time.

A love of letterpress composition is not simply a nostalgic love for the way things used to be printed. It's a respect for a process that deserves a renaissance. Although labor intensive, the collaborative effort of poet and publisher is the purpose of the process: "preserving the language of the tribe," as Ezra Pound said.

Working full-time jobs in addition to publishing Limberlost books, my wife Rosemary and I make it a goal to print three books a year until we find more time to do more. Recent chapbooks of poetry include *Double You Double You Too* by Ray Obermayr, *Spirit Bone* by Gino Sky, *Blue Ink Runs Out on a Partly Cloudy Day* by Alan Minskoff, *Carpal Bones* by Margaret Aho, *The Canticle of Jack Kerouac* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Mind Writing Slogans* by Allen Ginsberg, *Where the Twilight Never Ends* by John Haines, with chapbooks in the works by Sherman Alexie and

ICB

NEWS

We're on the Web!

Courtesy Marshall Public Library
(special thanks to Web Mistress Susan Leek)
<<<http://www.eils.lib.id.us/icb/icb.html>>>

Visit us for Idaho's latest biblio news—plus peeks at Booker's Dozen and Zakuski: A Taste of Russian Artists' Books
October Newsletter features:

"Art Notes from the Plateau," by Ross Coates; "Designing 'Idaho-by-the-Book,' Idaho's Literary Map," by Meggan Jensen, and "Incunabula West: Idaho's Oldest Books"

Bruce Embree, and an essay collaboration by Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, and Carole Koda. Between book projects we print an on-going series of poetry postcards and broadsides.

In the end, how we publish books is not so important as why. In the room below me where I type this now squat several printing presses, flanked by type cabinets, galleys of type to be put away, and a clutter of tools and rags ready for a new project. Beside them are two large cardboard flats of paper recently delivered by the UPS man, marked "Heavy." I'm behind on projects as usual and feeling guilty about that. But I think of Harry Duncan, ink under his fingernails, setting type for a book that would never sell, and I find the stuff to carry on. "No ideas/but in things" Williams wrote. "No ideas/ but in things" Duncan pressed into paper, into time, into life.

**THE REDNECK PRESS
& THE REDNECK REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

by Penelope Reedy

(continued...)

Whenever I begin work on an issue of *Redneck*, I am never certain it will reach publication. Will I have money for paper and plates? Will I have enough money for postage (greatest expense)? Will whatever job I'm working at provide me with enough time to read and typeset reams of manuscripts, produce a layout, correspond with writers, collect ads? Will the current man in my life, or my children, try to suppress my work out of some perverse jealousy? Will economic or personal circumstances cause me to pack up and move yet again, setting me back, off schedule, wearing me down in logistical "heck" (to use poet Gerald Locklin's metaphor).

Putting all hassles aside, I am pleased with *Redneck's* evolution as I look back over the years. I remember the fourth or fifth one published in



Redneck nee The Camas

Fairfield which, I believe, was called *The Fairfield Tractor Company*. My then co-publishers and I followed form from signs in the high school library by labeling our writings "Fiction: Not True" and "Non-Fiction: True." It didn't do any good. Fairfield locals accosted us on the street with questions regarding the fiction, "When did those people live here?" Writers in small communities in Idaho were/are only supposed to write local history; after all, who could be interested in anything else?

Redneck's mobility—meaning I can publish it from wherever I live as long as there is postal service—has enabled me to maintain a wide network of friends and acquaintances: a Jesuit poet at the Vatican, linguists living in Hong Kong, scholars in western American literature scattered throughout the US, as well as a handful of legends: beat poets Antler and Charles Potts, that cantankerous desert rat Ed Abbey and novelists William Eastlake and Clay Reynolds. Few people know that the late southern novelist Walker Percy and the late California essayist MFK Fisher were subscribers for several years. The mail remains the highlight of my day. When I lived at the ranch, I would watch the southern horizon as I went about my chores and when the postman's pickup crested the small rise a mile down the road, I would put by coat on and head for the mailbox, my single most important link with the outside world. If my husband wanted to torture me, he would reach the box first and withhold its contents; he nearly threw away my first postcard from Ed Abbey, he confessed. Knowing that, I've always wondered what treasures may have actually met that fate.

Redneck is currently at rest in Pocatello, Idaho, the Poetry Capitol of the American West, the Literary Crossroads of America, a natural place for it to thrive among friends. I am currently considering buying a house, digging in, exploring once again the nature of staying put. *Redneck* will continue as long as people keep buying subscriptions and writing things to publish in it, as long as I can keep my press running and afford paper and stamps, as long as it continues to interest me.



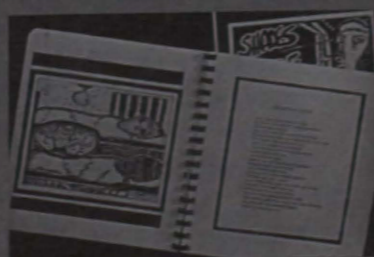
The ICB Newsletter is published biannually in April and October. Contributions, inquiries, requests for free subscriptions should be sent to: Idaho Center for the Book, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho 83725



A Booker's Dozen

EXHIBITION ITINERARY

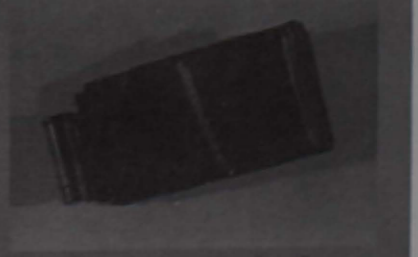
Idaho Falls Arts Council	January-February
Main Street BookCafe (Ketchum)	March
University of Idaho Library (Moscow)	April
Mountain Home Arts Council	May
Salmon Arts Council	June
Ada Community Library (Boise)	July
Hemingway Western Studies Center (Boise)	August
Orofino Regional Council	
on the Arts/Clearwater Library	September
Twin Falls Public Library	October
Marshall Public Library	November
East Bonner County Public Library	December



BOB HOBSON - Shades of the Prison House (Hand-colored illustrations)



LES LAIDLAW - [Untitled] (Stick/Twig book)



EVELYN M. SOOTER - What is Art? (Metal book)



ENVER SULEJMAN - The Boise Blessing (Two-volume letterpress book)

