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ILLINOIS COLLECTION

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ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ALUMNI FUND BOARD

~ A VISION ~

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A vision

*perpetuating an Illini
contribution to
the arts*



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If the University of Illinois had never done anything more than to produce Lorado Taft, it would have justified all of the millions that the State has expended in its upbuilding and maintenance . . .

SO SPOKE President James before the legislature when urging the University's appropriation bill, and in that estimate of the artistic worth of our great sculptor alumnus he voiced the sentiment of the contemporary artists of the world.

We are justly proud of our great fellow alumnus, and we miss no opportunity to claim with him a common bond in the University of Illinois, but if, when extolling the merits of our great brother, we were asked what examples of Taft's work adorn our campus, we might answer, if we were wise, that there are, or were, in the non-fireproof halls of the literary societies an "Excelsior," a "David and Jonathan" and a bust of Professor Snyder, all in plaster and all of which were made some forty or fifty years ago. Nothing more permanent, nothing more recent. Nothing more.

Nothing in enduring bronze, placed where it will daily catch the eyes of the throngs of passing students, leaving its subtle impress on their plastic minds and

characters. Nothing to proclaim to the visitors that University loyalty of which we sing so lustily. Nothing which we, the great body of former students, have helped to create.

Lorado Taft was of the Class of '79 and is now sixty-seven years old. He is rounding out a life of great activity and achievement, and although he is still in his prime, his three score and ten will probably mark the close of the period of his greatest creative ability. Lorado recognizes this and prays for health and strength to permit him to complete the great works he now has in progress, and to which his remaining years are mortgaged.

Orders for work and demands upon his time pour in from everywhere, nearly all of which must be declined. The limitations imposed by time and human strength have closed his order book, and not even a commission from the University or from its Alumni for a major piece of work, to be designed and modeled, could now be accepted.

And does that forever end our opportunity to have a Lorado Taft creation erected on our campus?

It does not, although it would⁴ were it not that for years the sculptor has had a burning desire to see upon the campus a piece in heroic mold, typifying his beloved Alma Mater with outstretched arms, welcoming her children back home. He has dreamed about it in his spare time, and when a sculptor dreams he is creating.⁷ Bit by bit and at various times these dreams were reproduced in clay and then in plaster, and exhibited at the University. Taft himself said it was crude and incomplete, but

at that it showed he had a real vision of a great theme, which needed only to be worked out; and although another year's study may be necessary to give the piece its final form, enough work has been done to warrant its being classified as "a major work in progress."

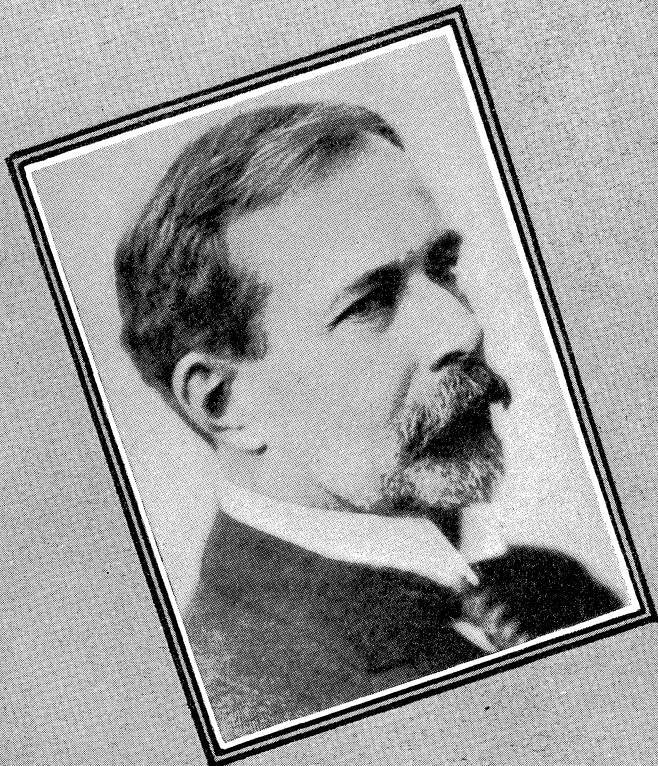
And now comes the Alumni Fund Board, a creation of the University Alumni Association, to take over this long discussed project of a tribute to the University and a memorial to Lorado Taft and to put the project in definite form and on its way to being realized.

It is a comparatively small thing for the Illini, after the memorable stadium achievement, and yet it is a man's job, as \$40,000 will be required to carry the project to completion and present the University with the Taft Alma Mater group in heroic size, cast in bronze and placed on a suitable foundation. This should be done by Homecoming of 1928 but more probably by Commencement 1929.

This is the task to which we have put our hands, relying on the support of the Illini to carry it through, and the quicker it is done the less it will cost.

W. L. ABBOTT, '84

President Alumni Fund Board



THE MIDWAY STUDIOS
6016 ELLIS AVENUE
CHICAGO

January 19, 1937.

