2020

EXHIBITION "Louisiana's Natural Treasure: Margaret Stones, Botanical Artist"

Leah Wood Jewett  
*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, lwood@lsu.edu

John D. Miles  
*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, johnmiles@lsu.edu

Christina Riquelmy  
*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, criquel@lsu.edu

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**Recommended Citation**

Jewett, L. W., Miles, J. D., & Riquelmy, C. (2020). EXHIBITION "Louisiana's Natural Treasure: Margaret Stones, Botanical Artist". Retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/sc/1](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/sc/1)

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Louisiana’s Natural Treasure: Margaret Stones, Botanical Artist

Magnolia macrophylla, Bigleaf Magnolia

Exhibition catalog, February 2020
Art & Science in Margaret Stones’s Watercolors

John D. Miles, PhD, Curator of Books

The immediate impetus for this exhibition of Margaret Stones’s remarkable oeuvre is the centenary celebration of her birth, but its philosophical genesis might be traced back to the turn of the nineteenth century. Then, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, society looked for inspiration for the mind and soul in a natural world that seemed increasingly threatened. John James Audubon imbibed these heady ideas in Paris, and in 1803 sailed west on a journey that would eventually find him in Louisiana, paintbrush in hand.

In what became a touchstone for the age, in his preface to *Lyric Ballads* in 1800, English Romantic poet William Wordsworth opined that “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.” For Wordsworth the “intense emotion” that engendered poetry – and all good art – was found in the contemplation of the sublimity of nature, which overthrew the intellect through force of emotion. The artist translated this emotional experience to the audience by reassembling its context in the work of art and replicating the moment of the sublime. Art was not nature itself, or a direct representation thereof, but an artist’s intellectual work translating nature’s emotional effect into the language of human experience. Representation, not reflection; metaphor, not mimesis.

This philosophy underpins the scientific accuracy of Audubon’s *Birds of America* (1827-38), which depicts birds as they lived and moved in nature rather than as mere specimens. The visual narratives his pictures tell are a part of their scientific value, capturing slivers of his subjects’ existence for study, along with their plumage, beak shape, and other mainstays of scientific illustration.

Take Audubon’s depiction of mockingbirds fighting with a rattlesnake, as seen to the left. Justly one of his most famous plates, the scene evokes movement, sound, even fear, acting upon more than the viewer’s sense of scientific realism in its depiction of not simply a mockingbird, or mockingbirds, or even their environment, but the drama of their existence. This is art with fidelity to the dynamic reality of its subjects and its viewers’ comprehension thereof. And this is still true when Audubon’s desire to convey life to the mind caused him to overlook the scientific realities of his subject: famously, rattlesnakes climb trees only
rarely and their fangs are much straighter than shown. Never mind such details, Audubon might retort, what matters is that the truth of the art be in the service of an apprehension of nature’s dynamism, not slave to trivial details – transcendence, not tedium.

When Margaret Stones began her work in Louisiana a century and a half later, treading some of the same ground as had Audubon, she did so with an equal commitment to representation beyond simple replication. In part due to her botanical subjects’ relative stasis, her paintings are more subtle than Audubon’s, though no less dazzling. Similar to how Audubon’s birds appear to move on the page, Stones’ plants’ delicacy suggests gentle breezes, the graceful detail of stems poised to respond to the wind. Stones’ artistic interventions aren’t as dramatic (or simply fictitious) as are Audubon’s, but her attempt to capture the totality of each specimen renders visible a level of detail invisible in nature.

Stones’ combination of art and science conveys the totality of each plant’s nature. Stones’ jasmine (seen to the right) winds delicately around a slender stem, seeming to shimmer in place for the single moment as she captured it. Her vanishingly thin lines and translucent watercolors suggest the plant’s fragility and hint at the tactile experience of its leaves and blossoms. Without overwhelming the viewer with a multitude of lines, Stones’ high-definition detail conveys not just what the flowers look like, but what it means to fully experience them in all of their myriad detail.

Returning to Audubon’s print, in which the same species of jasmine appears, seems almost unfair: by comparison, the rendering of the plant feels heavy and static, possibly befitting its place in the background, and pales in comparison with Stones’ meticulous work. The two pieces are equally moving, working the kind of power on the viewer that Wordsworth would recognize and approve of, but they do so by different means, even when their subjects overlap. Rather consciously or not, each displays the carefully constructed dynamism in service of sublime transport. Herein lies Stones’ science and her art: not one in the service of the other, but indistinguishably intertwined, fragile vines supporting each other in their reach toward the light of truth.
Born in Colac, Victoria, Australia on August 28, 1920, botanical artist Margaret Stones achieved an acclaimed international career that spanned three continents. Appreciated since the 1950’s by specialists and non-specialists alike, her work enriched the collections of museums, libraries, scientific institutions, and art patrons in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States, and appeared in significant botanical publications. Stones’s art has been featured in an impressive array of exhibitions and been recognized with distinguished awards and honors. Of the three major multiyear endeavors undertaken by Stones during her long professional career, the final one – the native flora of Louisiana – resulted in one of the most remarkable collections of botanical art created for a U.S. state.

The Louisiana project forged a special relationship not only between Margaret Stones and Louisiana State University but with numerous Louisiana residents as well. Funded entirely by private donations, the over two hundred watercolor drawings by Stones known as the Native Flora of Louisiana Collection are held in LSU Libraries Special Collections as a treasured legacy for the entire state. At the time of her death on December 26, 2018 at age 98, the artist's cherished connection with Louisiana was once again at the forefront shortly after the publication by LSU Press of a new deluxe edition of Stones's Louisiana flora. In the centennial year of her birth, we celebrate the story of Margaret Stones and the *Flora of Louisiana* both in tribute to her outstanding legacy, and with the hope of introducing her work to new audiences so that it may continue to be appreciated long into the future.

Growing up in Australia, Stones showed an early aptitude for drawing and by age fifteen had set her sights on art as her life occupation. She studied industrial art at Swinburne Technical College (now Swinburne University of Technology) in Melbourne on a three-year scholarship, then attended night classes at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School while working as a commercial artist. With the outbreak of World War II, Stones entered nursing training, but in 1945 became a hospital patient herself after contracting pulmonary tuberculosis. Confined to bed for over a year, she occupied her time by making drawings of wildflowers brought to her by visitors. The drawings impressed her physician, and this led to contacts in Melbourne that resulted in Stones’s first solo exhibition, as well as opportunities to attend
botany lectures at the University of Melbourne and participate in botanical expeditions documenting Australian flora.

Stones left Australia for England in 1951 to further develop her skills in botanical illustration, taking up employment as a freelance artist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where she remained until 2002. From 1958 to 1983, she was the principal contributing artist to *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, in which over 400 drawings by her were published. Valued by botanists for its scientific correctness, Stones's work during her years at Kew included illustrations for scientific monographs as well as other projects. Her second major body of work, commissioned by Lord Talbot de Malahide, was issued from 1967 to 1978 in six volumes in *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*, considered one of the most significant botanical publications of the 20th century.

While at work on the Tasmanian flora, Stones received a visitor from Louisiana – an encounter that would lead into what the artist later called “the ten happiest years” of her life. LSU professor emerita of theatre Gresdna Doty, on sabbatical in London in 1974, was the catalyst that brought Stones to work in a part of the world unfamiliar to her until then. Doty had first been introduced to Stones’s art by LSU landscape architecture professor Wayne Womack. After meeting the artist in London and seeing more of her work, Doty proposed to Chancellor Paul Murrill that LSU commission Margaret Stones to create a portfolio of drawings of Louisiana native plants to commemorate the bicentennial of the United States, and LSU’s 50th year at its present campus, in 1976. With strong support from Murrill and others, private funds were raised to commission six watercolor drawings from Stones, who on her first visit to Baton Rouge in early 1976 was immediately intrigued by the variety and beauty of Louisiana’s flora. Those first six watercolors were so enthusiastically received by the LSU community that Murrill offered Stones an expanded commission for two hundred drawings, to be completed over ten years.

A statewide committee of Louisiana citizens solicited financial sponsorship from individuals and corporations. Lowell Urbatsch, shortly after joining LSU’s botany faculty, became the project’s principal scientific advisor. A committee made up of members of the landscape architecture faculty had created an initial list of native plants for the project. Urbatsch made some changes to that list, and coordinated the selection and collection of plant
specimens from throughout Louisiana for Stones to draw. The specimens were subsequently deposited in the LSU Herbarium as a permanent scientific record of the project, complementing the beautiful drawings that gradually entered the LSU Libraries’ E. A. McIlhenny Natural History Collection.

Since she worked only from live specimens, Stones made trips from England to Baton Rouge once or twice each year during the ten-year commission. She often joined in plant collecting excursions to various parts of the state, forging lasting friendships with some of the participants. The Louisiana flora project with Margaret Stones not only generated considerable public interest, but also expanded botanical knowledge by documenting a number of rare and endangered plants found in the state and never illustrated before. In recognition of her outstanding work, LSU awarded Stones an honorary doctorate in 1986 and a University Medal in 1992. The artist continued to visit Baton Rouge well beyond the official conclusion of her ten-year commission, making several additional drawings for LSU and generously donating others. Louisiana friends kept in touch with Stones after she retired to Australia in 2002, up until her death.

LSU Press first published the Stones drawings in book form in 1991, in *Flora of Louisiana*. Selected drawings from the Louisiana flora collection have been exhibited over the years in Hill Memorial Library, as well as other venues in Louisiana. Some of Stones's Louisiana watercolors have also been loaned for exhibitions at the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, and at museums in England, Scotland, and Australia. The drawings in the Native Flora of Louisiana Collection are a marvelous record of the state's natural heritage as well as an artistic treasure, which community groups, LSU visitors, and classes in botany, landscape architecture, and art are welcomed into Hill Memorial Library to view by appointment. In November 2018, LSU Press issued a much-anticipated full-color folio edition of the Stones watercolors under the title *Native Flora of Louisiana*. The new publication was made possible in large part by private fundraising, spearheaded by former Chancellor Paul Murrill and other longtime supporters of Margaret Stones’s work. The artist received her copy of the new book before her death, and was able to enjoy revisiting those happy years during which she had worked on the Louisiana drawings. It was surely a gratifying end to her long and amazing journey.
Bibliographical References


Additionally, numerous articles on Margaret Stones and her Louisiana work have appeared in the Baton Rouge newspaper, The Advocate, from the 1970’s to the present.
Known as *herbals*, early botanical works were created to identify, through both text and illustration, plants that were useful for medicinal or utilitarian (and economic) purposes. First produced by hand in manuscript form, herbals were also among the earliest printed works. Limitations of the woodcut process (fine and curvilinear lines are difficult to render) and the shape and orientation of the page influenced the decorative, symmetrical, and wholly inaccurate depictions of plants. The popularity of metal engraving, which allowed for more subtle detail, coupled with the flood of exotic plants from remote locales harvested during the European Age of Discovery (15th to early 17th centuries), shaped the illustration process, producing finely detailed prints of plants that included not only leaves and flowers, but root systems, fruit, and seeds. Leaves too long for the page were depicted in a folded position to show the leaves in their entirety to produce an accurate image. Scientifically correct depictions of commercially useful natural resources, such as plants, in turn helped promote the cause of empire for many nations, as did collections of faunal specimens and exotic artifacts.

