

# Judson Stained Glass Studios began 88 years ago in LA

(Editor's Note — This is the second of a series of articles on local cultural landmarks to be saluted during Highland Park's cultural festival, May 18-20. This week, the Judson Stained Glass studios is examined).

The great grandfather of Walter W. Judson, current owner of Judson Studios, 200 S. Ave. 66 William Lees Judson, saw the need for a local stained glass shop in Los Angeles in 1895.

At his request, his three sons, Walter H., J. Lionel and Paul came to Los Angeles and started the Judson Studios in Mott Alley just off the Old Plaza, Los Angeles. His sons had

been apprenticed in the stained glass craft in Canada.

William Lees Judson was born in Manchester, England and came to Brooklyn, New York in 1852. He studied art and at the age of 10 was painting frescoes. He came to California in 1893 and stirred by California's landscape and history he turned from portraiture and began painting scenes of the old mission days.

He taught art at the University of Southern California, organized its College of Fine Arts and became its first dean.

When William Lees designed and built the

College of Fine Arts with his students it was in the district of Garvanza (later Highland Park).

As a result of his influence the Arroyo Seco area where the college was located became one of the first art centers in Southern California and in the late 1890s this area was supported by artists, writers, printers, binders, glass makers and mosaicists.

The College remained the art and architecture school for the University of Southern California until it moved to the central campus around 1920 when Judson Studios moved in the building. In 1969 the Los Angeles Cultural and Heritage Board declared Judson Studios as a historic-cultural monument.

The Studios will be one of the participants in the Highland Park Cultural Festival May 18-20 and the public will be able to tour them and view the paintings of William Lees Judson.

The building was the headquarters for a group called the Arroyo Craftsmen who made furniture and art objects for some of the fine homes built from 1900 until World War I including work fabricated for Green and Green. The building was also lecturing headquarters for many of the turn of the century intellectuals and artists of the Los Angeles area including George Wharton James and Charles Lummis.

In the early days, Judson



**FOUR GENERATIONS** — Judson Studios, 200 S. Ave. 66, has had four generations of the same family owning the business which was started in 1895 in Mott Alley just off the Old Plaza, Los Angeles. Current owner, Walter W. Judson, displays the process known as "cartooning." During Highland Park Cultural Festival May 18-20, the public will be able to tour the studios.

Studios' work was balanced between religious and secular, between recreating the Gothic effect and working for Frank Lloyd Wright in glass and tile on the Ennis and Barnsdall Houses.

William Lees Judson died in 1928 and six years later his son, Walter Judson died. Taking over the firm was Walter's son, Horace, an attorney who gave up his practice to assume leadership of the family firm. Horace retired to San Diego in 1975 and today his son, Walter W. is the president of the firm.

Judson Studios does both ecclesiastical and secular stained glass work. Their glass stock is probably the largest in the world.

Their installations can be seen all over the world and include the Congressional Prayer Room in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. and the Air Force Chapel in Colorado Springs. The studio has also made a massive interior dome which measures 107 by 35 feet for the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Cost of the window was \$200,000. They also did Caesar's Palace Hotel Palace Court Restaurant dome in Las Vegas.

Locally, windows can be seen at Highland Park Presbyterian Church, St. James Episcopal Church in South Pasadena, All Saints in Pasadena and the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles. "The Life of Christ" window series which sanctifies the facade of Eagle Rock's St. Barnabas Church, "The Rose Window" in La Jolla and "The Baptistry Window" in Westwood are other examples of the studio's work.

They are also involved in design of the decorative arts and have worked in marble carving, mosaic, carved and etched glass, furniture and other speciality items.

Judson Studios employs 10 full-time craftsmen, down from a high of 22 in 1956 and 1957, a boom-time for church construction in

Southern California and the world.

The present owner, Walter W., has taught craft history on the university level and published a book on the craft of stained glass. He has traveled extensively in Europe not only for education purposes but also to see the manufacture of glass, mosaic, marble and wood, carvings for the studio's customers. — \*