

“A Half Hour With Our Designers”

A student of naval architecture who has become a foremost designer and delineator of cemetery memorials for the trade.

Part 3

Granite Marble & Bronze

Vol. XXXI, No. 4, April 1921, pp. 29-36

The article begins:

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(first photo caption) “L. A. Whitehouse, Quincy, Massachusetts. Beside the model of Virgin and Child for a memorial he designed.”

This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

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May 2017

A Half Hour With Our Designers---III.

A Student of Naval Architecture Who Has Become A Foremost Designer and Delineator of Cemetery Memorials For The Trade

THE interesting careers of numerous architects and talented designers in the field of memorial art bespeak the remarkable evolution of our craft from a trade into a great industrial art. The character of present-day memorial design is commanding respect and recognition in circles which have heretofore been disposed to depreciate and scorn the craft by destructive criticism and derision. Since the closing years of the 19th century the influence of our designers has been largely responsible not only for the renaissance of good art but as well for the economic expansion of the industry.

With the advent of good design as the dominant factor in competitive distribution of the industry's production, there has come an era of sound values, ethical relations between contemporary dealers, together with a general prevalence of pride and self-respect born of the higher standards prevailing throughout the craft.

Sales policies and arguments founded on tawdry claims of mechanical perfection in workmanship, quasi-geological dissertations upon the relative merits of materials, blatant tirades designed to announce bargain-counter values, childish and jealous disparagement of competitors—all these have yielded to the inspiring and happy modern idea of gaining public confidence through genuine service in selling, and by appealing to the good taste and intelligence of patrons rather than the mercenary side of human nature.

The substantial and sustained success of concerns which feature art in the conduct of their business demonstrates conclusively the commercial value of design as a supreme sales factor and one which is constantly becoming more indispensable as the trade in general responds to an insistent public demand for individuality and expression in memorials.

Contrary to a current impression, this featuring of art is not confined to the metropolitan concerns or to the more aggressive dealers. A surprisingly



L. A. WHITEHOUSE, Quincy, Mass.,
Beside the Model of Virgin and Child
for a Memorial He Designed.

large number of concerns in rural districts and cities of lesser population are commanding better prices, producing more business and taking more real joy out of their lives through the inspiring influence of an art atmosphere in their work. They are daily gaining ground on outside competition by combating the art appeal of larger concerns with the very weapon which heretofore lost for them many of the sizable contracts in their territories. They are meeting good design with good design. They are giving no quarter to "high-brow" competition because they are no longer ignorant of the powerful appeal of good architecture and intelligent service. These dealers may not afford graduate architects or talented designers, but they have learned to utilize the expert services of artists who have exclusively specialized in the design and delineation of memorials for the trade. Strange-

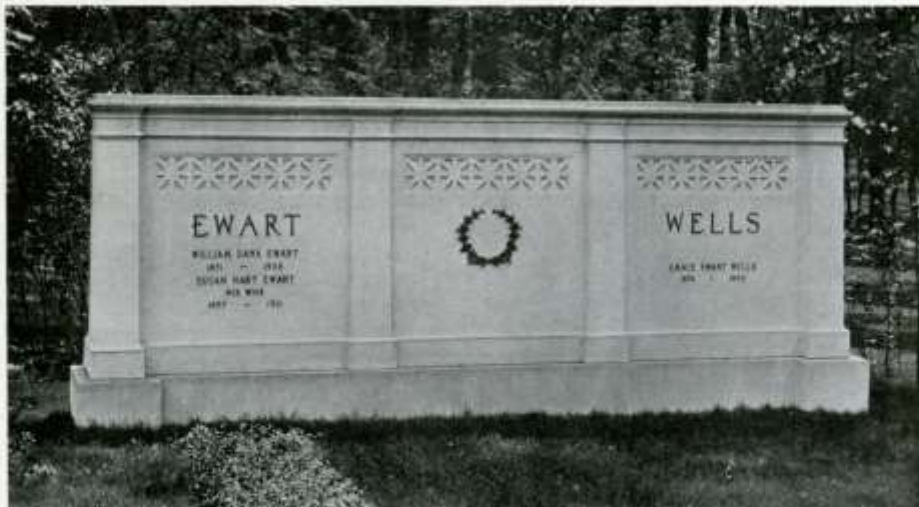
ly enough, many of the so-called leading concerns have largely relied upon these very designers for drawings with which to defeat the local dealer who, for lack of enterprise, has ignored the same service.