The Native Flora of Louisiana project, though born of a different purpose, is grounded in the tradition of botanical illustration: Stones only worked from live specimens, requiring the collection of the plant through all of its stages and seasons to include flower, fruit, and seed. Many an intrepid collector navigated swamp and forest to secure representative species, their endeavors documented by the artist on the finished drawings. The completed work serves as a catalog of over 200 native and endemic species of Louisiana that is of great use to botanists specifically and scientists generally, especially in regard to efforts to restore our coastal wetlands. And just as historical works of botany instilled pride in the readers for the abundance and beauty within their nation's realm of influence, these exquisite watercolor drawings continue to serve as a source of pride for Louisianans.

**Art and Science: Maintaining the Balance**

Often asked about the importance of balance between art and science in her work, Margaret Stones frequently replied that focusing too much on the artistic aspect could result in something "silly," while devoting one's attention solely to scientific accuracy could be "deadly." Following established conventions
of botanical illustration, Stones brought her subjects to life with a deft brush and an eye for detail, creating watercolor drawings that are both aesthetically pleasing and botanically correct. Indeed, they represent the beauty in truth.* Modern attempts to use photographic techniques, a departure from paint and pen, have depicted the detail essential for identification; they often fail, however, to capture the life-essence of their subjects, rendering instead illustrations that are cold, clinical, and indeed "deadly."

Stones’s “Great Work”

Early on in the project, Stones confided to a friend that the *Native Flora of Louisiana* would be her “great work.” She came to refer to the state as “My Louisiana,” and often noted that her time at LSU was the highpoint of her life. Fundraising and collecting efforts spanned the entire state. The project was not just about flora, or LSU, but friendships, and of the steadfast dedication among all involved to create something of lasting value: a legacy in celebration of the natural beauty of Louisiana.

*SBeauty in Truth* is the title of an exhibition and book cataloging the work of Margaret Stones by Irena Zdanowicz.

Suggested Reading:


Amsonia ludoviciana

Louisiana Blue Star

“I’m drawing a very rare flower, now extinct in the wild and only growing in Caroline Dormon’s garden. It had only been known in 3 areas (2 in Louisiana and one in Mississippi.) The botany department will keep the lower stalk for the herbarium and we are hoping to send the root to Kew with Jim [Traynham]! Very exciting. They only collected one plant because it is so very rare.”

From a letter from Stones to Doty; from Baton Rouge to London, April 5, 1981 (GD)**

Stones often allowed friends, such as Doty, to stay in her home in London while she was in Baton Rouge working on the project.

*Caroline Dormon (1888-1971) was a Louisiana naturalist and forest conservationist who helped establish the Kisatchie National Forest in central Louisiana. The property on which she lived near Natchitoches, La., became part of a nature preserve named for her.

**See notes on collection abbreviations.

Click the scientific name to view full image of drawing in the Louisiana Digital Library.

In Her Own Words:

Stones’s Commentary

Stones and Urbatsch examining a specimen of Stewartia malacodendron, c.1980s

Stewartia malacodendron, Silky Camelia
**Amsonia ludoviciana Vai**

*Louisiana Blue Star*

“I’m drawing a very rare flower, now extinct in the wild and only growing in Caroline Dormon’s* garden. It had only been known in 3 areas (2 in Louisiana and one in Mississippi.) The botany department will keep the lower stalk for the herbarium and we are hoping to send the root to Kew with Jim [Traynham]! Very exciting. They only collected one plant because it is so very rare.” From a letter from Stones to Doty; from Baton Rouge to London, April 5, 1981 (GD)**

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**Bignonia capreolata L.**

*Crossvine*

“The only item that has eluded us, I believe, are fruits of crossvine. We have searched vigorously for that one, but have come up empty handed. It seems that it doesn’t fruit well except in the tops of 80 foot high trees. Mr. Johnson of Briarwood [Caroline Dormon property] says he sometimes sees it when cutting down tall trees. He is on the watch for it.” From a letter from Urbatsch to Stones, October 10, 1978 (MS). Restricted; used with permission.

“I have been looking off and on for two months now and since Dr. U. has joined the hunt, it has earned the name ‘fruitless angiosperm.’ I certainly hope we can get all this taken care of for you soon. I know how you dislike loose ends.” From a letter from Paula Barton to Stones, September 25, 1978 (MS). Restricted; used with permission.

Barton was a student who collected many specimens for the project.

“Some things like crossvine seem to be very shy fruiters – I’ve waited 3 years for that wretched flower to fruit or for someone to bring in a fruit – I think half of Louisiana is on the lookout.” From interview with Mary Ann Sternberg, n.d. (MAS)
**Canna flaccida Salisb.**
Golden Canna

“Canna flaccida is a small yellow canna not at all like the showy Asian cannas, but it is very pretty, I think. It grows in swamps and that also is a very early introduction into British gardens in, I think, about 1790. It’s got a very strange make up and is quite difficult to draw.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Stones donated to LSU Libraries Special Collections an original watercolor sketch of *Canna flaccida* by famous botanical artist James Sowerby (1757-1822).

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**Cirsium horridulum Michx.**
Spiny Thistle

“Today I went out to collect a flower with Lowell. We looked for the Buckeye and came back instead with the dreaded THISTLE that Wayne [Womack] and Jon [Emerson] always tease me about. I’m not telling them I’m working at it in case I give up but it will be great fun if it turns out well and I confound them.” From a letter from Stones to Billy Harbin, c/o Faculty Club, March 27, 1980 (BH)
“I was out with Kittie Derstine when she collected that. It’s the Blue Larkspur, and she got that in June 1982 in oak woods, sparse oak woods, in a very dry situation. A most brilliant blue flower, every sort of blue, from pale to deep, looked so beautiful in that dapple sunshine. It’s something I shan’t forget.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

“Dear Gresdna, I am overwhelmed by your kind letter about the drawings – I am so relieved you all like them….How wonderful to perhaps have my drawings shown in the Anglo-American museum. I keep telling people about that lovely place and never imagined my work might one day hang in it. Please thank Pat Bacot* for thinking about it. …I was walking through Burlington Arcade this morning and the arcade shops have put up American banners, one for each state and of course the first [one] I noticed was LOUISIANA. My eyes were drawn like magnets. I’m so pleased you like the trumpet vine. I’ve done a large drawing of the wild form of HELIANTHUS ANNUUS which will either end up in Louisiana or at my next Colnaghi show. There is a photograph of it in [professor] Clair Brown’s** book.” From a letter from Stones to Doty, September 13, 1976 (GD)

*While Pat Bacot served as the director of the LSU Anglo-American Art Museum he showed Stones’s work and advocated for the exhibition that took place at the Smithsonian.

**Clair A. Brown (1903-1982) was a professor of botany at LSU, former director of the Herbarium, and author of numerous works, including Wildflowers of Louisiana and Adjoining States (1972). He was involved in the collection of plant specimens during the early years of the Native Flora project.
“Iris brevicaulis, the Zigzag Stemmed Iris, I drew in May 1978. That was a very funny time because Lowell and Florence Givens and I went out to the Burden Plantation [now the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden in Baton Rouge] where they have it grown wild and Ms. Burden asked the man who helped around the garden to take us to the iris and to make sure that there were no snakes. So he brought a tomahawk and threw himself among all the irises. I can still see those beautiful, delicate, blue flowers flying up in shreds into the air as he cleared the place for snakes and cleared the whole area of blue irises. So we couldn’t complain because he was keeping it safe for us. We went off and found another site and braved the snakes without our snake charmer.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Florence Givens (1933-1990) was assistant curator of the LSU Herbarium, working under Lowell Urbatsch. She and Stones developed a personal friendship as a result of the project. Approximately one fifth of Stones’s Louisiana drawings are based on specimens collected by Givens alone or with others.

Julia Hawkins was married to Murray Hawkins (1917-2013), professor of petroleum engineering at LSU. Both Julia and Murray Hawkins befriended Stones, taking her to all manner of places to collect plant specimens for the project. Upon its completion, the group continued to travel together, visiting the American Southwest, Nova Scotia, and points in between.

“Iris giganticaerulea, the Giant Blue-Flag, we got in April 1981 in Cameron Parish where Julia Hawkins collected it for me, and it was growing in marshes and eaten by cattle. It was very funny to see the cattle with these beautiful blue irises hanging out of their mouths as they munched away on them.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)
“Lilium catesbaei, the Pine Lily, is a beautiful orange lily with turned back petals, and Latimore Smith, who is one of our best collectors … told us where he could find it for us. He knew the sites so we went out to look for it, and when we got there, there were the lilies with those still enclosed buds so it was useless for me to draw. We went off to another site some miles away and there they were not many but enough. We collected one for our drawing, and Latimore went and the others stayed to photograph the rest of the collection, and Latimore went off and when he was away about 50 yards he gave an excited shout and someone called out to him, “Have you found some more?” He said, “No, I’m just relivin’ it!” It was very funny because he was so pleased, and we were all so thrilled because it isn’t a common lily in the state. A very, very pretty sight.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Latimore Smith was an ecologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and The Nature Conservancy. He is currently a principal of Southern Wild, a firm dedicated to restoration of the longleaf pine.

