

President Taft Address
Photo

Address of

*President William H. Taft, at the dedication of the Young Men's Christian Association building,
Kalamazoo, September 21, 1911*

Ladies and Gentlemen of Kalamazoo, My Fellow Citizens:

It is my good fortune to visit your city at a time when I could take part in the dedication of a beautiful and useful building for the Young Men's Christian Association.

I have been asked to say something appropriate to the ceremony this afternoon. It has been my good fortune to come in contact with, and to know with considerable intimacy, the good work which this Association does the world around. I know it in Shanghai, I know it in Hong Kong, I know it in Manila, I know it on the Isthmus of Panama, I know it in Cuba, I know it the world around.

It furnishes to the young men of the city in which it operates a Christian home in which they occupy their hours of leisure with amusements that elevate and do not demoralize or destroy, through secretaries who are trained men to carry on its educational, its amusement and its athletic functions.

I do not know of any place in which a man, anxious to help his fellow kind and who has more money than he knows what to do with, than to invest in the Young Men's Christian Association: if he gives it either to the building or to the fund, he can feel assured that it will be used for the benefit of his fellow men.

It is not a charitable institution, but the men who enjoy it are not put up on the basis of those who receive something for nothing. The secretaries, and those who organize such associations, are trained men and treat every one with respect and enable everyone, though receiving the benefits and hospitality of the association, to receive them in such a way that they are able to retain their self-respect.

I know, my friends, many men who are in the gutter today, who had they been taken at the formative stage of life, between twenty and thirty, and had been led into an institution like this and had the way pointed out to them and an opportunity by which they might spend their leisure hours with amusements and enjoyments that would not demoralize, would today be useful members of the community. We are a city people and the countrymen, I regret to say, are coming in more and more into the cities; and those young men when they come into the city are exposed to the temptations we all of us know and understand; and if those young men could be gathered into something that likens itself to a Christian home to enjoy the benefits of such an association as this and live to become useful citizens, they would be grateful to this association that their lives have been spared to make themselves useful in the community.

Now I wish for this Association the same success and prosperity that all the other associations have in this country; and I am glad, as President of the United States to take part in this ceremony of dedication in order to show how the head of the government, for the time being, takes an interest on behalf of all the people of the United States in the development of an instrumentality this that tends to uplift the young men of the nation.