The signal importance of the work our trade designers have quietly done for the commercial and artistic ascent of the industry has been curiously unrecognized. Artists identified with successful retail concerns are with many opportunities to gain public recognition, studied publicity and considerable financial success through salesmanship. Unlike their fellows in the retail field, our trade designers rarely come in contact with the general public, and the credit for the work they design is ordinarily bestowed upon the dealers who employ them. Through drawings which they frequently publish in the trade press, by means of articles and lectures, these men may achieve distinction in the craft, but they have elected to pursue a life's work which, though lacking glory, is not only indispensable to the industry but immeasurable in its potential good. They are responsible for the success of many dealers. They create

(photo caption) "L. A. Whitehouse, Quincy, Massachusetts. Beside the model of Virgin and Child for a memorial he designed."



MR. WHITEHOUSE ATTAINS MASSIVE DIGNITY WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE SINGULAR REFINEMENT, SENSITIVE PROPORTIONING AND FLOW OF LINE WHICH CHARACTERIZES HIS WORK.



THE ARCHITECTURAL DIGNITY OF THIS IMPRESSIVE SCREEN SUGGESTS THE ORIGINALITY OF MR. WHITEHOUSE IN CLASSIC DESIGN.

(photo caption) (the George Kendall Webster monument, top) "Mr. Whitehouse attains massive dignity without sacrificing the singular refinement sensitive proportioning and flow of line which characterizes his work." (the Ewart / Wells monument, bottom) "The architectural dignity of this impressive screen suggests the originality of Mr. Whitehouse in classic design."

the great volume of designs which are rendered into stock work. They have with the support of the trade press constantly held the torch high in the vanguard of progress in art. They have given liberally of their time through the written and spoken word in a sustained effort to kindle the love of beauty and to fan the desire for knowledge in all of us who would know more of the great traditions with which our craft is replete. They have been a mighty boon to the dealer who is without designers in his employ, and they have been a great asset to larger concerns as delineators and not infrequently as principal designers. As a body they have done more to achieve the much heralded renaissance of good art than any other single factor, and among the talented artists of this band, none has done more to inspire the entire craft than Louis A. Whitehouse of Massachusetts.

Seemingly destined in childhood to become a naval architect, Mr. Whitehouse in his young manhood turned to art, and particularly the art of the monument. There is a story told of a little child, who stood for hours at the window of his home, gazing out across the water and watching ships put out to sea. With a stubby pencil the child amused himself by drawing vessels. Doubtless many of them were not seaworthy, but they revealed a talent for line beauty and grace of mass which has marked the work of the grown man.

As a boy Mr. Whitehouse studied at the Mechanic Arts High School of Boston preparatory to entering the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he planned to study naval architecture and thus realize the dreams of his childhood, and likewise to follow his father's work as a builder of ships.

Ambitious and independent, he attended school in the evening and during the day served as a draughtsman in the office of E. C. Willison, the Boston monument wholesaler. The inherent genius of the youth in design and draughtsmanship became more insistent than the mechanical aspects of ship design and gradually the appeal of art dominated.

Without any art school training, without any systematic study of architectural design, this gifted youth, by sheer genius and persistent application, has within the space of a very few years thoroughly earned a national reputation in the craft for his remarkable qualities as a designer and renderist.

After spending five years as a designer for Milne & Chalmers, Mr. Whitehouse in 1908 engaged in the practice of designing memorials for the trade, and within a few years he commanded a clientele which covered the entire United States. In his studios at Cambridge and in the Studio Building, Boston, Mr. Whitehouse without the aid of assistants conducted his profession and the re-

markable productivity of these busy years is perhaps the most eloquent evidence of his resourcefulness in design and his masterful rapidity as a draughtsman. When, on Dec. 1, 1920, Mr. Whitehouse became a partner in the long established retail firm of Kavanagh Bros., Boston, the industry lost a trade designer who was without a peer in the field, and one who had during his brilliant career established friendships among retailers throughout the country. The craft cannot soon forget the quality of the man's art, and we may well be glad that Mr. Whitehouse is to continue his association with the industry, albeit in another field.