“The Limnobium spongia, Frog’s Bit, I collected with Florence Givens in August 1983 in a very alligator ridden swamp or marsh in Lafourche Parish and that was remarkable because I lost my glasses over the side of the boat, and I didn’t dare go in after them or reach down for them in case I got caught by one of those alligators. It was a wonderful trip. We stayed overnight with the [park] manager … and his wife, and they took us out on the swamp at midnight. It was a very hot night. It was a wonderful sight to see all the stars so clear and bright and around us the terrible noise of the alligators making loud, roaring, barking, and horrible noises. We could shine a torch on their big, red eyes. It really was a rather hellish sort of experience and one I shall always remember.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)
“Listera australis, or the Southern Tway Blade, is a very, very small plant. Garrie Landry collected it, and he is a super plant sleuth. He can see the smallest things, and he got it in March 1979. It’s a very small brown orchid, and I can’t imagine how he saw, but he did and brought it in. So that got into the collection.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Garrie Landry taught botany at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette from 1980 to 2016, and contributed a significant plant collection to the herbarium there. He was subsequently hired by the McIlhenny Company as a staff botanist at Avery Island.

“Magnolia grandiflora L.
Southern Magnolia

“There is something of the LSU campus growing here on Bushwood Rd. When I was at LSU last year, I managed to do a drawing for myself as well as LSU. It was of Magnolia grandiflora from one of the trees near the Faculty Club. Lowell sent me a ripe fruit to add to the drawing in September. I threw it when drawn on the garden and lo! A few weeks ago I unearthed it when searching for slugs and it had sprouted seven seedlings!! I have now potted them all up…” From a letter to Harbin from Stones, April 22, 1996 (BH)

The drawing shown here was completed in 1979 from different specimens.
“Magnolia macrophylla, the Bigleaf Magnolia, was quite difficult to get because it usually flowers fairly high up and Lowell Urbatsch had to climb the small tree to cut it … while I stood underneath and caught it. We then had to get it back to the Faculty Club, and it’s enormous. The leaves are about three feet long, and we put it in the bucket. I tried to keep it in the bathroom, but it was too big for the bathroom so I had to put it in my bedroom. At 6:00 a.m. while it was still dark I heard a click, and I realized the bud was opening. I had to rush and start to draw this thing, sketch it, in different stages until it opened, and I got the whole flower from bud to flower. That was a very exciting experience.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Emory Smith, a retired postman and avid naturalist who donated his property “Hilltop” to LSU in 1981, collected a specimen of this species and many others for the project, and made plants on his property available to other collectors. A friend of “Bob” Reich, Smith invited the professor’s students to the property to study native Louisiana plants and landscapes. Now known as LSU Hilltop Arboretum (located on Highland Road in Baton Rouge, LA), Smith’s 14-acre gift is under the stewardship of the LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture and the non-profit group, Friends of Hilltop.

“Stop the car! A Magnolia virginiana!” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

Sternberg was along for the ride to collect plants, and noted Stones’s excited call to action.
“The Nelumbo lutea, the Yellow Lotus, was collected by Julia Hawkins in September 1982, and that was collected from their boat when they were out fishing or they took me out to look for it, and we had to collect it between two alligator cadavers because it was the only one we could see. It was a place where there were many of them, but they seemed to have died out rather, so that came from a rather nasty collecting area. I can't say anything good about that, but you really wouldn't know from the drawing.” Stones's commentary, n.d. (MAS)

“Dear Wayne, At last the lovely Slash Pine (Pinus elliottii var. elliottii) has turned up in perfect condition – I took it in to the Kew Herbarium to David Hunt who is Kew’s conifer authority and he has suggested I do the leaves and male cones and wait to do the fruiting cone when I get to Louisiana. The Agriculture department sent the cone separately instead of leaving it on a piece of branch and as it is a persistent fruit it would be best shown the way it grows. – I hope you don’t mind this but it's such a wonderful conifer that I'd hate not to do it justice.” From a letter from Stones to Womack, February 7, 1977 (GD)
“Sarracenia alata, the Yellow Pitcher Plant, was collected by the late Clair Brown in April 1977. It was one of the first things I did for Louisiana State. I remember going out when Clair collected it, and he was very excited about that.” Stones’s commentary, n.d. (MAS)

“Today I am taking in to Colnaghi’s FIVE drawings. They tell me they will get them away by air-mail this week and you should have them in 4 or 5 days time – they will send me the bill some time and I’ll let you know how much I’m owed. The drawings are: Stewartia malacodendrum, Hydrangea quercifolia, Liriodendron tulipifera, Rhododendron canescens and Campsis radicans. The last is “unscheduled” and if you don’t want it, it can be returned some time – I thought it was better to get six drawings out this year (The magnolia to follow later) since I’ve been paid for six – Have I told you I also did a drawing of Stokesia laevis? This is smaller than the others and I thought it was a good idea to let the Murrills* see that all the drawings would not necessarily be large.” From a letter from Stones to Doty, August 25, 1976 (GD)

*Both LSU Chancellor Paul Murrill and his wife Nancy were admirers of Stones’s work and maintained a lifelong friendship with her. The Murrills donated and fundraised to help make the LSU Press’s 2018 folio edition of the Louisiana flora possible. Paul Murrill’s portrait hangs in the E. A. McIlhenny Room of Hill Memorial Library in honor of his professional and personal support for the development of the Native Flora Collection, and donation of other works that are part of the larger E. A. McIlhenny Natural History Collection. He passed away in April 2018, before the folio edition was published.
"Utricularia inflata, the Floating Bladderwort, was collected by Murray and Julia Hawkins in March 1982 when they were out fishing in their boat. There are very small water creatures that are trapped inside the bladders that float around on these plants, and when you put them under the bisecting microscope you see these poor creatures, who have been trapped, racing around trying to get out, but of course they can't because they've been trapped, and they are there until they die because they are absorbed by the plant. It's one of those plants that lives on, I suppose, it's carnivorous really." Stones's commentary, n.d. (MAS)
Stones’s Career

• Margaret Stones’s business card, n.d. (GD)

• Note from Stones, possibly to Oscar Richard, Director of LSU Public Relations, c. 1980s. (MS)
  Restricted; used with permission.

  “Could I please take up one point with you? I noticed when I was at LSU that I had been turned into a NATURE ARTIST. I am a botanical artist and if considered with others who are perhaps drawing snakes, insects, birds and so forth, we should be known as natural history artists.”

  Stones was known for being particular in all things - titles, quality of plant specimens, and accuracy and aesthetics of her paintings. The collection of finished watercolors is better for it.

• Photograph of Stones at work in the LSU Faculty Club, c. 1980 (MAS)

  Stones painted most of the watercolors in the Native Flora of Louisiana Collection in a guest room at the LSU Faculty Club. At the time of the project, the building served as both a hotel and a restaurant. Today the facility is known as The Club at Union Square and operates exclusively as a restaurant.

  Stones placed live plants in water in the bathtub overnight to help them recover from being uprooted during collection before being painted the following day. A simple desk placed next to the window allowed the artist to take advantage of natural light.

• Quotations from Margaret Stones, c. 1980s (MAS)

  Journalist Mary Ann Sternberg interviewed Stones for a variety of articles published throughout the duration of the Native Flora of Louisiana project. Early on in her travels to Louisiana, Stones expressed her love for local flora, fauna, culture, food and people, sentiments that Sternberg captured in her copious notes.

  “I always feel that I’ve had the best job in the world. Mine is the happiest work. There could be nothing nicer to do than what I’m doing.”

  “I was interested in the South because of early collectors – natural history painters – Bannister, Bartram, Catesby, Audubon…I came here and liked the look of it.”

  “I always take home to London as much Community Dark Roast coffee that my bags can carry.”

• Photograph of specimen Asclepias tuberosa, “Butterfly Milkweed”
  LSU Shirley C. Tucker Herbarium, LSU00031668
Specimens gathered for the Native Flora of Louisiana project were permanently added to the Tucker Herbarium’s holdings to aid in research. Stones collected this plant herself on May 15, 1982, near the Whiskey Chitto River in Allen Parish.

- **Photograph of Stones on a collecting trip in Louisiana, c. 1981 (MAS)**

  Stones enjoyed the opportunity to collect plants alongside botany faculty and volunteers, commenting to Sternberg, at one point, that she felt closer to the paintings for which she helped collect specimens. Each finished painting bears the name or names of those who collected the plants, an acknowledgement by the artist of the time and effort involved in the process.

- **Letter from Stones to Carolyn Hargrave, LSU Provost, April 27, 1988**
  LSU Office of Academic Affairs Records, A0100

  Stones reports, “*My Louisiana-in-London season is in full swing. Kathy Morgan was here...*” LSU friends and associates regularly visited Stones while in London; she enjoyed preparing meals featuring Louisiana cuisine for her guests.

  Kathryn Morgan was Curator of the McIlhenny Collection at LSU Libraries Special Collections from 1980 to 1991, one of a series of LSU librarians responsible for the custody of the Flora of Louisiana drawings. Morgan later worked with Stones on the publication of a small portfolio of botanical prints for the University of Virginia, after becoming Curator of Rare Books there.

- **Photograph of Stones’s painting desk at home at Kew, c. 1980s (MS)**
  Restricted; used with permission.

  Stones rendered her exquisite watercolors on this humble table in her home. In correspondence with a friend, Stones expressed relief when a neighbor’s home remodeling project did not alter the roofline, which would have changed the character and quantity of light coming into her studio.

- **Photograph of Bill Harbin, LSU Theatre professor and close friend of Stones, unknown woman, and Stones in front of her home at 1 Bushwood Road, Surrey, London, near the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, c. 1980s**
  Reproduced with permission from Gresdna Doty

  Stones nurtured a variety of Louisiana plants in her London-area garden, some cultivated from seed collected for the Native Flora of Louisiana project.

- **Handwritten calendar listing Stones’s numerous social engagements while visiting Baton Rouge after the Native Flora of Louisiana project was completed, n.d. (MS)**
  Restricted; used with permission.

- **Photograph of Stones’s last visit to LSU, 2004**
  Reproduced with permission from Gresdna Doty

  LSU Libraries Special Collections presented an exhibition of Stones’s work on the occasion of her last visit to Baton Rouge in Spring 2004, after she had retired from working in England and had moved back to Australia.
Left to right: Viera Chmelarova, LSU graduate student; Elaine Smyth, Rare Book Curator at LSU Libraries Special Collections; Margaret Stones; Ron Boudreaux; and Jim Traynham, LSU Professor and husband of Gresdna Doty.

- **The Melbourne University Magazine, 2004**
  On loan from Gresdna Doty

  Cover features *Rhododendron lochiae* by Margaret Stones, 1973.

