

Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.

Secretary of State, head of first UN delegation (1900 – 1949)

Edward Reilly Stettinius, Jr. was United States Secretary of State under Presidents FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT and Harry S Truman, serving from 1944 to 1945.

Stettinius was born in Chicago, graduated from the Pomfret School in 1920, and attended the University of Virginia until 1924. In 1926 he married Virginia Wallace, with whom he would have three children. That year he became assistant to John Pratt, a vice-president of General Motors, and in 1931 he succeeded Pratt in that position. After Roosevelt was elected President, Stettinius was asked to join the administration as director in the Office of Production Management. Two years later he became head of the Lend-Lease aid to the allies, a position he held until he became undersecretary of state in 1943. In November 1944, Stettinius succeeded Secretary of State Cordell Hull due to Hull's poor health.

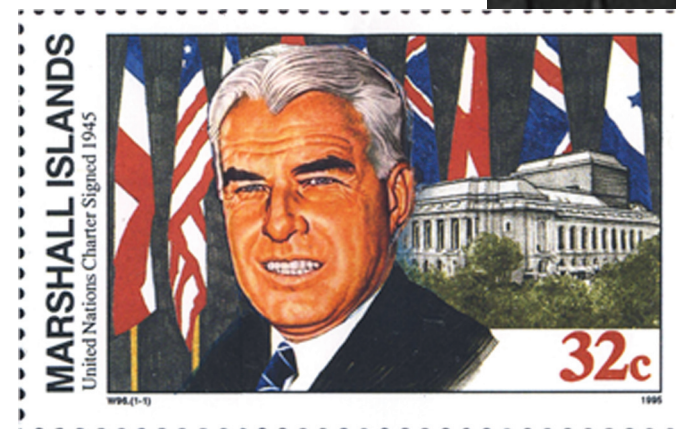
Stettinius, as chairman of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Conference on International Organization, was instrumental in the formation of the UN and was present at its official founding on June 26, 1945. Stettinius resigned as Secretary of State to become the first U.S. Ambassador to the UN. He then resigned from that position in June 1946, after which he became critical of what he saw as Truman's refusal to use the UN as a tool to resolve tensions with the Soviet Union.

As noted by WILLIAM VANDEN HEUVEL in his 2002 speech at the club, FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT's last known communication with the Century was on June 10, 1944. HERBERT HOUSTON had asked him to write a supporting letter for Stettinius, but Roosevelt said to tell the Committee on Admissions that Stettinius was a good man who would add greatly to the values that the Century Association cherished.

Stettinius died of a coronary thrombosis at the age of 49.

In a Century moment, EDWARD R. STETTINIUS presents the new Under Secretary of State JOSEPH C. GREW and five of the new assistant secretaries at the oath of office ceremonies in December 1944.

Left to right: WILLIAM L. CLAYTON; DEAN ACHESON; GREW; STETTINIUS; ARCHIBALD MACLEISH; NELSON A. ROCKEFELER; JAMES C. DUNN. Looking down approvingly is a portrait of HENRY L. STIMSON.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress