

# "INFLUENCE OF ROMANESQUE AND BYZANTINE PERIODS"

Lecture by William Ward Watkin at Rice Institute

On Friday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock in the lecture amphitheater of the physics laboratories of the Rice Institute, William Ward Watkin, instructor in architecture at the institute, read a lecture on "Influence of the Romanesque and Byzantine Period," which was the second of a series of three Friday lectures on "Some Phases of Historic Architecture Expressed in the Buildings of the Institute."

The last of the series of six Monday lectures on "Studies in Modern Drama" will be given on Monday, March 27, by Stockton Axson, when he will speak on "The Drama in England and America today and to come." The several courses of lectures are open to the public.

There is given below an abstract of Mr. Watkin's lecture.

We found that there had existed in Italy an architecture decidedly distinct in its character from the character of the architecture of Greece.

We found that the architecture of Italy had from the earliest times been one in which the use of the round arch had been of the essential nature of its construction; an architecture in which the gradual expanding possibilities of arched construction had continued in Roman work up to the marvelous developments of the buildings of the late Roman empire. It was natural, therefore, that Italian architecture, in the ages succeeding the fall of Rome, should cling closely to forms associated with the round arch in its humbler expression, by virtue of the fact that its means were more modest and its limitations much more complete than those of Rome in the days of its prosperity, the resulting architecture showing less of the extensive development of arched construction in great vaulted interiors, but continuing its expression of round arched windows and round arched doorways and simple arched interiors with wooden roofs.

In the institute you feel constantly in the buildings the degree to which the design in pattern of marble and brick work has been used, but for the most part this pattern work is on the exterior. As yet, however, the nature of the rooms has been that of class room or

laboratory, rooms in which the decorative styles have not been called for. In the course of time, as occasions develop and as there is opportunity in these buildings in which the decoration of the interior may be carried to its logical proportion as compared with the stylistic treatment of the exterior, we naturally look forward to the giving both color and detail the true character which shall reflect the colorful possibilities suggested in the interior treatments of marble and the interior treatments in murals and fresco which accompanied the work of the early Christian architecture in Italy.

I wish I had time allowed me to go on at greater length relating to the use of triple arches and the great relieving arch enclosing the tympanum over triple arches which was to such large extent used in Italy and Dalmatia. This motif was one of the principal features of the style, and it occurs in the buildings of the institute in the pleasing form of three slender windows separated by columns supporting the arches over the heads of the windows, and they in turn separating a decorative panel made up of brick work and marble, which is in turn enclosed by a strong brick relieving arch made up of a succession of forms, and more vitally of a succession of shadows, the charm of which was appreciated in all periods of the Italian renaissance, and which was used to a very beautiful extent even as late as the buildings of Genoa.

Treatments in plaster, reflections of which, although simplified to be true in their Romanesque character, occur in various forms in the dormitory groups, the domestic character of which was obtained in the stucco which was generally used in the domestic architecture of the Italian buildings.

The Lombard influence continued in Italy with the creation of still more extensive monuments, such as the Church of St. Zenone, in which you see a breaking away from the purely Roman forms and the adoption of certain newer forms in which there are latent architectural possibilities before finally its completion as a style in Italy leads us to such an exterior as that of the churches of Siena and Pisa, in which there have been developed influences markedly beyond the ear-

lier Lombard beginnings, and dating in the Eleventh century, at which time, frankly, the possibilities of the style have been exhausted or at least have been diverted to expressions which no longer possess the structural dignity of the earlier Romanesque.

Therefore, you can see that it is impossible for me to place before you a composite prototype of the buildings which you see about you here at the institute. However, I simply try to outline how clearly the various characteristics fall within the period of the purely Italian Romanesque and how we have tried to continue the richer and more dignified qualities of that style, choosing as an inspiration the more beautiful details developed in various and successive periods from the fourth to the tenth centuries A. D., trying, however, to avoid the influences which you see beginning in such a church as these late Romanesque churches of Northern Italy, and also to avoid the later influences of a similar nature, but more attractive in their presentation, occurring in the city of Venice, all of which influences we must see are the beginnings of that style which a century later had developed into the so-called Gothic and in which the more clearly Roman characteristics had been reduced to a minimum and a different conception of arched construction had been achieved by the builders of Northern Europe.