- **Letter from Stones to Julia Hawkins, May 22, 2005**
  Reproduced with permission from Julia Hawkins

  Stones relays a story regarding a visit to a local gallery:

  “Last week Elaine [Stones’s niece] took me to see an exhibition of the work by a botanical artist friend in a small country town north of Melbourne. We had never been there before and planned to go somewhere after seeing the show, for lunch in the town. As I opened the door we were faced by ten people who look [sic] shocked to see us, or rather, me. Then they all exploded with laughter because the owner of the gallery was just then showing them my ‘Endemic Flora of Tasmania’ and had two of the volumes open - It was [as] if I was a ghost. We were lucky because two of their lunch guests hadn’t arrived and Elaine and I were invited to stay for a most elaborate and delicious lunch. As you know I have been blessed with the gift of serendipity.”

---

**The Commission**

- **Original proposal of LSU project by Doty to Murrill, Sept. 3, 1975**
  LSU Office of Chancellor Records, A0001

  Having viewed one of Stones’s paintings, commissioned by Wayne Womack, Doty set off to meet Stones while on sabbatical in London. Upon her return to LSU, she proposed the idea of a commission of works to Chancellor Murrill, who agreed.

  LSU first commissioned Stones to illustrate six native Louisiana plants in honor of the 1976 U.S. bicentennial. These were to be the foundation for the larger commission that followed later: *Helianthus annuus*, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Gelsemium sempervirens* (Carolina jessamine), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Poplar), *Quercus virginiana* (Live Oak), *Tillandsia usneoides* (Spanish Moss), and *Pinus elliottii*. All of these except for *Liriodendron tulipifera* are on display in the exhibition.

- **Letter from Stones to Doty written from Victoria, Australia, November 9, 1975 (GD)**

  “Of the flowers on Wayne’s list I could get in England I believe: *Cornus florida*, *Magnolia virginiana*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Taxodium distichum*. There are no doubt others but I can’t discover for sure until I get back. Would it be possible to begin the work on my way home? I am as you know taking myself by Baton Rouge and if anything was likely to be flowering then I
could do it there. …If you know of anyone flying to London who could bring an occasional specimen packed and with a phytosanitary certificate for the customs and the box labelled “The Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for the attention of Miss Margaret Stones” this would ensure speedy delivery. …However, it would be best if someone at Baton Rouge wrote and asked the Director of Kew, Professor John Heslop-Harrison, if he would agree to this arrangement. I am sure he would be most helpful as he has been with my Tasmanian work and again recently over the Melbourne retrospective. Indeed he is a very great botanist with an international outlook and would I feel take it as a great honour if Baton Rouge commissions drawings from the artist to the Botanical magazine. The artist herself is more than delighted at the prospect. I note that the live oak and Spanish moss drawing can be done in Feb so that would be something achieved and there may well be some other things flowering then.”

Stones refers to the plant list created by an LSU committee at the beginning of the project, led by landscape architect Wayne Womack. Few plant specimens were in fact sent to England from Louisiana for Stones to draw, since most Louisiana plants were too fragile to survive shipment. Stones also discovered that some specimens from Kew varied in shape and size from plants growing in Louisiana. During her ten-year commission for LSU, Stones traveled to Baton Rouge once or twice each year to work from live specimens.

Wayne Womack and Jon Emerson taught landscape architecture at LSU; Womack was later a partner in Emerson’s firm, Jon Emerson & Associates. Womack, a key player in what became the Native Flora of Louisiana project and a close friend of Stones, passed away in November 2019.

- **Letter from Stones to Murrill, August 25, 1976 (MS)**
  Restricted; used with permission.

Stones noted that the six drawing commission of 1976 was complete.

  *LH1 .L55 A4 LLMVC*

  Article describes Native Flora of Louisiana project upon its completion. Provost Hargrave worked with Stones to continue the project, and there are a number of drawings in the collection that were done after 1986.

- **Letter from Stones to Doty, October 29, 1976 (GD)**

  “Two days ago I met Sir Clive Fitts the doctor who looked after me when I was sick so long ago and who took my drawings to the director of the Melbourne National Gallery…we met at the Tate Gallery. It was a lovely Autumn morning so for half an hour we sat on a seat outside the front entrance at the top of the steps and exchanged news…I told him the latest version of the [LSU] contract had gone off and a committee had been formed to raise funds. So, I said, We must keep our fingers crossed. At this very moment, a large pigeon sitting on a ledge above us deposited an avian blessing upon me!! My friend was most upset but I was almost helpless with laughter for such blessings are always considered a sign of the greatest good luck!!!”

Close friends often comment on Stones’s sense of humor.
Photograph of signing contract at Asphodel, April 24, 1977
Louisiana State University Division of Strategic Communications Records, A0020

Shown from left to right are: Mrs. Robert E. Couhig (owner of Asphodel Plantation), Paul Murrill, Margaret Stones, and James J. Coleman, Jr., honorary British consul for Louisiana.

Official fundraising brochure for the Native Flora of Louisiana project, featuring Stones’s tulip poplar illustration, c. 1977
LSU Office of Chancellor Records, A0001

Letter from Stones to Doty regarding prospect of LSU commission, August 16, 1975 (GD)

“Very many thanks for your letter of April 3rd which knocked me for six as they say in cricketing circles. I’m only just beginning to surface from the shock. Oh Gresdna how wonderful you and Wayne [Womack] and Jon [Emerson] are to be laying such plans on my behalf. I’d love to go to Baton Rouge to do a folio of six or twelve drawings and I only hope it comes to pass... I’ve had a letter from Wayne and I must answer it soon. But would you please tell him how thrilled I am at the possibility? And please thank Jon for suggesting I make use of his studio…My mind revolves around the flowers in the Audubon bird pictures and I am even now drawing Magnolia grandiflora for my Melbourne show so am feeling in a Southern States mood.”

Handwritten letter from Murrill to Stones, Dec. 20, 1976 (MS)
Restricted; used with permission.

“I know it is going to be a great success.”

Native Flora of Louisiana notebook, n.d. (GD)

This project notebook is the last item that Stones donated personally to LSU Libraries, conveyed through Doty. Stones kept meticulous records of the drawings and their completion status throughout the duration of the project.

Letter from Stones to LSU Foundation on Faculty Club letterhead, May 20, 1986
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files: Elaine Smyth

Stones documented new drawings that replaced earlier ones, and noted that “apart from sundry details of fruits and seeds etc. to be added to existing drawings, this completes the collection of two hundred drawings commissioned by the university.”

At least one of the finished watercolors in the collection bears a penciled message by Stones: “Awaiting Fruit.”

LSU Magazine, April 1986
(Feature story on the project and its completion) BIBLIO
George Guidry, director of LSU Library; Oscar Richard, Director of the Anglo-American Art Museum; Pat Bacot, Assistant Director of the Anglo-American Art Museum; Charles Schneider, Professor of Botany; Les Phillabaum, Director of LSU Press; Gresdna Doty, Professor of Theatre; Jon Emerson, Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture; Neil Odenwald, Professor emeritus and former director of the LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture.

Neil Odenwald is a familiar name among garden enthusiasts; his books have influenced everyone from landscape architecture students to the home gardener. Stones happily reported to a friend that a cultivated variety of hydrangea that Odenwald had given her was thriving in her home garden in England.

This is an early version of the list of 200 plants recommended by the Plant Selection Committee for inclusion in the project. LSU botany professor Lowell Urbatsch later revised the list, based in part on what was found in the field.

Heslop-Harrison agrees to provide Stones access to Louisiana plants cultivated at Kew, and to receive living plants from Louisiana.

LSU Boyd Professor emerita Shirley Tucker noted that university funds were needed to hire someone to drive Stones during her next visit. She emphasized that “the botanists view the project as one that will help promote botanical activities in the state as well as the University, and they are eager to cooperate.” The LSU Herbarium was renamed in Tucker’s honor in 2015.

Urbatsch suggests changes to the original plant list. Stones submitted this letter to Paul Murrill, noting Urbatsch’s expertise, professionalism, and pleasant nature. She called him “my kind of botanist.”

Urbatsch suggests changes to the original plant list. Stones submitted this letter to Paul Murrill, noting Urbatsch’s expertise, professionalism, and pleasant nature. She called him “my kind of botanist.”

LSU botanists on a collecting trip with Stones, c. 1980
Left to right: Shirley Tucker, Lowell Urbatsch, Margaret Stones, and Florence Givens.

Photograph by Mary Ann Sternberg.
• Handwritten note and sketches of Magnolia species from William Garbo to Stones, May 30, 1983 (MS)
Restricted; used with permission.

Garbo was a landscape architect from Mississippi, well-known in later years for his work restoring historic gardens in the Natchez area.

• LSU botanists Urbatsch and Givens gathering and photographing plants, c. 1980 (MAS)

Photograph by Mary Ann Sternberg.

• Memo from Thomas Moore, Professor and Chair of LSU Department of Botany, to Dean Henry of College of Basic Sciences, Oct. 7, 1985 (MAS)

Moore wrote in support of LSU awarding Stones an honorary doctoral degree because of her work for the Native Flora of Louisiana project: “… the Stones project has stimulated successful searches for plant rarities in Louisiana…these efforts are highly useful to indicate which plants are in danger of extinction, and where rare populations still exist.”

• Receipt for shipment of plant specimens to Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, November 4, 1985
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files

Working Drawings

All of the working drawings in this case correspond with finished watercolors displayed in this exhibition.

_Amsonia ludoviciana_ Vai
Louisiana Blue Star

_Delphinium carolinianum_ Walt.
Blue Larkspur

_Listera australis_ Lindley
Southern Tway Blade

_Pinus elliottii_ Engelm. var. elliottii
Slash Pine

_Utricularia inflata_ Walt.
Floating Bladderwort
Letter from Stephen Cooper of LSU Faculty Senate to M. Stone Miller of LSU Libraries, April 25, 1977
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files: Elaine Smyth

Cooper notes that Stones regularly destroyed sketches that she deemed sub-par, and notes his concern about where the working drawings will go. Stones donated the drawings to LSU Libraries Special Collections upon the project's completion.

Handwritten notes from Stones, 1979-1980 (MS)
Restricted; used with permission.

Documentation of finished drawings turned over to the LSU Office of the Chancellor.

