

In Memoriam  
R. A. Cram  
1942

Ralph Adams Cram possessed that rare grace of being a wholehearted enthusiast, tireless in his efforts for a jubilant world, a world devout rather than dull, which could share his ideals. It was his unflinching belief in the richness of the civilization he sought to inspire by expression in a noble architecture that will immortalize his unique character.

Accustomed as our generation has become to opinions hedged by qualification, lack of decision, and without total conviction, Cram's militant declarations were stimulating and inspiring.

He believed in a Christian civilization with its ideals capable of complete leadership in all things. In his ever exuberant way, he carried on, almost alone, a crusade for Christian art as symbolic of the powers and ideals which are needed to recreate a more perfect state in which to live.

For more than half a century, Cram labored with energy which seldom showed fatigue to produce colleges, churches, and cathedrals; expressing by enduring masonry the permanence of their purpose. No man I have ever known possessed such a true love of masonry. His was the skill of long and varied observation in many lands, which enabled him to appreciate the manifold powers and qualities that could be perfectly embodied by a strong masonry. In this respect, this major quality of enduring building was shared by Goodhue to nearly the same degree. With Goodhue it was more flexible because of his brilliance of delineation and his infinite ability to express form and detail. Cram by comparison was restrained, but always sure. Solids for him meant buildings. These solids were by his clear perception appropriate to the site, purpose, and proportion of the work at hand. He began with them, developing a drawing devoid of detail, containing only the center line of nave piers, the center points and radii of arches, the height and form of roof trusses. This was his church. All else came in the drafting room by long and careful study. Never was time or haste part of the problem. Thoroughness to the point of tardiness was normal, and change was never considered cowardice; rather was it encouraged courageously. Those of us who knew Cram well have wished that he had taken a like course in his written works. Here haste represented the excessive enthusiasm of an abundant vitality, and exaggeration often impaired the clear meaning of the vital truth he sought to express.

Clarity marked his plans for his churches from his earliest work until his death. They declared his genius. Now as he passes into history, let us recall the dignity with which he ennobled to high purpose the sacred shadowed space within the church.

Of the great builder, a devout defender of the faith  
"May it be said, 'Well done;  
Be thou at peace.'"

by Wm. Ward Walker

1942