Review of: Ethan Anthony, The Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram and His Office

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preference for depicting single, isolated features in a landscape: the embankment running between the train and the viewer seems to suggest that the railway separates people rather than brings [sic] them together” (212).

Although Kennedy and Treuherz have collected an impressively broad range of images, their choices often seem arbitrary, dictated by the availability of an object for loan or the limits of their knowledge. They seem most comfortable on British and French materials, but, as an Americanist, I wonder, why Cole and Inness but not Thomas Eakins

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...
Anthony’s work adds to the existing scholarship, however, is a detailed discussion of the evolution of the firm itself, as well as unprecedented access to the firm’s own archives. The majority of the plans, photographs, and renderings on display in the book are drawn from these archives and celebrate Cram’s place as one of the master practitioners of Gothic revival in the United States. Although the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City is often considered Cram’s masterpiece, he also effectively advanced his aesthetic, spiritual, and practical preference for the neo-Gothic on college campuses throughout the United States.

Cram’s entrance into his later prolific university work came when the young firm won the architectural design competition for the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1902. Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson’s neo-Gothic design trumped others from such well-known firms as McKim, Mead, and White, according to Anthony, because the firm proved to the jury that “old forms could be recombined to suit contemporary purposes.” The jury recognized Cram’s appropriate material choice of “a local stone that blended with the rugged cliffs over the Hudson River” to create an attractive “Gothic scheme” (24). Throughout his life, Cram fought to resolve the tensions between the medieval and the modern (he wrote increasingly polemic statements and the modern (he wrote increasingly polemic statements) and such attention on this complex figure and his stunning portfolio is both well deserved and overdue. Anthony, as Cram’s successor, has added his straightforward contribution to the considerable recovery work already done on Cram, the firm, and their influence on modern American architecture.

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This is a lavishly illustrated and superbly produced book on the advertising in ten wide-circulation American magazines during World War II: Life, Look, Collier’s, Saturday Evening Post, Ladies’ Home Journal, Esquire, Time, Newsweek, Business Week, and Farm Journal and Farmer’s Wife. With sixty black-and-white illustrations and ten color plates, the reader is treated to a large selection of wartime advertising in periodicals that are hard to find, most of them now tucked away in storage as libraries strive to cut down on vandalism and look for shelf space. Magazines once occupied a central place in American popular culture, with circulations in the millions, when people had more time to read and fewer distractions from other media. Advertising fueled this widespread success as it enabled publishers to sell their magazine subscriptions at a low cost and keep newsstand prices low as well. At a time when advertisers feared going out of business as manufacturers shifted from consumer goods to war production, advertising revenue actually increased during the war because the big agencies found a way to sell the war instead of products. Author John Bush Jones meticulously tells this story of advertisers selling ideas instead of consumer goods by focusing on the various campaigns supported by the War Advertising Council, government agencies, and advertising companies themselves. With effective reference to information in Business Week and engaging anecdotes about his own memories as a child during the war, Jones paints an absorbing picture of life on the home front as it was depicted in national advertising, when ads were beautifully illustrated with compelling copy designed to motivate civilians to buy war bonds, accept women in blue-collar jobs, resist the black market, donate blood, and do all they were asked to support the troops overseas.