LSU Press

  QK98.183 .S76 A2 1991 OVER McIlhenny

  The book won the 1992 Louisiana Literary Award from the Louisiana Library Association.

  QK98.183 .S76 A2 2018 FLAT McIlhenny

  Friends of Margaret Stones (Gresdna Doty, Carolyn Hargrave, Randy Harelson, Laura Lindsay, Paul Murrill, and Lowell Urbatsch) raised funds from private donors to make possible the publication of the deluxe folio edition.

  Kevin Duffy, LSU ITS Digital Imaging and Video Services, photographed the entire collection for this folio edition, with assistance from Margaret “Sissy” Albertine, LSU Libraries Special Collections photographer. Albertine assisted with handling and exhibiting the Stones drawings throughout her 33-year career at LSU; she passed away in November 2019.

- Letter from Stones to Les Phillabaum, director of LSU Press, April 4, 1991 (MS)
  Restricted; used with permission.

  “Dear Les, David Scrase has sent me a copy of “Flora of Louisiana” and I want you to know quickly how thrilled I am with it. The cover is splendid as is the frontispiece and the introductory essays. I especially like your own contribution. Very many thanks. It is a wonderful conclusion to our great project. Almost the nicest thing, indeed the nicest thing about my Louisiana years has been to work with a group of like-minded people.”
Stones noted her approval of the LSU Press title Flora of Louisiana: “I am so proud of Louisiana State University.”

Exhibitions

Major exhibitions of selections from Native Flora of Louisiana Collection

1980 Smithsonian Natural History Museum
1985 Louisiana State Museum
1987 University of California, Davis
1993 University of Virginia, on the occasion of Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday

Photo of Stones, Murrill, Carolyn B. Long (wife of Senator Russell Long) and James “Jim” Mello, Assistant Director of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, 1980
Louisiana State University Division of Strategic Communications Records, A0020

Brochure for Smithsonian exhibition, 1980
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files: Elaine Smyth

Fifty Flora of Louisiana drawings were exhibited.

Stones and exhibition visitors at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, 1980
Louisiana State University Division of Strategic Communications Records, A0020

Stones, Julia Hawkins, and friends in New Orleans to view exhibition at the Louisiana State Museum (Presbytere), 1985
Reproduction used with permission from Gresdna Doty.

Sixty-five drawings were exhibited.

“Naturally Louisiana” flyer, 1985
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files

Flyer announcing Louisiana State Museum exhibition.
Selected drawings were displayed around the state as part of Paul Murrill’s efforts to secure state-wide participation in the project. Venues in Alexandria, Lake Charles, Shreveport, and Lafayette hosted exhibitions featuring Stones’s work.

John S. McIlhenny, whose family is known for producing Tabasco® sauce, commissioned Stones privately to paint tabasco peppers. McIlhenny was an early financial supporter for the Native Flora of Louisiana project. The photograph was taken by LSU photographer Jim Zietz on the occasion of the exhibition reception marking the completion of the ten-year commission on May 18, 1986.

The Fitzwilliam show was the first major international exhibition of Flora of Louisiana drawings, featuring a total of 90. The same group was displayed at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

Irena Zdanowicz was Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia) from 1981 to 2001. She organized the retrospective exhibition held at the NGV in 1996 entitled “Beauty in Truth: The Botanical Art of Margaret Stones,” which included 22 Stones drawings borrowed from LSU. Zdanowicz remained a close friend of Stones until the latter’s death. She currently works as an independent art historian, curator, and writer.
Awards and Honors

1977  Royal Horticultural Society - Veitch Silver Medal; Member of the British Empire (MBE) for Service to the Arts
1986  Royal Horticultural Society - Veitch Gold Medal; Louisiana State University - Honorary Doctor of Science
1987  Garden Club of America - Eloise Payne Luquer Medal for Special Achievement in the Field of Botany
1988  Member of the Order of Australia
1989  University of Melbourne - Honorary Doctor of Science
1992  Louisiana State University - University Medal

• Letter from Stones to Doty, December 6, 1977 (GD)

Queen Elizabeth II named Stones a Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1977. Stones insisted to LSU friends that this was a “minor honor” and she did not want the information publicized. However, she shared her experience in this letter:

“Inside there were guards with gorgeous uniforms … My eyes were out on stalks at the wonderful paintings which I couldn't tarry to see - Rembrandts, Rubens, van Dycks in multiples not to mention everyone else one seems to have heard about. …We were told how to approach H.M. [Her Majesty] about 10 steps forward to the Royal Chamberlain a stately gentleman whose name I can't remember, then when our name was called, about four steps forward again, a left turn, curtsy, three steps toward H.M. who is TINY to my amazement, with marvelous eyes and a beautiful smile and she speaks in her little, fluting voice about 5 inches from your face as she pins on the medal . . . It was of course all sheer theatre and you would have greatly enjoyed it … We saw all over the Royal Society which was of course very interesting. They have a beautiful portrait of Benjamin Franklin.”

• Official Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana [Baton Rouge, etc.]
J87 .L8 April 1977c, Volume 2 LLMVC

Louisiana House Concurrent Resolution commending LSU and the Native Flora of Louisiana project.

• Letter from Stones to Doty, January 30, 1979 (GD)

“Murray Hawkins has got me the Honorary Citizenship of MAMOU. The Mayor of Mamou was once a student of his… 'Be it Known to All That Margaret Stones has been made an Honorary Citizen of Mamou, Where the Progress of the Future is Forever Entwined with the Traditions of the Past.’”

• LSU Commencement program, May 21, 1986
LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files
• Nomination letter from Les Phillabaum, LSU Press, for the Garden Club of America Medal of Honor, October 17, 1986  
LSU Office of Academic Affairs Records, A0100

• Letter from Stones to Hargrave, March 13, 1989  
LSU Office of Academic Affairs Records, A0100

Stones wrote to Hargrave regarding her receipt of an honorary degree from the University of Melbourne: “They probably felt they should keep up with LSU!”

• Photograph of LSU Chancellor William “Bud” Davis presenting Stones with the University Medal, 1992  
Friends of LSU Libraries Records, unprocessed

Davis presented Stones with the University Medal at a ceremony in April 1992 held at the Governor’s Mansion, part of a three-day series of events at LSU and other venues, celebrating Margaret Stones and the “Flora” project.

Sally Clausen represented Governor Edwin Edwards and presented Stones with a Governor’s Award.

The First Drawing: Live Oak

• Working drawing of Quercus virginiana Miller (Live Oak), the first drawing completed for the 1976 LSU commission.  
On loan from Gresdna Doty

From a letter from Stones to Doty, March 3, 1976 (GD)

“I’m writing to ask you please to remind Wayne that I DESPERATELY need flowers from the live oak and (if possible) the Spanish moss to complete my drawing. I was very envious when you mentioned seeing the Cornus in flower – would this have been Cornus florida which I need I wonder? I’m delighted you have Wayne to keep me alive by mimicking my Australian accent.”

• Photographs featuring Stones in the field on plant collecting trips, and socializing with friends, 1970s-1990s  
(MAS) and reproduced with permission from Julia Hawkins

• Coneflower cartoon, n.d.  
On loan from Melanie and Russ Chapman

Professor Russell Chapman came to know Stones in his role as Chair of the LSU Department of Botany. He and his wife Melanie befriended Stones, and she created this one-of-a-kind cartoon for their two sons.
Photograph of Baton Rouge residents who were early supporters of the Native Flora of Louisiana project and friends of Margaret Stones, 2019

On loan from Julia Hawkins

Louisiana Plants

*Liatris earlei / Liatris squarrulosa* Michx.
**Appalachian Blazing Star**


*Schoenolirion croceum*
**Sunny Bells**

Collected in Vernon Parish by Lowell Urbatsch, April 3, 1992

*Trillium foetidissimum*
**Mississippi River Wakerobin**

Working drawing for Native Flora of Louisiana Collection, 1986
Working drawing, pencil on paper, 1999
Finished drawing, watercolor and pencil on vellum, 1999
All donated by the artist; all specimens collected by Lowell Urbatsch.

*Physostegia longisepala*
**Longsepal False Dragonhead**

During a visit to Baton Rouge in May 1997, Margaret Stones made this drawing of a rare plant not originally included in the Native Flora of Louisiana Collection.

Working drawing, pencil on paper, 1997
Finished drawing, watercolor and pencil on paper, 1997

*Chaptalia tomentosa*
**Pineland Daisy**

Finished drawing, watercolor and pencil on vellum, 1999
Donated by the artist. Specimen collected by Lowell Urbatsch.
Malus angustifolia  
Southern Crabapple

Finished drawing, watercolor and pencil on vellum, 1999  
Donated by the artist. Specimen collected by Lowell Urbatsch.

Outside of Louisiana

These framed watercolors are part of the E. A. McIlhenny Natural History Collection.

Sorbus wilfordii

Cultivated at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; collected November 1984.

Polygonatum odoratum  
Solomon’s Seal

Cultivated at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; collected on May 11, 1988; fruit added August 11, 1988.  
Donated by John S. McIlhenny

Hibiscus saintjohnianus Roe  
St. John’s Rosemallow

Endemic to Oahu.  
Donated by John S. McIlhenny
In 1787, English botanist and gardener William Curtis (1746-1799) began a publication entitled *The Botanical Magazine, or Flower Garden Displayed*. The publication was later called *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, then became *Kew Magazine*; finally, in 1995, the publication returned to the title *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*.

Margaret Stones published her first drawing in *Curtis's* in 1956. By 1958, she was the magazine's principal contributing artist. When her last drawing was published in the magazine in 1983, she had produced more than 400 watercolor drawings for it, in addition to many technical drawings of plant parts, rendered in black and white.

*Curtis's Botanical Magazine* text from “Late Bloomers” exhibition, curated by Elaine B. Smyth, LSU Libraries Special Collections, 2005

  
  QK1 .C9 McIlhenny

  This volume features Stones's illustrations of *Aerangis rhodosticta*, a species of orchid.

- Letter from Stones to Robert S. Martin, Head of LSU Libraries Special Collections, December 7, 1987
  
  LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files

  Stones donated 62 working drawings associated with *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* to the LSU Libraries, noting, “I feel very strongly that working drawings should be kept in good archives.”

  
  QK1 .C9 McIlhenny

  This volume features Stones's illustrations of *Crossandra massaica*, a species of orchid.

- *Crossandra massaica* working drawing.