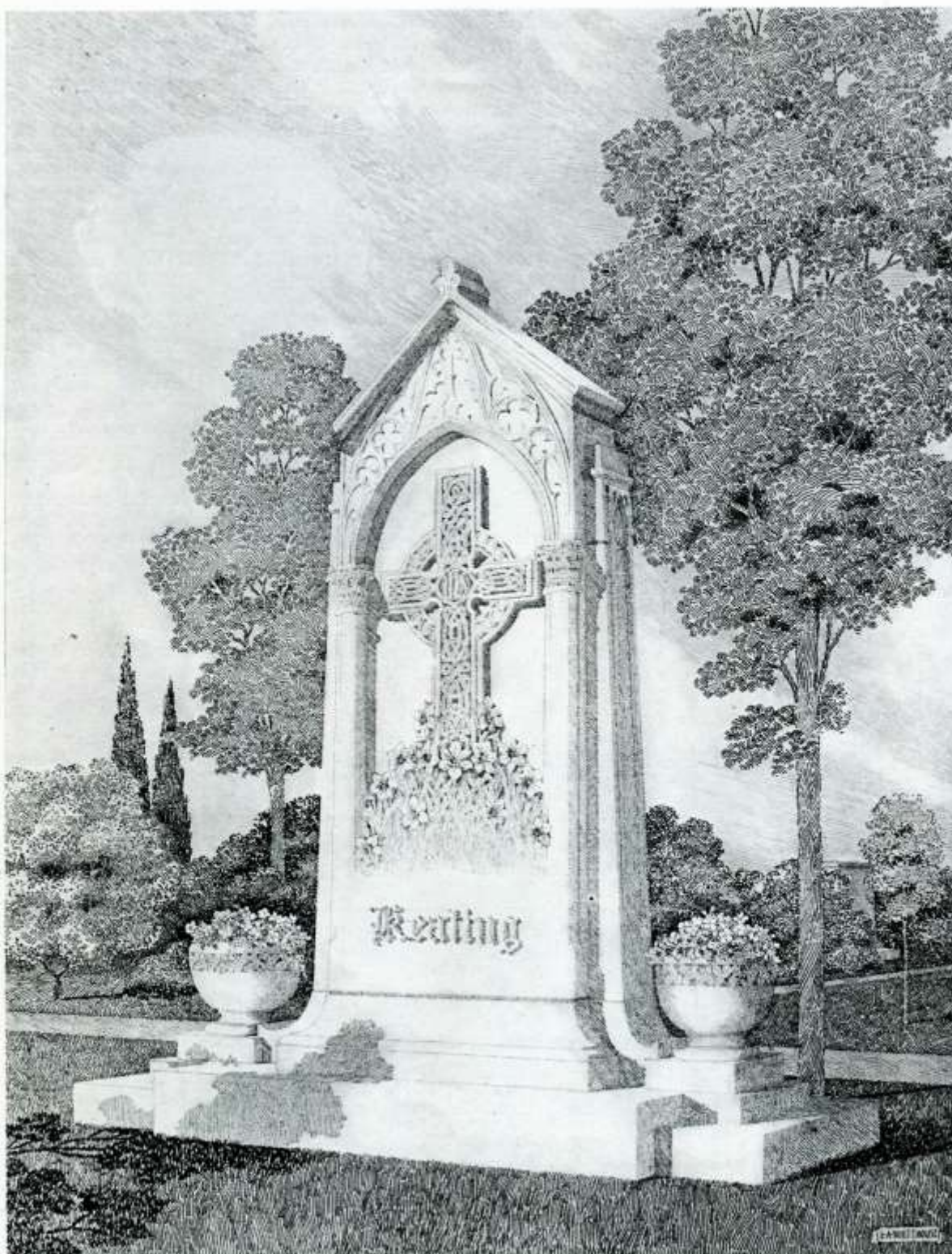
Two qualities are outstanding in the work of Mr. Whitehouse as a designer—his remarkable sense for proportion and his technique as an architectural renderist. A singular delicacy marks both his compositions and their delineation. One may be pardoned for suggesting that the grace of line which is so typical of his work is a subconscious expression of his early fascination for the curious loveliness of sailing vessels.

