

## ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: Artist Lee Sturges (1865-1954)

Lee Sturges was born August 13, 1865 to Frank and Jeannette Sturges of Chicago; he had two sisters, Lucy and Jeanette. He attended the Markham Academy in Milwaukee, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Sturges married Mary Allen Sullivant in 1890. They moved to Elmhurst, Illinois in 1892 and built a home, Shadeland, at 280 Cottage Hill Avenue, which still stands today. Sturges designed the house, laid out the floor plan and directed an architect throughout the home's construction. Lee and Mary Sturges had three children.



*Lee and Mary Sturges. M2010.1.58*

In 1887, Sturges joined the family manufacturing business, Chicago Stamping Company, which made milk and waste cans. He founded the Illinois Manufacturers Association in 1893 and started the Sturges and Burn Manufacturing Company in 1921. Later he was president of Solar-Sturges Manufacturing in Melrose Park. He was awarded patents for 20 inventions including the personal sized etching press in 1916, which contributed to a revival of the art of etching because it allowed etchers to work independently. In spite of his business responsibilities, Lee Sturges never lost his interest in art and added a studio in his home.



*A Lee Sturges etching of Cottage Hill Avenue, 1910. M2010.1.63*

Sturges became an internationally known artist and etcher, winning many awards including the Logan Award of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1923. He had a solo exhibition at the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. in 1927. Sturges published many articles in art journals and was a member of several professional etching societies. Sturges produced the bulk of his etchings from the early 1920s through the mid-1940s. Outdoor scenes were a favorite subject of his etchings. He was heralded as a master at capturing the essence of a scene. Lee Sturges moved to Florida in 1953 and died in 1954.

There are more than 400 etchings listed in Lee Sturges' complete works. The [Elmhurst History Museum](#) has an extensive collection of Sturges etchings, as well as engraving plates, sketchbooks, scrapbooks and correspondence. Other Sturges works are in the Smithsonian Institution, the Art Institute of Chicago, the California State Library and several universities.