  
  QK1 .C9 McIlhenny

  This volume features Stones's illustrations of *Glossodia major*, known as the Wax-Lip Orchid.

- *Glossodia major* working drawing.

  
  QK1 .C9 McIlhenny

  This volume features Stones's illustration of *Rhododendron wardii*. 
The Endemic Flora of Tasmania

_The Endemic Flora of Tasmania_ earned Stones international acclaim. Privately commissioned by Lord Talbot de Mathilde (continued by his sister, Rose, after his death), this six volume set was completed in 1978. Stones worked from live specimens, sent by air-freight from Tasmania to her studio at Kew. Dr. Winifred Curtis, professor of botany at the University of Tasmania in Hobart, wrote the botanical and ecological commentary.

_The Endemic Flora of Tasmania_ overview text from “Late Bloomers” exhibition, curated by Elaine B. Smyth, LSU Libraries Special Collections, 2005
• Photograph of Rose Talbot and Stones at Shadows-on-the-Teche in New Iberia, LA., n.d. Reproduced with permission from Gresdna Doty

• From a letter from Stones to Doty, August 16, 1975 (GD)

“We've had a very hot few weeks so I put out an improvised bird bath. It is a shallow plastic box which Lord Talbot bought in Tasmania in 1963 to send flowers to me for my book. It has thus travelled back and forth at least 250,000 miles and must be unique in travelled bird baths. The sparrows don't seem impressed.”


Stones donated this inscribed set of 6 volumes to LSU Libraries Special Collections.

Volume 2 – Plate 39 Eucalyptus amygdalina

Volume 3 – Plate 103 Drapetes tasmanicus

Volume 4 – Plate 158 Stipa stuposa

This drawing is a clear example of traditional botanical art convention, whereby the artist bends leaves in order to show the full leaf on one page.

Volume 5 – Plate 169 Dracophyllum milliganii

Volume 6 – Plate 237 Pultenaea selaginoides

Botanist Sir George Taylor renamed Stonesiella selaginoides after Stones to acknowledge her keen eye for detail.

Australian Plants

Anigozanths gabrielae

Collected in Kings Park Nursery, Perth, Australia, on November 4, 1983

• Banksia pilostylis

Cultivated at Waite Arboretum, S. Australia; collected on January 8, 1986

• Banksia caleyi

Cultivated at Waite Arboretum, S. Australia; collected December 1985
• From a letter from Stones to Doty, January 1, 1975 (GD)

While not a reference to this specific species, Stones makes note of another member of the genus Banksia as she describes an important commission:

“The very controversial but good Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, has been over recently and I was lucky enough to be invited to a reception to meet him and of course his wife. The liaison man with the PM’s party had phoned me earlier in the day to say the new Australia Governor General Sir John Kerr had asked him to commission two drawings from me of Australian flowers – we met and discussed this at the reception and now I wait for the flowers to be flown from Canberra … Some local architects gave a party and one of them told me he’s just had the job of redesigning and decorating the second floor of the London Clinic. He had prints of mine from the Kew Orangery mounted and framed and put two in each patient’s room. The first patient was the Sultan of Muscat so I like to think of him lying there … gazing at Banksia sericea!”

Jefferson and the Natural World


After leaving LSU, former McIlhenny Collection curator Kathryn Morgan joined the faculty at the University of Virginia as Curator of Rare Books. She worked with Stones to create this portfolio of native Virginia plants, and organized an exhibition of a selection of the Native Flora of Louisiana drawings.

Other Published Works


Several species of Stonesia illustrated by Stones, with drawing signed E.M.S. (Elsie Margaret Stones).
The artist’s use of a microscope enabled her to identify aspects of plants that had gone unnoticed by botanists. Sir George Taylor named two genera after Stones in appreciation for her eye for detail: Stonesia and Stonesiella.

- **Letter from Sir George Taylor to Professor Shirley Tucker, April 19, 1985 (GD)**

  Taylor wrote this letter of recommendation for Stones to receive an honorary degree from LSU:

  “I have known Margaret since she came to England in 1951 and have followed her career with the utmost interest and admiration. I was in a position to get her work at the British Museum and also at Kew and she excelled in all the commissions that she undertook. It is not generally known and I am sure she would not wish it to be mentioned but she showed enormous courage in overcoming a serious health condition to become an artist.

  Although her work has been principally in depicting plants in watercolour with exquisite delicacy and detail she has also contributed many line drawings for botanical publications and perhaps it is apposite to mention that I named a most interesting genus of tropical aquatic plants after her and in doing so I said: ‘In naming this genus Stonesia I wish to express my deep gratitude to Miss Margaret Stones, whose beautiful illustrations, completed with infinite care and patience, have been of the utmost value in elucidating the microscopical floral structure of these remarkable plants.’”

  George Taylor (1904-1993) was a prominent British botanist who served as director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, from 1956 to 1971, and subsequently as director of the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust (U.K. and U.S.) until 1989.

- **Letter from Taylor to Stones, December 31, 1985 (MS)**
  Restricted; used with permission.

  Taylor congratulated Stones for being nominated for an honorary degree from LSU:

  “You see, deservedly or not, I personally regard you as a protégé of mine who has consistently excelled. Without your skill STONESIA would never have been born though its beauty and interest is only in the eyes of the microscopic beholder.”

  These books were illustrated with color plates and line drawings by Margaret Stones. Each cover is a reproduction of one of her color plates:

    SB413 .R47 C687 McIlhenny

    SB435 .C795 1961 McIlhenny

    SB435 .C7945 1962 McIlhenny

    QK495 .L72 E5 FLAT McIlhenny
Stones’s illustrations of *Paphiopedilum druryi* are shown here.

  QK495 .O64 C75 1988 McIlhenny

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**Early Botanical Artists: Influential Illustrators**

- Letter from Ursula Hoff, April 23, 1985 (GD)

Hoff, retired art historian and former Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria, wrote to support efforts for LSU to award Stones an honorary degree. She noted that, “It seems natural for an Australian to identify herself with the tradition begun by the botanical artists employed by [Joseph] Banks during the voyages of discovery of Captain Cook. Margaret Stones has all along taken a scholarly interest in the work of these early illustrators and been inspired by their example. Her illustrations of the Flora of Tasmania are in themselves voyages of discovery and have immortalized the indigenous plants of that part of Australia.”

- Banks’ Florilegium: A Publication in Thirty-four Parts of Seven Hundred and Thirty-eight Copperplate Engravings of Plants Collected on Captain James Cook’s First Voyage Round the World in H.M.S. Endeavour, 1768-1771. The Specimens were Gathered and Classified by Sir Joseph Banks, Bart., and Daniel Solander and were Accurately Engraved between 1771 and 1784, After Drawings Taken from Nature by Sydney Parkinson. London: Alecto Historical Editions in association with the British Museum (Natural History), 1980-1989.
  QK5 .B33 1980 FLAT McIlhenny

Upon his return to England in 1771, following his voyage with Captain Cook, naturalist Joseph Banks (1743-1820) commissioned over 700 engravings based on Parkinson’s original illustrations of plants never before seen by Europeans. The engravings were not published in Banks’s lifetime. A selection of prints, not in color, was finally published in 1900. While Stones would not have seen the full-color edition of *Banks’ Florilegium* completed by Alecto Editions in 1989 until late in her career, she would have had access to the earlier publication, and likely saw Parkinson’s original illustrations from the *Endeavour* voyage at some point (these are currently held by the Natural History Museum at South Kensington in London). Plates 1-337 of the Alecto edition depict plants of Australia.
Elizabeth Blackwell (1707-1758) of England illustrated, engraved, and colored her plates in this work, produced to earn funds to pay off her husband's debts and free him from prison. The White Lily is featured here, the specimen of which would have been obtained from the Chelsea Physic Garden (London's oldest botanical garden, founded in 1673).

During an interview with Sternberg, Stones exclaimed, “I've got an Ehret – he's my hero!” German illustrator George Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770) worked closely with Swedish botanist and physician Carl Linnaeus while the latter was working on his system of binomial nomenclature, the modern system of naming and classifying organisms. Ehret's illustrations balance art with science. His detailed, accurate portrayals of plants, with emphasis on reproductive systems, set a standard for botanical illustration that is still followed today.

British artist James Sowerby (1757-1822) was a contributing artist to Curtis's Botanical Magazine. A product of the Enlightenment, Sowerby was a major influence on the development of botanical art. While primarily focused on plants, Sowerby also illustrated fungi and fossils.

“\textit{I drew this flower for LSU...I'd be so happy for it to go to LSU since there is also a connection with my own work. Sowerby was such an important botanical artist. He painted and engraved the first work, Iris persica for Curtis's Botanical Magazine and the drawings and engravings for Sowerby's English Botany ...He seemed to have had a finger in so many botanical pies at the time.”

Belgian artist Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759-1840) is best known for his illustrations of lilies and roses.

\textbf{Letter from Stones to Martin, December 4, 1990}

LSU Libraries Special Collections Administrative Files
Stones reports on helping curate the 1991 Fitzwilliam exhibition at Cambridge that would feature the work of major botanical artists in conjunction with the showing of her Flora of Louisiana watercolors from LSU:

“I have chosen the best of the best. Wonderful and very great Ehrets, early and late Redouté, Sowerby’s beautiful Iris persica, the first subject in Curtis’s Botanical Magazine and many others. A great cornucopia - this will be shown at the same time as my own but in a separate room.”

  QK1 .C9 McIlhenny

This volume features a Winged Passionflower by Welshman Sydenham Teast Edwards (1768-1819), an early and prolific contributor to the journal. Edwards split from Curtis after several illustrations of Edwards’s were attributed to other artists. He started a rival publication, The Botanical Register. The Botanical Magazine title changed to Curtis’s Botanical Magazine in 1801.

  QH41 .C28 FLAT V.2 McIlhenny

English naturalist Mark Catesby (1682-1749) travelled along the Atlantic coast of the United States during the colonial era describing and illustrating the native flora and fauna he encountered. This work was the first visual record of the natural history of Britain’s North American colonies.

Stones remarked in an interview with Sternberg that her favorite plants of those collected by Mark Catesby were Lilium catesbaei, along with Delphinium carolinianum and Stewartia malacodendron. “I feel closer to the plants I help collect…I love to see things growing in the wild that I’ve seen in the drawings by Catesby and Bartram.”

