

Robert Thom

Robert Thom (illustrator)

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Robert Alan Thom (March 4, 1915 in Grand Rapids, Michigan - December 31, 1979 in Alma, Michigan)^[1] was an American illustrator who specialized in the portrayal of historical scenes for commercial patrons. He is perhaps best known for his series of 40 paintings depicting the history of pharmacy, and his series of 45 paintings depicting the history of medicine, both commissioned by Parke-Davis.

A student of Robert Brackman,^[2] Thom began his career as a commercial illustrator for General Motors and Detroit Edison in 1939, and set off as an independent artist in 1945. In this role, he produced many series of commissioned paintings for clients such as Kimberly-Clark (scenes from the history of "Graphic Communications Through the Ages"), Illinois Bell (scenes from the history of Illinois), Michigan Bell (scenes from the history of Michigan), and Chevrolet (scenes from the history of baseball).

Thom's works appear in galleries, museums, and universities worldwide, including the Baseball Hall of Fame and the White House.

Parke-Davis commissioned artist Robert Thom to produce 40 illustrations for the series, "A History of Pharmacy in Pictures." Each print came with a history article that explained the depicted scene and its place in history. Launched in 1957, the series was developed in cooperation with the Institute for the History of Pharmacy at the University of Wisconsin. Druggists were encouraged to display the artwork in their stores.

The series depicted such early topics as scientist Galen in the second century to later developments such as chemotherapy, antibiotics and pharmaceutical research. Parke Davis also commissioned Thom to paint a series of illustrations on the history of medicine. Thom (1915-1979) was well known as an illustrator of historical subjects, including great moments in baseball and the history of Illinois and Michigan.