Mr. W. L. Abbott,
73 West Adams St.,
Chicago, Ill.

My dear "Erer Rabbit";-

You have done me a great kindness; I am sore thankful than I can tell. There is nothing that a sculptor prizes so much as opportunity to make his work permanent. This you have given me and it will enable me to put myself on record at our grand old U. of I.

Gratefully yours,

Orlando Tapp

The "Alma Mater" -- its conception and development

LORADO TAFT, '79, our distinguished sculptor alumnus, has had in mind since 1883 the idea of modeling a sculptural group to be placed on the campus of our Alma Mater. On his return from Paris in 1883, four years after his graduation from the University he modeled a relief of Learning and Labor clasping hands. Although this was not preserved it came back into his mind again in 1916 when he made a sketch of his proposed "Alma Mater" and made some experiments as to the size of the figures to be included in the group.

With the approach of the fiftieth Commencement in June 1922 Mr. Taft again took up his study of this work and finished the plaster cast of his first conception of "Alma Mater" in time to have it brought to the campus and temporarily erected on the steps of the auditorium in order that those attending the Commencement might have an opportunity to see it, to study it, and to express their ideas about it. He wanted his classmates and old time companions to join him in his expression of a message to the other generations of students and alumni who are to follow in their footsteps. You will note that the figure of "Alma Mater" stands in front with outstretched hands to welcome the oncoming students and

alumni. To the rear stands the figure of Learning clasping the hand of an earnest man representing Labor, thus typifying the motto of our University.

Mr. Taft in speaking of his group at the Alumni Reunion in June 1922, told his classmates and fellow alumni that the modeling of the statuary "has been a labor of love, a period of happy toil, recalling the wonderful days of the early practice of my art. I have been going to my studio at five o'clock every morning—returning to the house for breakfast at eight—and these fragrant mornings have brought back memories of similar dewy dawns of nearly fifty years ago when I used to hasten over to my spacious studio in the basement of old University Hall and work in the clay until breakfast time."

Professor Taft—for he is non-resident professor of art at the University—contemplates several changes in the figure of Labor in his group as it was originally worked out in a few short weeks. He hopes to complete the model within the next several months so that the Alumni Fund Board may arrange to have the group cast in bronze as a tribute to the University and no doubt in time a fitting memorial to Lorado Taft himself.

The frontispiece illustrates Mr. Taft's plaster model of his "Alma Mater" group as it appeared when temporarily placed on the steps of the University of Illinois Auditorium at the fiftieth Commencement in June 1922.

*The "Alumni Fund" -- what it
is and its purpose*

THE ALUMNI FUND has been created by the University of Illinois Alumni Association "to induce universal annual giving by alumni, students, and citizens in appreciation of the educational opportunities afforded and to encourage gifts of any size for the benefit of the University."

The idea of an Alumni Fund at Illinois was first suggested by President David Kinley in January 1922 in a letter to Executive Manager Roseberry, '05, of the Alumni Association and was given the breath of life by the class of 1923, which contributed \$2702 in cash to that fund as its class memorial. The Class of 1922 which had already promised to use its class memorial fund to pay the balance of the indebtedness on the University chimes had previously passed a resolution endorsing the idea of the Alumni Fund.

The Alumni Fund committee of the Alumni Association appointed in 1923 by President E. E. Barrett of the Alumni Association made a report in 1924 outlining the scope of the fund. This report was approved by the Alumni Association, and an Alumni Fund Board was then appointed with Charles S. Pillsbury, '07, as its first president and Wensel Morava, '78, as honorary chair-

man. Mr. Pillsbury was succeeded in January 1927 by W. L. Abbott, '84, as president of this Board.

The classes of 1924, 1925 and 1926 have added their class memorials to the Alumni Fund. With the accumulation of interest earned and with eight contributions by individual alumni the fund now amounts to \$10,217.92, which is available for whatever purpose the Alumni Fund Board may decide to use it as long as it will benefit the University. The class of 1927 is now collecting cash contributions to this fund as its class memorial.

The Alumni Fund Board has decided that its first project shall be the sculptural group called "Alma Mater" designed by our noted alumnus, Lorado Taft, '79—and to be erected on the University campus. The Alma Mater design has received the approval of the Board of Trustees, and the Board will later designate a site on the campus for the placing of the statuary.

The Alumni and former students of the University are now called upon by the Alumni Fund Board to contribute the amount of money (estimated at about \$40,000) needed to cast the group in bronze and to meet the expense of erecting it in a fitting architectural setting. Mr. Taft is gladly contributing his services, to use his own words "as a small return for all I owe to my Alma Mater."

A word as to the history of University Alumni Funds at other institutions may be of interest. The Yale Alumni Fund, the pioneer of them all, was established in 1891 and was created to afford the Yale alumni and former students an opportunity to make annual cash

