

Over the Week-End

By Arthur R. Ford

IN this column recently we made references to William L. Judson, early London painter and teacher of the noted London artist, Paul Peel. This brought a response from many readers who had pictures of Judson. The Art Gallery of the Public Library has decided to give an exhibition of Judson's works early in the New Year. Mr. Judson moved to Los Angeles in the nineties, where he founded an Art College and where his sons still carry on the Judson Studios and do notable work in stained glass.

Through the Los Angeles Public Library we have secured a wealth of information in regard to Judson. He had a remarkable career in California. A collection of his work is housed in the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles. There is also a large collection of his work owned by the family housed in the Judson Memorial Gallery which is a part of the Judson Studios. His work is also represented in the University of Southern California and there are many of his paintings owned by individuals through California, Judson was a much bigger figure in the artistic world than Londoners have ever appreciated.

Judson was born in 1842 in Manchester, England. His father, John Randle Judson, was also an artist and his whole life was spent in an artistic atmosphere. When he was 10 years old, with his father, he migrated to Brooklyn where he attended public school and studied painting under his father. Even at this age he was painting frescoes. After a short stay in Brooklyn his father moved to London. When the American Civil War broke out young Judson, then 19, stirred by the call of Lincoln like so many youthful Canadians, enlisted with the Northern armies. He joined the Illinois 21st Volunteers and served for over four years. During the war he carried along with him his painting outfit and painted and sketched at every opportunity.

The war over he returned to London to enter his chosen profession as an artist and teacher of art. In 1869 he married Maria Bedford and his four sons and three daughters were all born in London. Except for short periods when he studied painting in New York and Paris he made his home in London until 1890. During 1872 and 1873 he studied in New York under John B. Irving, genre and portrait painter. He visited the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876, where there was displayed the first National Art Exposition on this continent. This inspired him so that he decided to go to Paris and enrolled at the Julian Academie. He was in Paris three years, from 1878 to 1881, and studied under the famous artists, Boulanger and Lefebre.

He returned to London and continued his painting and teaching until 1890. The World's Fair in Chicago was announced in that year. The lure of its art possibilities seized upon Judson and he resolved to go to Chicago and take advantage of them. So two years before the fair opened he was in Chicago where days and nights were spent devoted to studying the great masters collected from all over the world for this fair. The fair over he was broken in health and financially, and his doctor ordered him to a milder climate.

According to my Los Angeles informant he had bought a ticket for Florida when he met at the station a friend, George Wharton James, author and lecturer of the American Southwest. James was an enthusiast over California and he persuaded him to change his Florida ticket for one to Los Angeles. California sunshine soon restored his health and his vigor.

Shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles he started to teach portrait painting and other branches of art at the University of Southern California. His enthusiasm was such that he organized the College of Fine Arts in connection with the university. He was made dean and held that position until his retirement in 1922. In 1901 when the quarters of the campus became too confined he moved the young, but growing college, to his new home on the bank of the Arroyo Seco, at Garvanza, now part of Highland Park, a site he had long chosen as the most artistic in the environment of Los Angeles. He built there an attractive college building, studio and art gallery. The school attracted many artists and brought fame to the district. Around it the members of the Arroyo Seco Guild built their studio homes. Mr. Judson was for years president of the Guild. The picturesque buildings were for many years the active art centre of Los Angeles. The Fine Arts College remained in this district for some two decades, when it was moved back to the university campus and Judson resumed his private painting. In December, 1910, fire destroyed the buildings and many of his works of art. He escaped by a window, but met his classes the next day under the pepper trees. Lumber for rebuilding was on the ground beside the smoking ruins before night.

The new buildings are now the home of the Judson Studios where a second and third generation design and work in stained glass. These studios founded by Judson were carried on by two of his sons, J. Lionel and Walter H. Judson. Walter Judson, who died in 1934, studied abroad and during his life time won many international awards for his translations of his own and others works of art into stained glass. ~~His son, Horace, who still has old school-boy friends in London,~~ is now actively associated with the firm which specializes and excels in ecclesiastical work. The firm has today a national reputation and examples of the fine work of the Judson Studios may be found all through the United States.

The librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library sends us an undated clipping from The Los Angeles Times, which records:

"Southern California, Arizona and Nevada intend to perpetuate a rapidly disappearing Spanish culture in stained glass. The new artistic movement in the Southwest has attracted many young graduate architects from western universities. This was the dream of William L. Judson, founder and dean of the College of Fine Arts, as well as founder of the College of Architecture, of the University of Southern California, and his sons are now carrying it into execution. To further his plan for perpetuating in glass the brave old scenes of the Southwest, he established a picturesque series of glazier rooms and invited artists in glass from both Europe and America to come and work, much as Benvenuto Cellini worked in the days of old. When the masters of glass came, Judson introduced apprentices from the school of architecture to learn the arts of the masters at first hand. Today these glazier rooms are an attraction visited almost daily by artists from all parts of the world. They have become particularly famous for their ability to detect forgeries in Old World stained glass."

Judson died in 1928 and in 1930 his family installed in the State Exposition building in Exposition Park, Los Angeles, a beautiful stained glass window in his memory.

This London artist who spent some two decades in this city made a mark for himself in California. He was a pioneer in art in that state. He was one of the great men London has produced, although few Londoners have ever realized the mark he made in the artistic world.