

War Memorials

The recent unveiling of a municipal war memorial in the form of a stone monument in one of the townships, near Quelfh, Ont., brings home to every municipal council in Canada their responsibility in the matter of commemorating the part taken in the great war by the sons and daughters of their respective communities. In the case of Quelfh memorial the money was not raised by public subscription but by a direct tax on the citizens so that in every sense it was a municipal recognition of splendid war service. For the information of the communities considering the erection of war memorials we publish the following article prepared by Messrs. A. W. Crawford and J. H. McFarland of the American Civic Association, and in particular would draw attention to the following suggestive question:

"If your community cannot afford to erect a high-grade architectural or sculptural memorial, would you not approve of having something more simple yet excellent of its kind, such as an avenue of trees, or an open plot of ground properly planted and well kept, both suitably indicated by a permanent, dignified marker?"

"The location of a memorial is of equal concern with the merit of the design itself. If a memorial is to take the form of a memorial building, it will doubtless be proposed, in some cases, to place it in a public park, under the usual misconception of the true purposes of a park. This must be fought off at all costs, and every effort made to get such memorials located so as to front toward public parks instead, thus securing permanent advantages for both.

The preciousness of open spaces must be conserved. While small, well-designed monuments, if well placed in parks, are not objectionable, yet many of them have been put in the middle of open lawns, where they are quite out of place, and have tended to turn a useful park into a decorative cemetery.

It has been said that:

"The approaches to any memorial and the points of view from which it is seen are quite as important as its immediate surroundings. The cost of laying out the site, when necessary, should be included in the scheme. The effect of a memorial is often entirely lost by want of a careful laying out of the site."

Because Paris has kept in mind approaches to memorials and other great public structures, that city has secured vast collateral advantages in beauty, dignity, and the attractiveness that has drawn to her travel-money from all the world. Consider the Place de la Concorde, for example.

It is impossible to dogmatize as to whether a memorial should be symbolic, like a monument, or utilitarian, like a bridge or a park, or a building, or a section of a road. It depends upon the need and resources, as well as the good sense, of the individual town or of the particular location in a section of a larger town or city. A few practicable suggestions are here discussed.

1. Memorial Steps have recently been constructed from a point on the Boston Commons to Beacon Street. This is in line with the thought of making the useful beautiful. Victor Hugo phrased it forever in his saying, "The beautiful is as useful as the useful," and the usefully beautiful thing is doubly valuable.

2. Memorial Bridges are especially happy examples of this, particularly bridges over water. Moreover, the building of bridges can probably be made to give employment to such returning soldiers, sailors, and marines as happen to be either laborers or workers in stone, concrete, or structural material. Opportunities for monuments on bridges are excellent; for instance, the pylons or enlarged posts at either side of the entrance to the bridge. As one enters a bridge he may find the main pylon on the right carried up into a monument to soldiers, and the one on the left to sailors, and so on. If the bridge has piers in the stream, monuments to individual leaders, made smaller to carry a correct scale, can be erected as finials to the piers or located in semi-circular bays, and the like. Arnold W. Brunner has designed for Pennsylvania, as a part of its proceeding and much-needed capitol park extension at Harrisburg, a great memorial viaduct in which two monumental pylons will stand for the army and the navy.

3. Water-Front Memorials. In some of the larger cities a plan for water-front treatment could readily be made a memorial. The embankments of the Seine are in reality a vast work in sculpture. Why should not memorial water-

front embankments of considerable length be erected in some of our cities? They would usually displace other memorials—those of civic abominations.

The Thames embankment in London, for example, is a striking contrast to Chicago's treatment of the Chicago River, or to the way in which Milwaukee and Pittsburgh have disregarded value and patriotism in their messy and ugly stream-bank defacements.

4. A Memorial Park, a Memorial Playground, or a Memorial Plaza would be appropriate; the last especially appropriate, because, like the Place de la Concorde, peculiarly available for additional monumental decoration, from time to time, upon a broad and consistent plan.

5. A Memorial Hall. If a city really needs a public meeting-place, a memorial hall will be a splendid structure to erect. Most cities do not now make anything like adequate use of the buildings into which the city or the citizens have already put very large sums of money—the schools, the public libraries, and the churches. Yet a community-centre building that would serve as admirably as do the recreation centers on the South Side of Chicago would be admirable. A properly placed convention hall might well serve as a memorial, if it were architecturally adequate.

6. College Buildings, as memorials to the tens of thousands of students and alumni who went into the war, are very appropriate; a considerable number of these are already projected.

7. Mural Decorations would be an admirable and comparatively inexpensive form of memorial. Why not make the entrance hall of your city hall or your courthouse or your post office or your high school or your public library an exquisitely beautiful memorial, at one-tenth or one-twentieth the cost of bricks and stone and mortar, piled up into what may ultimately be merely another building?

8. Roadways, such as that proposed from Utica to Syracuse by a bill already introduced in the New York Legislature, can be made adequate and charming memorials, especially if developed with the plants and trees of the neighborhood, so that they are peculiar to that locality, and if they include footpaths, at the entrances to which simple bronze tablets may serve to indicate the purpose of the memorial; always provided the abutting properly controlled.

9. Sculptures; Monuments. If a work in sculpture is desired, it is important to act in accordance with what Frederick Law Olmstead says:

"A free-standing stone monument which has no other purpose except to act as a memorial is one of the most difficult artistic problems in the world, and it is pretty generally felt, after the newness has worn off, that a large proportion of the monuments so erected in the towns of this country since the Civil War have proved unworthy of the lofty ideals they were meant to commemorate.

"In this case the thoughts surrounding the subject are so noble, so big, so fine, that nothing short of the best of its kind is really worthy.

"A monument committee would never start out deliberately to pick out a poor-grade defective monument as being good enough to honor the men who fought for the freedom of the world.

"In any case, bear in mind that when we do something which is meant to endure for centuries it is more important to do it rightly than to do it quickly. Rather than risk, through haste to dedicate the permanent thing by July 4, the doing of something that we should afterwards feel to be unworthy, I would prefer to make that date the occasion of a ceremonial personal tribute to the boys who have returned, and as a part of the ceremonies enlist the whole town in a project for doing the very best thing that can be done as a monument not only to the boys who have done their part by sea and land, but to the ideals of liberty and justice for support of which the whole people have offered their work, their wealth and their lives."

10. Memorial Walls. There should be in America and Canada the example of the use of blank walls or party walls for fountains, duplicating in location that of the Fountain St. Michel in Paris, which is simply placed to cover completely the side wall of a house, the wall being located on the truncated base of an angular intersection.