  QK98 .B35 FLAT McIlhenny

William Bartram (1739-1823) of Philadelphia was the first American-born naturalist who was also an artist. Commissioned by London physician John Fothergill to collect plants and seeds for the doctor’s botanical garden, Bartram travelled through the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, and west to the Mississippi River (including parts of Louisiana) from 1773 to 1777. He described the areas he visited in his famous Travels, published in 1791. The book displayed contains reproductions of drawings Bartram made for Fothergill, now held in the Natural History Museum (London, England).

The editor, botanist and botanical historian Joseph Ewan (1909-1999) was a professor at Tulane University in New Orleans for thirty years, and subsequently research associate at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Stones corresponded with him, specifically regarding the work of Catesby and Bartram. Ewan was one of four invited speakers at the April 1992 symposium held at LSU in honor of Margaret Stones and her Louisiana work.
Of International Renown: One of the 20th Century’s Finest Botanical Artists

These works include illustrations by Margaret Stones:

  QK98 .M28 FLAT McIlhenny

  This is an unusual illustration by Stones, featuring a mixed bouquet rather than one species with fruit, seed, and root system.

- **Daniels, Gilbert S. *Artists from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.* Pittsburgh, Pa.: Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1974.**
  QK73 .K4 D28 McIlhenny

- ***Twelve Flower Paintings from the British Museum.* London: British Museum Publications, 1983.**
  ND1400 .B7 1983 McIlhenny

  Sunflower by Margaret Stones. When Stones illustrated the same species, for a private commission or for a publication, she changed the placement on the page so that no two drawings looked alike.

  QK98.183 .S76 Z39 1996 OVER McIlhenny

  Stones often emphasized the necessity of careful observation as the foundation of successful botanical illustration. Zdanowicz describes Stones’s methods for observing the tiniest of details: “Throughout the process Stones checks details under magnification, not only in order to draw magnified sections, but to better understand the plant’s structure. Under a microscope the joint of stem and branches, or the physical structure of leaves and petals reveal evidence of what it is that determines their appearance. Understanding this makes for a more convincing depiction.”

  This publication was issued in conjunction with the 1996 Margaret Stones’s retrospective exhibition in Melbourne, Australia.

- ***Arte botanica nel terzo millennio.* Edited by Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi, Alessandro Tosi; with the collaboration of Shirley Sherwood. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2013.**
  QK98.3 .A78 2013 McIlhenny

• Lindsay, Laura F., ed. *Treasures of LSU.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010. LD3113 .T74 2010 LLMVC


The cover illustration is *Rhododendron lochiae* (1973) by Margaret Stones.

An excerpt from the foreword by HRH Prince Charles:

“The history of illustration of Australian plants is a rich and fascinating story in which the exploits of early explorers, botanists, naturalists, gardeners and artists are closely associated with the discovery, exploration and development of the country itself…The artists’ task was to preserve details of vibrant, living plants and flowers in a way that dessicated herbarium specimens never could. Their legacy to us is priceless; a rare synthesis of art, science and history which reminds us that detailed, painstaking observation can result in work which is both utilitarian and strikingly beautiful…The advent of photography brought new and faster ways for recording botanical information, but today we are in the midst of a revival of those earlier skills. In quality and realism, the work of artists such as Margaret Stones and Celia Rosser rivals anything produced by their illustrious predecessors of two centuries ago…”

• **Bausch & Lomb StereoZoom 4 microscope with picks and tweezers**
  On loan from Lowell Urbatsch, Professor & Herbarium Director, Emeritus
  LSU Department of Biological Sciences

Stones used microscopes such as this one to complete her watercolor drawings. Botanists held Stones in great respect for her attention to detail and knowledge of the field.
On Margaret:
Friends Remember the Artist

Margaret Stones, n.d. (MAS)
Russell Chapman, Professor Emeritus and Founding Dean
LSU College of the Coast & Environment

During the more than decade long Flora of Louisiana project, my wife Melanie and I had the pleasure of socializing with Margaret Stones many times at various venues including LSU, our home in Baton Rouge, and her home in Kew, England. During her visits to our home she met and interacted with our two sons, Christopher John and Timothy Sean. The young boys seemed to appreciate Margaret and one year they prepared an Easter basket for Margaret when they knew she was going to join us for Easter dinner. On another occasion one summer, the boys prepared a painting for Margaret which they presented to her, much to her delight. Margaret sent a thank you note in which she said she “treasured the double painting” and offered the cartoon of a cone flower resting after a hot day in the sun. We of course treasured her note and cartoon. Our appreciation grew a bit when sometime later Margaret told me she did not ever draw or doodle for recreation or fun. I am not sure if she was 100% serious or whether I had heard her correctly, but I thought if even just partly true, then the coneflower was even more special.

Sir Peter Crane, FRS, President
Oak Spring Garden Foundation, Upperville, Virginia

Bunny Mellon started collecting Margaret Stones’s drawings in 1984. She acquired 22 watercolors, each one was drawn at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where Margaret first began her botanical art career. Mrs. Mellon commissioned Margaret to draw two of her favorite plants: a common sunflower in 1985 and a great mullein in 1986. Mrs. Mellon enjoyed and appreciated these wonderful plant portraits, and she would often display them for special guests at her personal library, the Oak Spring Garden Library.

Margaret enjoyed very much her visit to Oak Spring, touring the Oak Spring Garden Library and the personal gardens of Mrs. Mellon. After Mrs. Mellon’s death in March of 2014, Margaret wrote a very touching letter to me asking, “has her library survived? I do hope so & should welcome a letter about this...” I amicably responded by saying the Library would continue and it is now a part of the Oak Spring Garden Foundation. The Foundation named in 2016 a guest bedroom in honor of Margaret and we reproduced several of her drawings to decorate the walls.

After meeting and talking to Margaret, it was apparent that flowers were the passionate essence of her life. One can’t help visualizing Margaret ardently drawing them from nature and observing her carefully executing the minutest detail of a flower’s pistil or stamen. Margaret’s fascination with a plant’s origin or how it was cultivated, also bring another interesting dynamic to her drawings. We have shown her remarkable collection to various artists, scholars and students, and each individual has been amazed and inspired by her extraordinary talent. More importantly, however, as the world’s climate continually changes Margaret’s botanical drawings can be used for a myriad of reference purposes in the future.
Gresdna Doty, Professor Emerita  
LSU Department of Theatre

During one of Margaret Stones’s earliest visits to Baton Rouge several LSU faculty—Jon Emerson, Bill Harbin, Wayne Womack and I—took Margaret on a Sunday afternoon drive to Jefferson Island. Spotting a clump of wildflowers along the roadside she asked Jon, who was driving, to stop so as to collect a specimen, which Bill Harbin quickly did. After looking over the blossoms, however, she rejected them. We made more stops that afternoon, and each time Margaret found the collected specimen unsatisfactory. Finally, Wayne turned to her and said, “Margaret, you are just too particular!” She immediately challenged Wayne, “Why am I not allowed to be particular?” We all laughed, but it was, to me, a revealing comment that I have often recalled when I look at Margaret’s beautiful drawings. Each one is a testament to not only her fine sense of design but also her unerring eye for detail. Margaret was a master of the particular.

I shall always be grateful to Margaret for introducing me to a whole new world—of botanical art and artists, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and friends from Winchester to Edinburg to Melbourne—as well as a whole new way of seeing. In later years we shared enriching adventures, sometimes with friends, in places exotic and familiar on different continents. With Margaret one always saw more.

Randy Harelson, Horticulturist and author

Clint Harelson, my older brother, introduced me to the work of Margaret Stones in the late 1970s or early 80s. Clint was an artist, trained at Rhode Island School of Design, who loved plants and incorporated orchids and tropical plants into his oil paintings and serigraphs. Two of his favorite artists were Margaret Stones and Walter Anderson. Both artists, he said, studied the natural world with great attention to detail - with a scientist’s eye - and then took their drawing and painting to a very high level of fine art.

I became enamored with Margaret Stones’s original watercolor drawings when I was asked to curate an exhibition at the LSU Museum of Art in 2016. I titled the exhibition “Margaret Stones’s Flora of Louisiana: The Baton Rouge Connection” because we framed and showed 52 original watercolor drawings for which the plant specimens had been gathered in East Baton Rouge Parish - and gathered by a marvelous group of Baton Rouge friends and associates of Miss Stones.

In working on the exhibition I fell in love with the originals, which I had never seen in person. My strong desire for others to see the work directly, or at least in large and full-color reproduction, led me to write a book proposal to LSU Press to publish a new folio edition of the Native Flora of Louisiana. The great pleasure of creating the finished folio edition was working with the staff of LSU Libraries Special Collections and LSU Press and our project steering committee: Paul Murrill, Gresdna Doty, Carolyn Hargrave, Laura Lindsay, and Lowell Urbatsch. The book was published in November 2018.

Carolyn Hargrave, LSU Provost (retired)

I have had the honor and privilege of knowing and working with Margaret Stones since June, 1981, when I became LSU’s Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs following the retirement of Chancellor Paul Murrill in the fall of 1980. When it came to my attention that following Chancellor Murrill’s retirement, no office or individual was assigned the responsibility for supervising the Flora of Louisiana project, I volunteered to serve as project administrator to insure that the project continued
to be overseen with the same care and dedication as provided by Chancellor Murrill and his staff. As project administrator, my staff and I made arrangements for Margaret’s visits, authorized expenditures, signed contracts, transferred funds, assured visa and immigration support, and worked closely with all campus offices involved in the project. The project was unique because it involved a wide variety of members of the University community, including administrators and faculty from the Library, LSU Press, LSU Foundation, and the Departments of Botany and Landscape Architecture.

This became one of my most enjoyable and cherished responsibilities as Provost, because it gave me an opportunity to visit with Margaret regularly for the next 10 years and to work with her and other LSU officials to undertake projects which would provide recognition for Margaret and LSU for the quality and significance of the Native Flora of Louisiana collection of drawings. Projects and activities undertaken during my time as project administrator included: an exhibition of drawings at the Presbytere in New Orleans; an exhibition at Hill Memorial Library in connection with LSU awarding Margaret an honorary Doctor of Science degree; working with the New Orleans Town Gardeners on an agreement for the organization to sell a limited edition of four drawings; helping to convince Margaret to continue her relationship with LSU beyond the expiration in late 1986 of her initial 10-year contract with LSU; and most significant, working with the LSU Library staff to arrange a showing of Margaret’s work abroad. The result was that in late spring, 1991, ninety drawings from the Native Flora of Louisiana collection travelled to England to be exhibited at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; the Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh; and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It was a very special moment to represent LSU at the opening of the exhibit at the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford and to see and hear the wonderful comments about Margaret and LSU. Even more special was to have tea with Margaret at her home outside the entrance of Kew Gardens and to try to keep up with her as she gave me a guided tour of her favorite flowers at Kew.