Ideally, however, as you know, never embraced the Gothic. For Italy the Gothic style was but a temporary influence which was unfortunate and unsuccessful a fact that which was perfectly natural in that it had been developed to its greatness under climatic conditions totally different and totally separated from those of Italy.

I would recall to you, therefore, that we have up to this time found that the architecture of the institute is in nearly all of its parts Italian in its character; that for the most part its expressions are of the periods of the Romanesque in Italy as existing between the fourth and the tenth centuries; that there is in it the influences which are purely Roman and the influences of the Byzantine as they were exhibited in Roman work in Italy in such monuments as those of Ravenna; that there is also to a minor extent the occurrence of the even later influence of the Lombards; but that beyond this point we have sought to exclude from our designs anything that would reflect an architecture which to us appeared to have lost its vital touch with the round arch which was the essence of its design.

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## Last of Rice Architecture Series

PROFESSOR WATKIN GAVE INTERESTING LECTURE AT INSTITUTE.

On Friday afternoon at 4:30 in the lecture amphitheater of the physics laboratories of Rice Institute William Ward Watkin, instructor in architecture at the institute, read a lecture on "The Later Influences in Color and Detail," which was the last of the series of three lectures on "Some Phases of Historic Architecture Expressed in the Buildings of the Institute." The first of the series of six Monday lectures on "Poetry and Some Poets" will be given on Monday afternoon, April 3, by Stockton Axson, professor of English literature in the institute, when he will speak on "The Nature and Uses of Poetry." The several courses of lectures are open to the public.

There is given below an abstract of Mr. Watkin's lecture.

I promised, however, in my first talk to tell you something more about the plan of the institute. I will therefore sum up the historic traces as these, repeating that you may express yourselves, in interpreting the historic styles which the institute buildings reflect, that they are distinctly Romanesque forms of Italy and Dalmatia as existing between the third and the twelfth centuries, the major influence of which is to be found in the architecture of Dalmatia and the architecture of Ravenna, with the occasional influence of traces from the Lombard and

the Venetian; that the work is distinctly Italian; that the work is not a historic continuance in that it is not the arbitrary acceptance of any previously existing group of buildings but is a simple and imaginative continuance and creation, using for its elements the forms developed and possessed by the Romanesque in Italy.

Now, as to the plan: From the architect's point of view, the plan is the fundamental concern. As I told you further the institute had at its disposal 300 acres of exceedingly monotonous and level country, with nothing particularly to emphasize any one spot as of more importance than another on these 300 acres. It was bounded, as you will recall, by a rather irregular polygon, which invited a principal axis extending somewhat from the east to the west, and a series of minor axes from the north to the south. Along one side extended the county road, which was an extension of the main street of the city. This road was not continuous, but its line broke at the water course at the western side of the tract, deviating slightly towards the south. In view of the developments which have since occurred and which were to a degree hoped for at the beginning, the extension of Main street was considered as being possible of attainment and its continuing in a straight line bounding one side of the property.

Further, beyond this and the fact that the land adjacent to the small stream or

ditch through the western part of the property was at certain periodic intervals inundated, there was frankly no limitation to the remaining area as to its development in collegiate buildings.

You can see how necessary were the elements of a definite conception of planning a group of buildings in which there should be attractive vistas, both by closing in and by closing out by effective buildings of the annoying effect which would be gained through an undisturbed view of a distant horizon devoid of either trees or hills, and so the plan was conceived with the view that the external beauty should be achieved within the limits of the property; that is to say, its working out by a succession of openings and widening vistas, finally closed by the line of existing trees, to be supplemented by other planted trees, flanking the water course at the west.

The general plan was designed in 1910. In it you will see the major axis from east to west has been developed, with minor axes from north to south. You will see how entrance has been taken from the extreme end of the tract and continued as far as it could go uninterrupted to the banks of the stream at the west. You will see how, intentionally, there has been placed across this axis the main building, in front of which there is a considerable open space, representing the most attractive portion of the campus in its original state, as it was the only portion that contained a reasonable number of fully developed trees.