There is a flow of line, a sense for scale, and a certain nobility of proportions in even his inexpensive tablets which stamps his work with a personality no fellow artist could mistake for that of any other designer. These qualities are patent in the Webster, Ewart, Chamberlain and Wilcox memorials here illustrated.

Unfortunately, Mr. Whitehouse has few, if any, finished drawings in his studio as they are obviously never returned by his clients, and it is, moreover, difficult to secure photographs of anything approaching a representative collection of his works. As a rule, the work of a trade designer ends with the preparation of the original design, and all too frequently the combined censorship of the dealer and the buyer result in a finished work more representative of the censorship than of the original design.

When we interviewed Mr. Whitehouse a few days ago, he was absorbed in the many details of his new work. We tarried with him only long enough to ask a few questions anent the problems of the trade designer—for we had misgivings that they were many. Like all men of action, Mr. Whitehouse is not prone to linger on hardships and, as with all men by nature given to draughtsmanship, work has nothing but the zest of life in which most artists find their greatest joy. We learned, however, that the trade designer must of necessity largely follow the ideas of the dealer who, in turn, is attempting to satisfy the real or fanciful ideas of the buyer. These ideas obviously limit the opportunities for free individual expression and unrestrained originality—limitations which the retail designer in direct contact with the client can frequently overcome by discussion.

From the meagre details which too frequently accompany a request for designs, the trade design-



THE MASTERFUL FUSION OF GOTHIC, CELTIC AND NATURALISTIC DETAILS; THE APPEALING BEAUTY OF THE SHRINE-LIKE TABLET; THE SUPERB PEN AND INK TECHNIQUE OF THE RENDERING.—THESE ARE QUALITIES WHICH HERE BESPEAK THE GENIUS OF L. A. WHITEHOUSE, THE DESIGNER AND THE DELINEATOR.

(photo caption) "The masterful fusion of Gothic, Celtic and Naturalistic details; the appealing beauty of the shrine-like tablet; the superb pen and ink technique of the renderings. These are qualities which here bespeak the genius of L. A. Whitehouse, the designer and the delineator."

er must visualize the requirements as best he can by considering the personality of the dealer, the character of work he does, the prevailing quality of design in the vicinity in which the dealer operates and the probable price limitation prescribed by the dealer.

"The dealer," suggested Mr. Whitehouse, "cannot tell the designer too much about each case. A telling suggestion is often conveyed in the most casual statement." Moreover, the trade designer is usually far removed, geographically, from the site of the proposed work and he is thus unable to recommend solutions perhaps more desirable than the one prescribed by the dealer. We were about to suggest that "recommendations" to the dealer were doubtless in many cases rather emphatically rejected, but our time was too limited to annoy Mr. Whitehouse with our neo-humor.

The moral we drew from our little talk on the problems of the trade designer suggests the importance of supplying the designer with full particulars as to grade, surroundings, the material to be used, conclusions of the dealer concerning the general taste of the client, and, in short, all data available concerning each project is of vital import to the designer who conscientiously is interested to do more than merely make a design and issue a receipt.

Mindful of the fact that Mr. Whitehouse had practiced during these years which have witnessed a change so remarkable in the quality of design, we left him to study at first hand some of his finished work in the cemeteries of nearby New England cities and to consider numerous of his published drawings in the files of **GRANITE MARBLE & BRONZE**.

