

Juliette Graves Adams

The Hymn Society named only one Honorary Member between 1939 and 1999: Juliette Aurelia (Nettie) Graves Adams (1858-1951). Born near Niagara Falls, she studied privately in Rochester before becoming the music teacher at a boarding school at the age of 21. In 1883, she married Crosby Adams, also from Niagara Falls, and they embarked on careers as music teachers. He was a choral conductor and theory teacher. After four years in Buffalo and four more in Kansas City, they moved to Oak Park, Illinois, and established the Crosby Adams School in 1892.

Mrs. Crosby Adams—as she was identified in all her publications—became known as a teacher who specialized in methods and literature for young piano students. She conveyed her experiences and pedagogical insights in *Chapters from a Musical Life* (1903). While in the Chicago area, she developed an enduring friendship with Amy Cheney Beach. In 1913, the Adamases moved to Montreat, North Carolina, where they built “The House-in-the-Woods,” which included teaching studios. They taught at the predecessors of Montreat College and held “teachers schools” in the summer to train public school music instructors. Skilled at description, Adams wrote “Easter at Winston-Salem, North Carolina” for the June 9, 1916, issue of *The Music News* (Chicago). This was reprinted as a 16-page booklet, with her narrative of Holy Week and Easter at Home Moravian Church accompanied by photos of Salem.

A promoter of hymn playing and hymn singing, Juliette Adams edited *Worship Songs for Beginners* (1924), *Worship Songs for Primaries* (1924), and *Worship Songs for Youth* (1927), as well as a series of *Great Hymns Youth Should Know* (1923). In 1927, she delivered a series of lectures on hymnology to the Women’s Auxiliary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States at the Mountain Retreat Assembly Grounds. These were published in 1929 under the lengthy title, *Studies in Hymnology: A Textbook Designed for Study Groups Where Attention Is Given to the Subject of Church Music*. The title page adds: “Also for Colleges, Schools, the Music Teacher, and All Inquiring Students.” Though she does not mention The Hymn Society, a reissue of the book in 1938 lists among “Some Valuable Reference Books” Covert and Laufer’s *Handbook* to the Presbyterian hymnal and books by Earl Harper, James Moffatt, Edward Ninde, Millar Patrick, W. S. Pratt, and Augustine Smith, as well as Benson’s two classic works. The introduction recalls her visit to Benson and his personal library. Adams was elected to membership in The Hymn Society sometime in the early 1930s.

At its February 2, 1948, meeting, the Executive Committee proposed to make Adams an Honorary Member, subject to action at the annual meeting in May. Presuming (accurately) on the approval of the body, this sequence of actions enabled the Society to honor Adams on her ninetieth birthday, March 25. She performed a recital that day, as she did on her birthday each year until she turned 93.

Juliette died on November 9, 1951, only a few months after the death of her husband. A plaque marking their graves at Piney Grove Cemetery, First Presbyterian Church, Swannanoa, North Carolina, reads:

Skilled in music and in friendship’s art, to God they offered gratitude, to each other devotion, to numberless friends memories of beauty generously shared.

