



GRAND TETON

Wyoming

ORIGINAL PRINT: AUGUST 1938

KNOWN SURVIVING PRINTS: 3

FIRST REPRODUCTION PRINT: 1992

SCREENS: 4

The idea for this poster design came from a diorama that featured the geological processes of the Cascade Canyon Glacier as it spread out on the floor of Jackson Hole, creating the moraine that formed Jenny Lake. Dr. Fritiof Fryxell, former chief naturalist at Grand Teton, worked at the WML in 1935 and likely influenced the diorama design. Prior to its construction, Lorenzo Moffett, the museum preparator artist for the WML, traveled from Berkeley to Grand Teton and skied eighteen miles to measure the location of this exhibit and take photographs for the background, a feat highlighted in the March 1938 WML monthly report. (Read an excerpt from the report on page 22.)



C. Don, this time with a hammer not a brush, building the glacier substructure for the Grand Teton diorama. With the attention given to detail, one can imagine why it took three years to build.



WPA artists work on the foreground glacier and background mountain landscape. The room was heated with large flood lamps, which sometimes required the artists to wear pith helmets to ward off the heat.



Preliminary study for the diorama of Pleistocene glaciation in Grand Teton



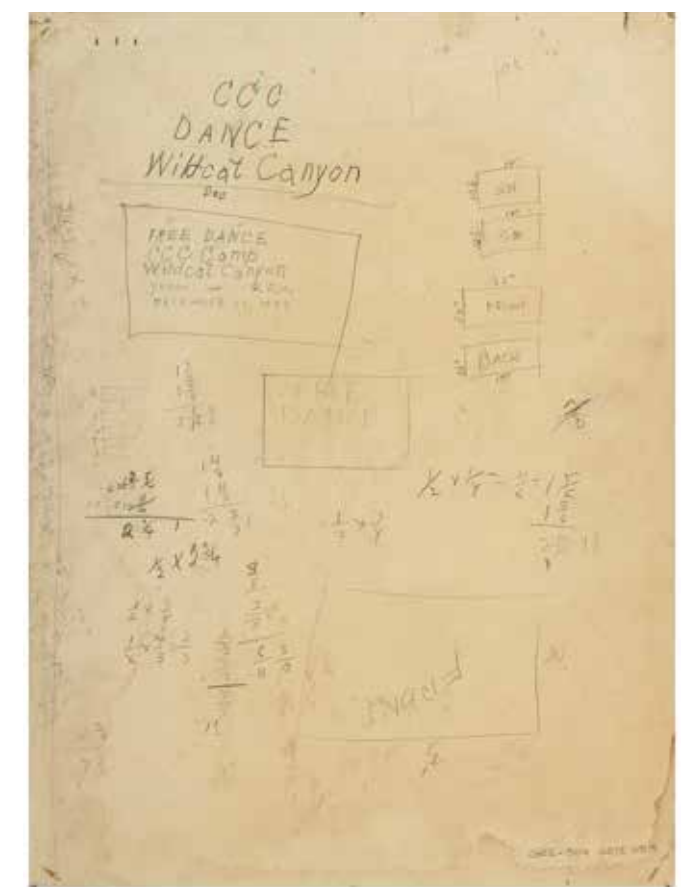
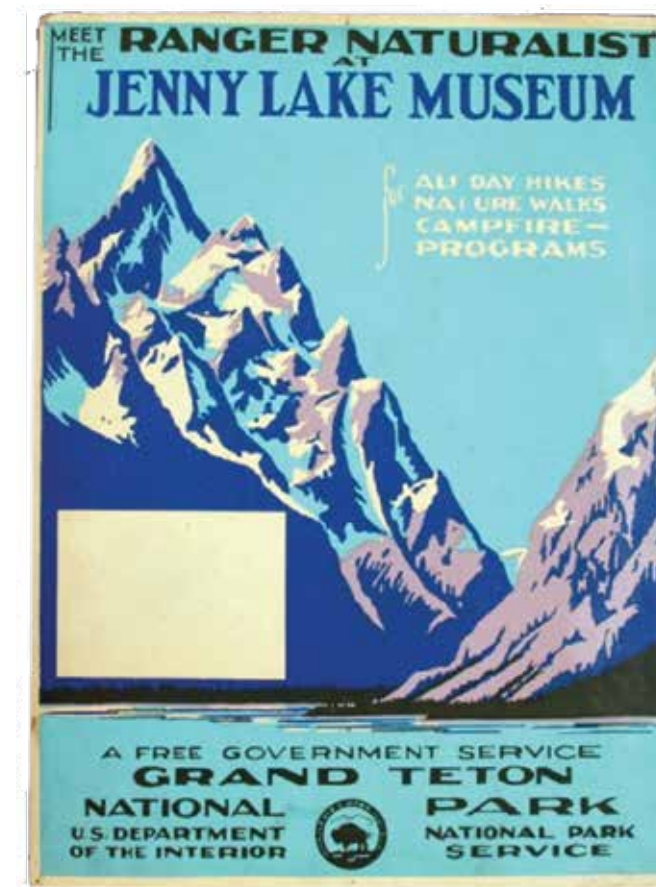
Close-up of the finished Teton diorama with detailed Cascade Glacier spreading out and forming the moraine in the diorama foreground