Without attempting in any way to summarize upon the work of an artist so productive, certain conclusions and generalities may be ventured without danger of superficiality. Exquisite refinement in the combination and profiles of mouldings and suites of mouldings, are features of his work in the classic orders and in memorials of the more academic type. His ornamentation is invariably subtle in relief and rich in play of delicate shadings. The rinceau carving in both the Webster and Wilcox memorials here shown are jewel-like in charming refinement and exquisite detail.

Mr. Whitehouse has devoted much of his genius to the development of the so-called moderate-priced memorials. His contributions to the design plates of the trade press and his work in the design of memorials for stock, or quantity production, are outstanding achievements in his career. Perhaps no single artist in the field surpasses him in the originality and individuality of this work which constitutes the great volume of production in our field.

He is particularly happy in his horizontal tablet forms in which he displays a remarkable sense

for lovely rectangles and beautiful lines. Here, as in his larger compositions, he employs low, platform-like bases, together with a skillful and resourceful use of panels and recesses conservatively enriched with carving which obeys without exception the fundamental laws of good design by expressing the structural lines of his mass.

Mr. Whitehouse is a letterist who has done much to demonstrate the superiority of incised lettering. He relies largely on the Roman alphabet and his work in this vital branch of design is distinguished by a singular legibility notwithstanding the refinement of his bars and the delicacy of the section he specifies. An interesting example of this unique feature of his work is admirably illustrated in the Lythgoe memorial here shown. Contrasted with the prevailing crudity and unstudied quality of much that is done in the lettering of memorials, how perfect is the scale, detail, design and refinement of the name Lythgoe in this example. As a classical composition, the Lythgoe memorial reveals Mr. Whitehouse at his best in the use of refined and admirably studied mouldings, in the eloquent restraint he exercises in the use of ornament and in his manifest feeling for the refinements of ancient architecture.

And these qualities are dominant in all his work. There is a singular simplicity without severity or plainness—a sustained note of studied refinement which lingers in the most modest marker and prevails in his more important compositions. Notwithstanding the remarkable fact that he is self-taught, Mr. Whitehouse is at once not only original but invariably authentic and correct in design. He takes leave of blind academic tradition without bordering on the dangerous shores of the faddistical, or the tawdry and cheap originality so dominant in the arts of design today. He finds ample scope for the play of his fertile imagination, and his creative impulse, in fields which have been tried and not found wanting. He has contributed abundantly to the progress of his art through the correct channels of evolution rather than revolution. Mr. Whitehouse, in conclusion, is an artist too sensitive, exacting and conscientious to resort, in any manner, to cheap devices or novelties.

The student of architectural rendering will find in the work of Mr. Whitehouse as a delineator or renderist, a veritable treasure of variety in both technique and mediums. Early in his career he worked largely in pencil from which he passed to ink and thence to water color, and in none of these has he had so much as an hour of instruction. In his charmingly delicate and finished wash drawings of today, he continues to introduce considerable pencil technique in his shaded surfaces, attaining a singular quality of texture which is individual, colorful and effective.

The landscape settings he employs in his ren-



MR. WHITEHOUSE EXCELLS IN THE DESIGN OF MODERATE PRICED MEMORIALS. HORIZONTAL TABLET FORMS AKIN TO THIS EXAMPLE ARE AMONG HIS NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ART OF THE MONUMENT.



A PROTOTYPE OF MANY SUBSEQUENT EXHEDRA-SCREENS, THE WILCOX MEMORIAL BESPEAKS THE JEWEL-LIKE QUALITIES OF HIS WORK AS AN ORNAMENTIST.

(photo caption) (the Chamberlain monument, top) “Mr. Whitehouse excels in the design of moderate priced memorials. Horizontal tablet forms akin to this example are among his notable contributions to the art of the monument.” (the Wilcox monument bottom) “A prototype of many subsequent exhedra-screens, the Wilcox memorial bespeaks the jewel-like qualities of his work as an ornamentist.”

derings are admirably composed, full of beautiful passages and distinguished by a skillful and pictorial interpretation of trees and shrubs, in a variety of lights and shadows. In this as in his architectural composition, Mr. Whitehouse is invariably careful and studied, avoiding equivocal splashes and displaying remarkable draughtsmanship which mounts to fine art in effecting distance, middle distance and foreground. There are no strong colors. There is nothing suggestive of the popular *Beau-arts-esquisse* manner in his renderings, a school of sketchy rendering now in favor among architects.