Since I left the Office of Academic Affairs in 1991, I have participated in two additional projects to expand national and international recognition of the quality and significance of Margaret’s work. I served on the steering committee to organize a symposium in April, 1992, which brought distinguished speakers from the United States and England to LSU to speak on the significance of the collection and Margaret’s place in the continuum of botanical art. And more recently, I served on the advisory committee for the new Folio Edition of the Native Flora of Louisiana.

Margaret Stones developed deep and lasting friendships with many people with whom she came in contact over the years. I am pleased and proud that I am one.

Julia Hawkins, friend, travelling companion, and plant collector

The way that I met Margaret Stones was in the Faculty Club at LSU where our daughter was having her wedding reception. This was in April 1977. While we were there setting up, I noticed a can with a trillium and a jack-in-the-pulpit. The can was sitting outside the door of an apartment. I realized this must be the room of the English artist I had read about. A few days later I called the Faculty Club and invited her on a boat trip on the Tangipahoa. She accepted! That trip was the first of many we took together and the beginning of a wonderful friendship.

My husband Murray Hawkins had just retired from teaching at LSU, so we were available to take Margaret Stones on her treks searching for native plants. These included swamp tours, a trip to the Tunica Hills near St. Francisville, and many more. The three of us also took extended vacations to Mesa Verde, the Grand Canyon, the Smoky Mountains, and Nova Scotia.
Margaret was deft at dealing with amateur artists who wanted to show her their work. She would look at the offered paintings and simply say, “You must be so proud!” What a diplomat.

After she returned to Australia, we kept up a close correspondence by letter and phone calls. For her 90th birthday, we invited all her Baton Rouge friends to our house. We videotaped the assembled group singing a special birthday tribute to her.

A few days before Margaret died, we called to tell her we had received our copy of her new book, and how thrilled we were with it. She lived long enough to see her own copy, and that is what she was waiting for.

Laura F. Lindsay, Professor Emerita
LSU Manship School of Mass Communication

My memories of Margaret are treasured and diverse, and I feel honored to have been invited by Chancellor Emeritus Paul W. Murrill to assist with the project that produced the magnificent folio of her work. I’m sure others will address her incredible knowledge of flora and amazing artistry that brings even the finest detail to life.

One particular memory stands out. I’d been introduced to Margaret by Dr. Gresdna Doty, who encouraged me to contact her when I was teaching in London. Not knowing me, other than my relationship with Gresdna and LSU, Margaret offered to host my mass communication students at her home in Kew where she enchanted them with her wonderful personality, delicious food, and warm home and lovely outdoor patio. The fact that she had no car and used only public transportation was a foreign idea for them and also encouraged them to venture out and discover museums and historic venues throughout the area. Her touch personalized the trip for my students and made these Louisiana students, many of whom had never traveled further than Shreveport, feel at home in England. I feel blessed to be able to call her “my friend, Margaret Stones.”

Paul W. Murrill, Chancellor Emeritus

Paul Murrill spoke on the occasion of the 1992 exhibition and Symposium at Hill Memorial Library, “Margaret Stones and Botanical Art.” Stones was present for Murrill’s comments.

In 1975 this campus, as was the rest of the nation -- this campus was preparing to celebrate the bicentennial in 1976, and as part of that celebration LSU had petitioned to be designated as a bicentennial university, and the petition itself had to set forth the programs and activities and events that we would sponsor to celebrate our heritage and our past. But also a part of that petition was a requirement that the university undertake some project to create something of lasting value … we entered into a formal agreement with Margaret to do six paintings…. [After raising the full amount we] started to relax. But there was the haunting idea that if people were that supportive of this kind of project, were we under-selling the idea? Did we have something here that was more significant than a single item of six paintings? … in a bit of leap of faith we just decided to go ahead and do it, and worked out the appropriate arrangements with Margaret, and she said, “I’m not a young girl, I can’t offer you a ten-year guarantee.” But the project formally got started, and people just flocked to the project …

[Regarding] the large numbers of people who have been intimately involved in this project, I think the number of people extends beyond 300, easily … First there are the field hands, really, under the superb leadership of the faculty in the Department of Botany, and especially under Lowell Urbatsch’s leader-
ship, but it involved other faculty members, graduate students, literally scores of collectors all across the state, just a lot of people put in a lot of hard work finding, identifying, collecting materials and getting them in the right place at the right time. The second category of people I would characterize as the caregivers. Large numbers of people who nurtured the project -- Kathy Morgan, in the LSU Library, just brought tremendous, tender, loving care to the materials themselves … The LSU Press and LesPhilipbaum - I can't say enough good things about them and the print program that they put together, publication of the book, but always seeking the very highest quality of work. Lots of other people across the campus, from landscape architecture to the Anglo-American Art Museum, Office of Public Relations, and on and on and on. Basically there are people who volunteered their services, they weren't assigned to it, there was no elaborate structure, people wanted to be a part of it, and they brought nurture and care to the project and gave it a very special life. And I think that, particularly during the 1980s, that Carolyn Hargrave gave some special … leadership to the project. The final group of people are the donors themselves. They are listed as being 72 donors … What is there about this project that would cause that many people to support it so aggressively, so tenderly, so enthusiastically?

… First of all, the bicentennial gave it a good kickoff… Secondly, it was a state wide project… Thirdly…people saw the parallel of the project to the work of Audubon, and people in Louisiana love Audubon. Fourthly, it was always a prestige project… Fifthly, the project came along at the right time as far as people's increasing awareness of environmental consciousness - it was a green project, and it was ahead of the power curve there… Sixth, and this is more important, it was recognized from the very beginning that the work was superb, not just good; it was the best you could possibly ever see. Seventh, the project was about beauty and art; it fed the spirit, it fed the soul, it was a thing of absolute beauty to behold. And this is in a state that has not done enough of that sort of thing, and there's a national void there, and people recognized it and they flocked to it and they fed on that. And… the eighth reason, and the final one, and more important than all the rest put together, was Margaret Stones. Margaret, I have to tell you that when we started this project there were a lot of anxieties about you. You know, first of all, they said, “Why didn't you get a Louisiana artist? You've gotten a foreigner. You know, she's probably a prima donna…” And that lasted 15 seconds. Margaret, you came in here and you thoroughly captivated us. Not only did you bring that superb talent, not only did you bring that quality that we talked about, but you also brought a standard of integrity, a warm, gracious personality, a good sense of humor, a good ability to relate to every single person that you ever met, and you have a group of subjects here and around this state that really think that you are just the absolute number one person in all the world.

Excerpted from 4700.0122 Tape 157 A, MSNFLC: Margaret Stones Papers.

Elaine Smyth, Associate Dean, LSU Libraries (retired)

During my time at LSU, I sometimes traveled for pleasure to England. Whenever possible, I arranged to visit with Margaret Stones at Kew. My husband, David (whom she rightly liked very much) and I would make the pilgrimage by train to the Royal Botanic Gardens, meeting Margaret there or at her home nearby. What better way to visit the Gardens than in Margaret's knowledgeable company? Afterwards, we would share a meal. Once we had a simple but delicious lunch at her home. Another time, joined by a very notable friend of Margaret's – the first female chancellor of a prominent Australian university – we had a very jolly lunch at a local café, with three bottles of wine! When Margaret moved permanently back to Australia, we made it a tradition to send her a bouquet of native Australian flowers on her birthday every year. She always wrote to thank us, often sending pictures. In her last letter to me, she wrote, “You will know that LSU is working on a new edition of the Louisiana Flora. I hope it reaches me before I die.” In truth, I think she waited for it to come. I’m glad she got to see it. She was a brilliant artist and a kind friend.
I initially got to know Margaret Stones because my husband’s business was one of the ones Paul Murrill requested support from. But my relationship with Margaret became personal when I began to write about her and the Louisiana flora project. I was allowed to go along on numerous collecting expeditions and then watch how she handled her “model” back in her Faculty Club studio—moving it around in a vase of water to find its perfect angle for her watercolor drawing. One of the most extraordinary experiences I had with Margaret was when my daughter and I were in London and she invited us out to Kew for lunch and a tour of Kew Gardens. As we trailed along, marveling at the gardens and the diversity of flora, I told my daughter, “you won’t appreciate until you’re older how exciting this is, being guided through one of the world’s most renowned gardens by one of the foremost botanical artists in the world who happens to be intimately familiar with the place!
Acknowledgements

To the donors and lenders of correspondence, art, and remembrances of Margaret Stones:
We could not have created this centennial exhibition without you. Thank you Melanie and Russ Chapman, Sir Peter Crane (Oak Spring Garden Foundation), Gresdna Doty, Jon Emerson, Randy Harelson, Julia Hawkins, Carolyn Hargrave, Laura Lindsay, Mary Ann Sternberg, Elaine Smyth, and Lowell Urbatsch.

LSU Libraries’ faculty and staff who made this exhibition possible: Leah Wood Jewett, Exhibitions Coordinator (curation, writing, design, installation, and graphic design and formatting of the checklist); John D. Miles, Curator of Books (essay); Kyle Neff, Public and Research Services Coordinator (research); Christina Riquelmy, Rare Book Cataloger (research, writing, and editing); Gabe Harrell, Computer Analyst; Anne Edwards, Facility Manager; student assistants Bryson Jones, Madelaine Kobe, Jordan Perry, and Chryshanna Williams (preparation and installation); and Christine Cloud, Instruction and Curatorial Assistant (exhibition catalog editing).
Stones at work in LSU Faculty Club, c. 1980

Stones’s desk in her home at Kew, c. 1980s

Native Flora of Louisiana (LSU Press, 2018)
Signing the LSU commission contract at Asphodel, 1977

LSU botanists Givens and Urbatsch photographing plants, c. 1980
LSU Chancellor William “Bud” Davis awarding Stones with University Medal, 1992

Case display featuring sketch and volumes of Curtis’s *Botanical Magazine*
Case display featuring volume 4 of *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*

Case display featuring microscope
Watercolor sketch of *Canna flaccida* by James Sowerby, n.d.