

This brief history was written by Barea Lamb Seeley and appears in the *Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, published by Rutgers University Press.

Lamb Studios is an ecclesiastical art firm, the oldest continuously operating stained glass studios in the United States. Originally named the J & R Lamb Studios, it was established in New York City in 1857 by the English brothers Joseph (1833-1898) and Richard (1832-1909) Lamb. The Lambs had for their credo “the beautifying of churches,” and expanded rapidly to become a large and well-known firm, chosen by the U.S. government as one of four studios to represent American achievements in stained glass at the Paris International Exposition of 1900. (Their prize-winning window, *Religion Enthroned*, is at the Brooklyn Museum.) “Specialists in Ecclesiastical Art, Church and Memorial Work,” the brothers produced countless works and whole interiors for churches, chapels, libraries, and private homes in mosaic, marble, carved wood, metal, and stained glass.

The brothers came to the United States from England with their parents when their father, a landscape architect, was engaged to lay out Niblo’s Garden, and exhibition hall and open-air theatre. Joseph returned to England, where, influenced by a religious and Gothic revival, he made his life’s work the decoration of churches. After an apprenticeship with an established glassmaker, he returned to New York and with Richard founded the Studios in Greenwich Village, moved to Carmine Street, and established workshops in the Dutch Reformed Church building on Sixth Avenue and on Downing Street.

Charles Rollinson Lamb (1860-1942), son of Joseph, trained extensively as an artist-architect and for his eventual position as head of the firm. His brother, Frederick Stymetz Lamb, after study in Paris, became head designer and overseer of the shop of skilled craftsmen. Charles’s artist wife, Ella Condi Lamb (1862-1936), an important designer, was one of two women accepted by the National Society of Mural Painters. The firm employed leading artists such as Walter Crane; many artisans and artists who would later become well known apprenticed at J & R Lamb.

Charles, famous for innovative ideas in city planning and as designer of the Dewey Arch, erected by the National Sculpture Society, was an eloquent spokesman for the City Beautiful. He became president of the influential Municipal Art Society in 1906.

Under the presidency of Charles’s son, Karl Barre Lamb (1890-1969), the Studios survived the Depression and moved to Tenafly. Charles’s daughter, Katharine Lamb Tait (1895-1981), became the studio’s head designer after World War II.

In 1957, on its one hundredth anniversary, the Voice of America chose J & R Lamb as an example of a small business in the United States for a broadcast in eleven languages to Europe and beyond the iron curtain.

Donald Samick, the present owner, learned all aspects of ecclesiastical decorating and bought the firm after the death of Karl Lamb. Faithful to spiritual expression through the arts and crafts and custodian of almost 150 years’ work, he is devoted to the preservation of old works and the creation of inspiring modern furnishings and windows for houses of worship.