Mr. Whitehouse is deliberate, painstaking, but not stilted, and withal he is rapid and decisive with the brush, pen or pencil. Invariably his backgrounds are properly subordinate to the object—a quality which many renderists unhappily miss in their quest for pictorial effects. The remarkable values and effects he achieves with pen and ink encourage one to deplore the limited use of this charming medium among designers in our field. To be sure, no medium is more exacting and none demands a more finished draughtsmanship and technique. In his line drawings, Mr. Whitehouse again reveals his sense for the poetry of lines and his complete mastery of every movement his hand makes.

An appreciation of his work as a renderist would be incomplete without mention of his consummate knowledge of perspective as a scientific medium to art. Like Brunelleschi, Donatello and Alberti, Mr. Whitehouse early became absorbingly interested in this science which revolutionized art in the 13th century. No architectural renderist is worthy the name who is lacking in a thorough understanding of this potent factor in the delineation of architectural forms, and Mr. Whitehouse has not only studied the subject far beyond the requirements of his work, but he has applied his great knowledge of the subject superlatively and has successfully taught the subject to his many pupils. In all his renderings he projects his perspective scientifically and conscientiously with a result that his drawings are meticulously faithful. So perfect has become his sense of perspective that a dashy *esquisse* or thumbnail sketch is almost perfect in position of lines.

In 1912 the state of Massachusetts, through the board of education, appointed Mr. Whitehouse to direct and conduct the first public institution for instruction in memorial art. For six years Mr. Whitehouse conducted with great success this school, situated in Quincy, Mass. An average of 20 pupils attended throughout the six years. When the great war brought on a critical shortage of coal, this school, in common with many other worthy enterprises, was compelled to close. The unique and invaluable service Mr. Whitehouse af-

forded the craft through this experiment should inspire the ultimate founding of a national school, perhaps in a future day, to be supported by the national association. It is altogether unfortunate that the nucleus which existed in this Massachusetts school could not have been developed and supported once it had gained such success.

If Mr. Whitehouse is facile with pen and brush, he is no less talented and eloquent in the written and spoken word. As a lecturer and writer, he has contributed extensively in his public addresses and in his published articles to the constructive advancement of the craft not only in matters of art but on subjects as well concerned with economic and trade conditions. As an authority on the art of the monument and as a student of general affairs in the industry, he has frequently wielded the pen forcefully, sometimes with vitriolic incisiveness, but always constructively and for the definite object of improving a craft in which he is profoundly interested.

His devotion to progress and the cause of better things inspired Mr. Whitehouse to play an important part in the cause of the Progressive party during Roosevelt's memorable career. He was



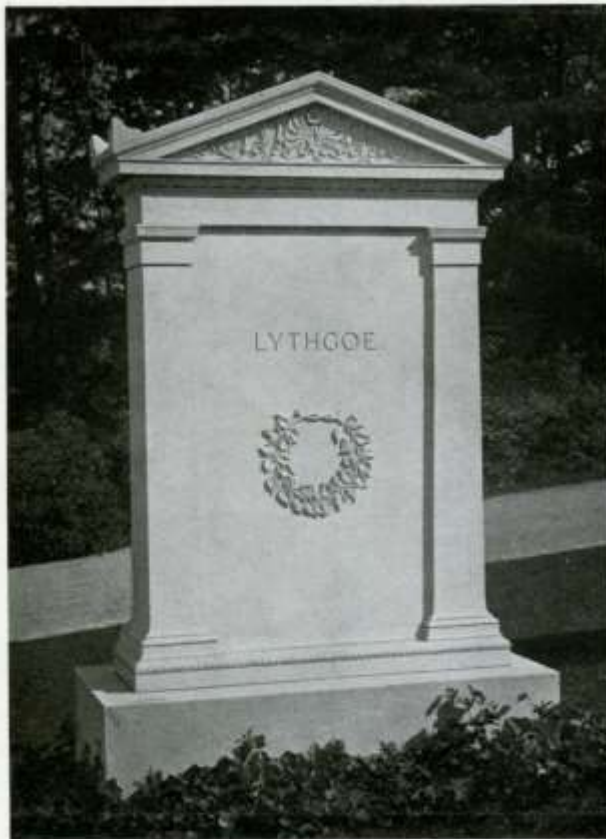
IN COMBINING REALISTIC ORNAMENT WITH THE ABSTRACT, MR. WHITEHOUSE HAS IN THIS GOTHIC COMPOSITION REVEALED HIS RESOURCEFULNESS AND GOOD TASTE IN A DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

