

# The Road Less Traveled

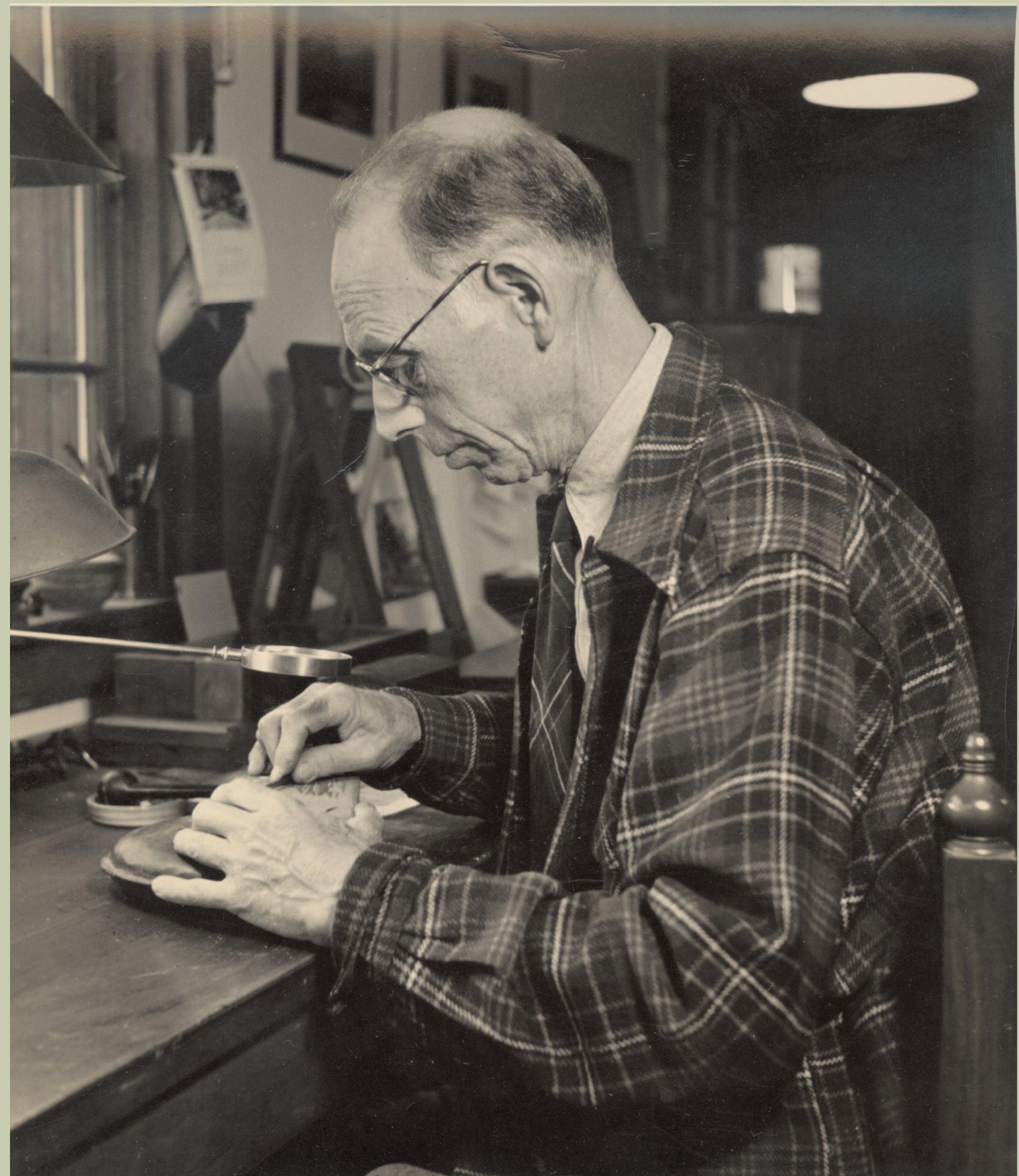
## Thomas Nason's Rural New England

Driven throughout his career by a devotion to craftsmanship, technical mastery and realism, Lyme printmaker Thomas W. Nason (1889–1971) built a lasting reputation as an artist working in a timeless style, independent of current trends

in the art world. At his studio on Joshuatown Road, however, Nason quietly absorbed and processed influences from a broad range of sources. This exhibition takes two paths toward understanding Nason's body of work: the common route, which examines the poetics of his somber observations of rural New England, but also the road less traveled, which explores for the first time the modern qualities of his prints.

In the first gallery Nason's role as "the poet engraver of New England" is examined in depth. The artist is perhaps best known for the wood engravings he created to accompany many treasured poems by Robert Frost. Both Nason and Frost connected with and appealed to a broad spectrum of the American public through their imagery of rural life in New England. The deliberate and stark lines of Nason's wood engravings echo Frost's carefully chosen, measured language. Several of their collaborations, including limited editions of Frost poetry and rare chapbooks illustrated by Nason for the renowned Spiral Press are on view here. Beyond his work illustrating poetry, Nason's stirring pastorals and deep meditations on nature and regional architecture encourage a poetic reading of his prints.

The second gallery highlights Nason's deep appreciation for the history of wood engraving and simultaneous turn toward the modern. Nason's prints are hung side by side with traditional nineteenth-century printmakers as well as more innovative artists of the twentieth century. Nason's tendency to produce sharp, precise, and stylized images reflects the changing aesthetics of the modern era. The prints selected from Nason's body of work emphasize the abstract elements evident in his smooth lines, simplified forms, and silhouetted compositions—traits that lend his works a surprisingly modern quality comparable to that of noted American Regionalists Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton.



This exhibition has been organized by Amanda C. Burdan,  
the Museum's first Catherine Fehrer Curatorial Fellow.