

Albert William Smith

August 30, 1856 — August 16, 1942

Few graduates of Cornell University have contributed as much to the spirit and service of Cornell as has Albert William Smith, one of its earlier graduates, and a teacher and administrator during twenty-one years, preceding his retirement as Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Emeritus.

Born in Westmoreland, New York, on August 30, 1856, Albert Smith entered Cornell as a student in 1874, and was graduated in 1878. During this period he distinguished himself as a student and as an oarsman on the first of the outstanding Cornell crews. He returned to Cornell in 1886 as a graduate student. In 1887 he was made assistant professor of mechanical engineering in Sibley College at Cornell, where he remained until 1891 when he became professor of machine design at the University of Wisconsin; he left there a year later to become head of the department of mechanical engineering at Stanford University, returning in 1904 to his Alma Mater to become dean of Sibley College until his retirement in 1921. He was acting president of Cornell University from April 3, 1920, to October 20, 1921.

After his retirement, writing, which had been his avocation, became his vocation. Seven books published in this period are: biographies of John Edson Sweet, Walter Craig Kerr, and Ezra Cornell; *Poems in Varying Moods*; *Poems of Cornell*; *Facing Life*, The commencement address at Cornell in 1921; *A Springtime Odyssey on the Shores of Southern Seas*.

Also, during his retirement he influenced alumni and others to make gifts to Cornell and guided the direction of those gifts.

As an engineer he added honor to his profession; as a teacher and writer in his professional field he clarified abstruse problems; as an administrator, he was incisive, patient, considerate, and sympathetically understanding.

Without the least detracting from his success as an engineer, teacher, and administrator it may be said that his outstanding contribution came through the example of his character, the breadth of his culture, his enthusiasms for the best in literature, music, and art, and his wholesome influence on students, who at one time voted him the most respected and most beloved teacher at Cornell.

Sorrow at his death is tempered by thankfulness for his inspiring life.