(photo caption) "In combining realistic ornament with the abstract, Mr. Whitehouse has in this Gothic composition revealed his resourcefulness and good taste in a difficult problem."

nominated for congressman from his district and the vote he polled in a cause which was destined to defeat is today a subject of constant discussion in his district. His brief career in politics might have been a turning point in his life had he not found the machinations of the game repulsive and ignoble. He retired amid the insistent pleadings of his many friends and fellow citizens, who shared with him an idealism which the public at this late day is recognizing in the great leader of that lost cause, Theodore Roosevelt.

Louis A. Whitehouse was born in East Boston in 1880. He has spent most of his time in this great center of culture and amid traditions which are particularly rich in import to our craft, for New England since the days of the early colonial worker in stone has been the great hub of progress in our art. During his career he has been associated with many artists of national reputation who drew upon his services, as did Bela Pratt, in the designing of pedestals and settings for important memorials.

The few examples of Mr. Whitehouse's work which we were able to secure for this essay are limited to subjects which chanced to be available.



SUPERB COMPOSITION, UTTER REFINEMENT IN DETAIL AND EXQUISITE ORNAMENTATION ARE QUALITIES IN THE WORK OF WHITEHOUSE. OBSERVE THE SCALE AND BEAUTY OF THE FAMILY NAME.

They are in no wise published as representative of his broad activities, nor do they shed light on his remarkable work in sculpture, Celtic cross design, mausoleums and a variety of forms which it were impossible to comprehend in so brief a summary of a life full of achievement. Surely his fellows in the craft will watch with interest the prosperity and success of Mr. Whitehouse in his career as a retail dealer. If an artist deserves to succeed financially as he has succeeded in his art, Mr. Whitehouse may look forward to a career rich in achievement.

MODERN COSTS

(Continued from Page 28)

Today he knows, or should know, that when a job costs him \$100 at the quarry that the freight, greatly increased, will cost him \$10, that it costs him 15 per cent. commission, 15 per cent. for his overhead, and that to do business with a net profit of 15 per cent., which he surely is entitled to, he must sell the same job for \$297 instead of \$200, the price he guessed at originally. This is only a fair, just and adequate price to which we are entitled, and is what my subject is entitled, "Modern Costs".

In closing, I would say that the monumental business, without doubt, is the oldest known of any trade and should be regarded as a profession. For a man to be trained in all its branches demands as much time and study as any profession. It is allied to death, and its purpose is to perpetuate mortuary art. It demands dignity, respect and careful consideration, and we, as monument dealers, should always try to maintain these standards. The sooner your work and mine is recognized as a work of art the sooner will modern cost take second place with the purchasing public, and our sales will not be measured by feet and dollars.

We ought to be proud that we are monumental builders or dealers and that we are members of the Retail Marble and Granite Dealers' Association, both state and national. If we conduct our business according to the code of ethics of our association, we will be welcomed or called upon by our prospective customers as dealers of integrity and trustworthiness, and will not be met with the oft-heard phrase: "Mother, here's another tombstone man."

A WORTH-WHILE JOB

A pessimist and an optimist were discussing life from their different viewpoints. "I really believe," said the former, "that I could make a better world myself."

"Sure!" returned the optimist; "that's what we are here for. Now let us get to work and do it.—Boston Transcript.

(photo caption) "Superb composition, utter refinement in detail and exquisite ornamentation are qualities in the work of Whitehouse observe the scale and beauty of the family name."