

Stevens, Lawrence Tenney collection

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Friends of Wood Memorial Library and Museum

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Business Number: 860-289-1783

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URL: <https://woodmemoriallibrary.org/>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Friends of Wood Memorial Library and Museum
Creator:	Friends of Wood Memorial Library and Museum
Title:	Lawrence Tenney Stevens collection
ID:	1990.16
Date [inclusive]:	1938-1975
Physical Description:	.2 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Lawrence Tenney Stevens (1896-1972) was a sculptor. For the 1939 New York World's Fair, he selected an elm located in South Windsor, CT, and created a 60-foot object believed to be the world's largest wooden carving. The collection consists of photographs and articles relating to the carving and a biographical article.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Lawrence Tenney Stevens collection (1990.16), Wood Memorial Library and Museum, South Windsor, CT.

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Biographical / Historical

Lawrence Tenney Stevens was born in Brighton, MA, on July 16, 1896, and died in Arizona in 1972. He studied at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts with Bela Pratt and Charles Grafly and later studied anatomy at Tuft's medical school. His travels and study at the American Academy in Rome and in Greece, Egypt, and Constantinople between 1922 and 1925 were made through a Prix de Rome scholarship to learn the classic techniques of sculpture.

After returning to the United States, he traveled extensively in the southwest. His growing reputation led to his being put in charge of sculpture at the 1936 Texas centennial celebration, for which he created six large stone pieces.

In the 1930s, Stevens also started a series of wood sculptures, working out of a New York City studio. Commissioned to do a large sculpture for the 1939 New York World's Fair, he searched through New England for a suitable tree, settling on an impressive 60-foot elm in South Windsor, CT, and purchased it. After returning to the southwest, he read of the widespread destruction caused by the 1938 New England hurricane and later found his tree had been knocked down.

He returned to South Windsor and chose a nearly 150-foot elm (possibly one of a series planted by Hessian prisoners during the American Revolution) as a replacement and worked with local helpers to prepare a 60-foot carving for the fair, to which it was delivered by truck. It was believed to be the world's largest wooden carving. Despite later searches, no record of what happened to the carving has been found.

During World War II, Stevens served with 2,000 technicians in the Douglas Project 19 of the United States Air Force. In Eritrea, he served as both an instructor of Italian and translator and formed sheet metal parts from damaged planes. At the close of the war, he was field director for the American Red Cross in the central Pacific area.

After WWII, Stevens married and settled in Arizona. His western travels inspired his "Rodeo Series" of bronze sculptures from 1958 to 1970. He also completed work on corporate, individual, and museum pieces.

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Scope and Contents

The Lawrence Tenney Stevens collection consists of materials related to a sculpture made for the 1939 New York World's Fair and a biographical article.

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Conditions Governing Access

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Conditions Governing Use

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Controlled Access Headings

- Stevens, Lawrence Tenney