You further see how this foreground has been enclosed moderately, by the placing of two groups of buildings, one a

school of fine arts, the other a college for women, and how there has been created an open court, in front of which occurs the tract in which there were the most desirable trees. We continue along the main axis through the great arch of the central building, into the great central court, the heart of the college, on either side of which there are the academic buildings. This court widens out into a further one, which is fringed with great clusters of live oaks and in which there are four buildings, such as a museum, library, etc., while at the end of the court the vista is closed by the great auditorium and commencement hall, which will give opportunity for the Byzantine expression of a dome covered with iridescent tile. Beyond it lies the opportunity of extensive gardens, the treatment of which would be after the gardens of Persia, in which great richness of foliage can mask the plainness of entirely level areas.

As you follow the various vistas through the plan, you see how completely they are intended in their ultimate development to be closed so as to form a complete architectural setting supplemented by the necessary landscape treatments.

In this respect, it is interesting for me to show you, so that you may conceive or partly conceive of the possible beauty which we attach to the ultimate development of this plan, in turning away from this plan, the really small portion of it which is represented in the development of the existing buildings. This sketch shows you the location of the present buildings, all of which are in perfect accordance with the plan which we have just looked at. You see how vast are the areas which remain between the buildings, which will in the future be filled up with the numerous buildings necessary to the completed university. As you feel and to a degree are impressed by the work which has already been done, by what is really but the beginning of the ultimate development, you can not help but feel a sense of enthusiasm as to the work which must necessarily in the future be one to which interest of wide extent will be directed.

You can, therefore, to an extent feel and appreciate our conception in the designing of this institution and probably feel the reason for what otherwise would be presumptive, of our feelings that we were justified in expressing it in an imaginative style—one in which in our opinion the fullest developments had never been attained, and one in which, if carried out through years might be clearly conceived and expressed in this great group of academic buildings.

With these views before you, it is possible for you to feel, as I have previously stated, some enthusiasm in the work which we have before us in the development of these academic buildings. We feel that, as they are gradually assuming a position of foremost importance in the development of artistic influences in this city, so will they year by year assume a more powerful influence in the full realization of the purpose and value of beauty of form and color in architectural conceptions. I feel that such an influence is reactive, as it must necessarily be, upon the thought and activities of the city, just as the influence of the learning which from these halls will extend through the graduates into the many activities of the city and the State, so the influences of beauty of architecture will be equally reactive in a desire for better and more beautiful things. The presence of beautiful buildings and the living among them in student years is an influence which continues and is present throughout all the life time of those whose undergraduate days have been spent in such surroundings. Whether expressed or unexpressed, it exists, to their own greater pleasure and greater joy in life and to the consequent advancement of the cause of the good and the beautiful in civilization. The good and the beautiful have their place side

by side with the purely intellectual and commercial activities of mankind, and the degree to which their place is appreciated and to which their influence is a joy to man is the degree to which our civilization is possessed of happiness and fullness of meaning.

## STATE ARCHITECTS TO OPEN ANNUAL SESSION HERE TODAY

TRADE EXHIBIT BEING GATHERED IN GALVEZ HOTEL BASEMENT.

Meeting Tomorrow Will Have Lectures and Moving Pictures for the Benefit of Public.

Busy and interesting times are in store for the Architects' Association, which will hold its annual meeting here beginning today.

The vanguard is expected in town by 10 o'clock and the session will be opened with an informal luncheon at Hotel Galvez today noon for the architects and their wives.

After luncheon the visitors will be taken for a steamer trip around the har-

bor and later will inspect the Texas Carnegie steel plant and the new departments of the brewery. These events will constitute the first day's official features of the program.

An interesting part of the meeting will be the display of trade goods by Texas concerns and agents in the basement of the Galvez hotel. Some fine stained glass memorial windows are to be shown, many heating devices and a varied assortment of brick, terra cotta, wood and other modern arranged building accessories. These exhibits began arriving yesterday and last night were being installed.

The architects are calling particular attention to the session in the Galvez beginning at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, which will be open to the public. The program for this session will include a lecture on architecture by Professor Ward Watkins of Rice Institute, a moving picture showing architecture in India and a lecture by Edward F. Harris of Galveston on the new law, which will be of especial interest to dealers, contractors and workers. Also pictures will be shown of the some of the better known examples of European architecture.

At tomorrow's session official business of the association will be taken up.