The diorama was delivered to the park in October 1939—almost three years in the making. This complicated exhibit, the first of many to follow, was delayed by a catastrophic fire in 1936 in the Many Glacier Museum in Glacier National Park. Museum Director Dorr Yeager “cleared the decks” of all projects, including this diorama, to focus on the museum rebuild.

Also delaying this diorama project was the impoundment of WPA funds and the loss of artists early in 1938. Ansel Hall and an associate, Mr. Addison, who was also involved in the diorama project, had departed for Mesa Verde. Dorr Yeager was now in charge.

Photographs show several WPA artists constructing and painting the background, though their identities are unknown. The poster artist is also unknown. The diorama was displayed in the Jenny Lake Museum-turned-Ranger Station during my tenure there, but disappeared after the 1972 season. When I first republished this print twenty years later, I called the park to see what happened to this exhibit and was told the diorama had been chain-sawed in half and hauled to the park dump. I wasn't there to save it.

Three Grand Teton prints have survived. The first to surface was the print I found in the Beaver



When I first viewed this print in Los Angeles, it was in a large art portfolio so I could only see the front of the print. Many years later, the NPS Archives in Tucson, Arizona, revealed that there were sketches on the back, including mathematical calculations (some questionable) likely determining the screen size versus border size of these prints and, interestingly, a sign for a holiday dance at the Wildcat Canyon CCC Camp on December 22, 1939, at 8:00 p.m.

Creek Barn, which started my quest in 1971. This poster hung in my ranger cabin at Jenny Lake, and followed me back to my apartment in Seattle where it hung on my wall for four decades. In 2018, I donated it to the NPS History Collection (HFCA) where it remains today.

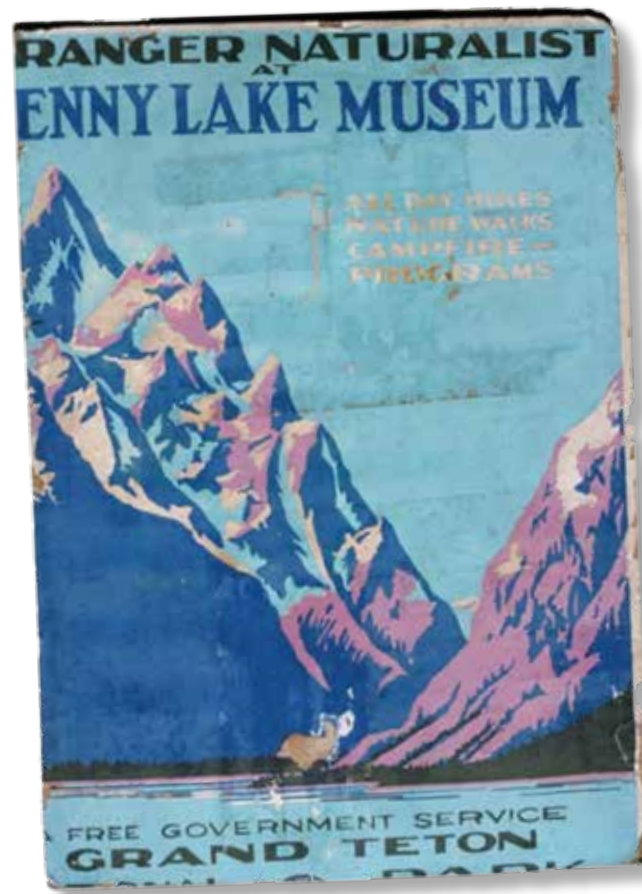
The second to turn up was discovered (along with nine other prints) in a secondhand shop in Los Angeles in 2004 by art collector Laurent Schwaar (hereafter referred to as LA Laurent), who purchased it for \$70. It was later offered at the Swann Galleries auction in November 2006, alongside the other original prints he found, but it didn't reach the minimum bid so was withdrawn. I called LA Laurent and purchased it for \$750 with the promise to donate it back to the park. It is the best condition of the three, however it has the cutout for the campfire schedule, which was the likely reason it didn't command a higher price at auction. It is now in the Grand Teton National Park Collection.

A third poster curiously turned up at Grand Teton National Park in 2012 where it had been buried in flat files since about 1970. It had been cut down to fit a plant press in White Sands National Monument. This print shows the most vivid purple color of the three. Did the plant press preserve or perhaps alter the colors? I surmise they ran out of the grayish-pink halfway through the run and simply mixed a close match. Today, the ink for screen printing has an exact chemistry; however, at the WML in Berkeley in 1938, they likely mixed plain house paint in the screening room.

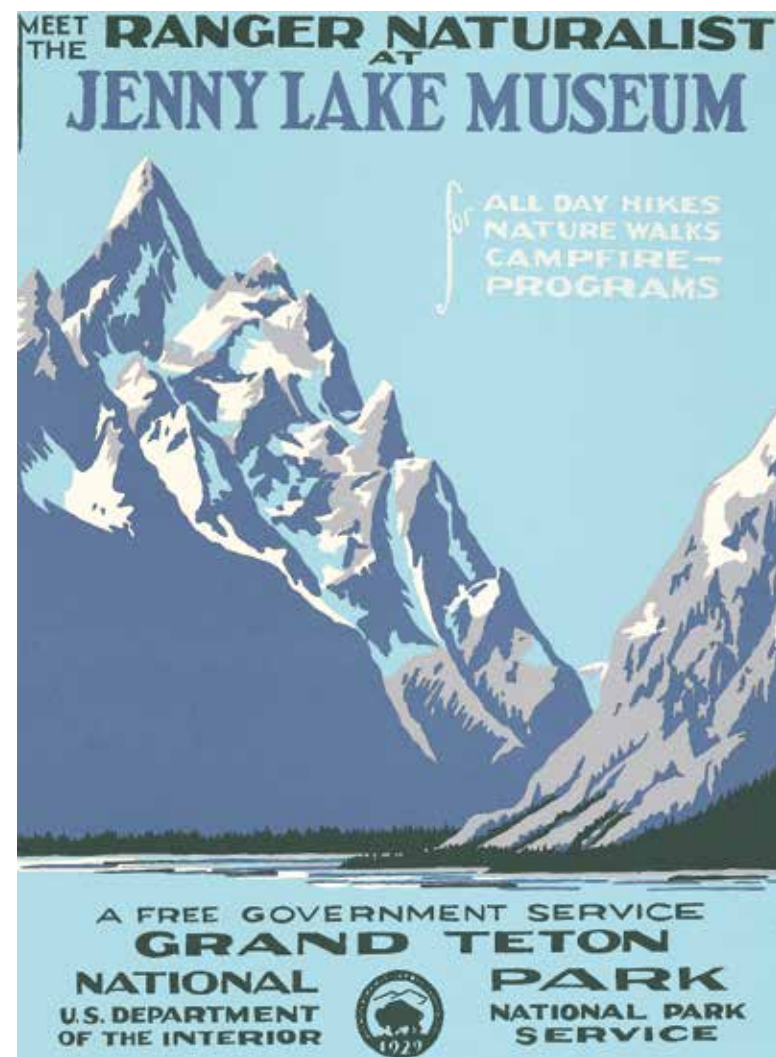


Jenny Lake Museum in 1934

Though Dorr Yeager described the Grand Teton print as an experiment, it was very successful. C. Don Powell, the artist who designed most of the national park posters, may have been somewhat chagrined by the lettering, reflecting back on his work with lettering artist Peter Domm, but this first poster attempt was perhaps the best compared with the prints to follow. An additional eight designs would be simple Bauhaus block lettering with the theme “Ranger Naturalist Service.” Six others would depart from this banner style. Bandelier’s font and lettering is completely different from the preceding thirteen, and was likely designed by another artist (see pages 68–69).



The poster found in a plant press in White Sands National Monument was cut down to fit the press—it was simply cardboard.



Our first edition of five hundred posters was printed in 1992 as a four-color screen print. I contacted artist Mike Dupille who searched out the only screen printer nearby at the time—a t-shirt company. They printed the first edition, but lost their shirt, so to speak, retooling and printing on paper. So did I, selling them for only ten dollars apiece to the park. It was primarily a fundraiser. They refused to print any subsequent editions.

Grand Teton, Grand Canyon, and the Birth of THE RANGER OF THE LOST ART

When I proposed printing a second edition of the Grand Teton poster, Sharlene Milligan at the Grand Teton National Park bookstore balked, until I proposed making a companion print of Yellowstone. She suggested checking with the NPS History Collection at the Harpers Ferry Center in West Virginia for any records of “an old government poster” that might have been made for the park.

I called NPS archivist Tom DuRant; he immediately knew what I was inquiring about.

Grand Canyon National Park had just sent him a photo of another poster they wanted to reprint, and they needed to resolve provenance and copyright issues. Tom dug out thirteen black-and-white negatives and a few letters describing a WPA project that printed the first poster series for our national parks, including Dorr Yeager’s letter to Superintendent Pinkley about the experimental poster for Grand Teton that was included in the “Miscellaneous Products” catalog in 1938.

Excitedly, I asked Tom if he had a photo of the Grand Teton poster. He did, and when he read me the header, “Meet the Ranger Naturalist at Jenny Lake Museum,” I knew I had found my

holy grail. I hopped the first plane to Washington, DC. Tom’s history collection included not one, but two Yellowstone designs.

I immediately called Grand Canyon and talked with Kim Buchheit, the author of the first archive inquiry, and asked her where they were in the process of potentially reprinting the park poster. She explained they had given up—“too expensive.” I shared that I had already screen printed another park’s design and would be happy to create new screens and print Grand Canyon.

This was back in the days of telephone booths, and I must say when I walked into that booth at the Harpers Ferry Center, I entered as a mild-mannered bespectacled dentist, and I left as Ranger Doug—Ranger of the Lost Art. That phrase hit me instantly during my conversation with Kim. The idea was born, and I now had the missing designs, albeit in very crude black-and-white negatives. Using the Grand Teton print as a template, I began a five-year process to restore this set, one screen at a time. I had all the necessary information except the colors. The colors I would simply have to make up. Our first challenge was the eight-color Grand Canyon design.

