

CHRIST'S CHURCH, HAMILTON, ONTARIO, AND THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH – 1835-1875¹

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> MALCOLM THURLBY

As we see it today, Christ's Church Anglican Cathedral, located on the east side of James Street North, Hamilton, between Robert Street to the south and Barton Street East to the north, presents a Gothic façade created by Toronto architect Henry Langley [1836-1907] (fig. 1). Along with the façade, Langley built the three western bays of the nave (1873-1875), which were added to the two nave eastern bays constructed between 1852 and 1854 by Toronto architect William Thomas [1799-1860]. Perhaps not surprisingly, Langley's nave bays follow the design of William Thomas so as to bring a uniform appearance to the whole (fig. 2). The elaborate chancel arch and western bay of the chancel are also by Thomas, while the two eastern bays of the chancel were erected in 1924, again adopting the design principles established by Thomas (figs. 3-4). The integrated Gothic appearance of the church experienced today did not come about in a straightforward way. The original church on the site owed little to the Gothic tradition which we now so readily associate with ecclesiastical architecture. Instead, the edifice designed in 1835 and built between 1837 and 1842 was classicizing. It was created by English-trained architect Robert Charles Wetherell [d. 1845], who is best known for Hamilton's Dundurn Castle, built for Allan MacNab [1798-1862] between 1832 and 1835.² Wetherell's church survived until the early 1870s and is known through descriptions, sketches, engraving, a watercolour, and photographs. The sources for his design are in the churches of eighteenth-century English architect Thomas Archer [1668-1743], two London churches of the 1820s by Sir John Soane



FIG. 1. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL, EXTERIOR FROM WEST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

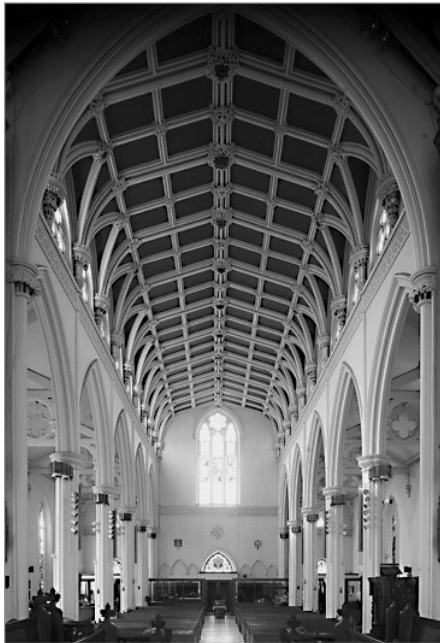


FIG. 2. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL, NAVE, INTERIOR TO WEST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 3. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL, INTERIOR TO EAST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

[1753-1837], and ultimately the tradition of Sir Christopher Wren [1632-1723] and James Gibbs [1682-1754]. For an Anglican church of the 1830s and early 1840s in Upper Canada (Canada West post-1841), Wetherell's design was quintessentially English, the perfect image for the Church of England. Yet, as we shall see, that image was short-lived. It was eclipsed by the introduction of Gothic as the true Christian style in Canada West in the mid-1840s and the beginning of the remodeling of Christ's Church in 1852.

DOCUMENTATION

We are fortunate in having The Minutes of the Building Committee for the construction of the first church.³ The first Public Meeting took place in Hamilton on June 13, 1835, "for the purpose of endeavouring to further the Erection and Building of a Protestant Episcopal Church in the Town of Hamilton." The site on James Street was selected and a Building Committee struck, which

included Allan N. MacNab of Dundurn Castle. The Building Committee

decided upon building a frame church in consequence of their limited subscription list. Tenders for erecting a frame church according to a design by Mr. Wetherall [*sic*], Architect, were advertised for and on the 1st of September the committee met to examine the tenders put in and to decide to whom the work should be given.

The tender of Simpson & Torvill having given the greatest satisfaction a Contract was accordingly entered into with said parties for the erection of the frame at the valuation of £1.10 per hundred feet - linial [*sic*] measure.

The contract specified that the frame should be completed by December 1, 1835, but problems with obtaining the timber delayed the construction. Subsequent financial concerns resulted in further suspension of the work, "till on the July 8, 1836, the Committee met

and resolved upon drawing £100 out of the Bank on their own security."

The minutes continue:

Upon receiving the sum of £75 the Contractors resumed the work which however progressed but slowly and eventually came to a pause—Simpson & Torvill demanding a further advance which the Committee were with their best exertions unable to make.

As a result of financial constraints, the frame of the church was "to stand in an unfinished state during the autumn of /36 and the winter of /37." Subsequently,

the Ladies of Hamilton desirous of contributing their proportion towards the erection of the church formed the determination of holding a Bazaar of the advancement of that object. The Bazaar whi [*sic*] was held on the 24th May 1837 produced the munificent sum of two hundred and twenty five pounds currency. About the same time a proposal



FIG. 4. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL, INTERIOR OF CHANCEL FROM SOUTHWEST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

was made by three gentlemen, Edmund Ritchie, James Ritchie and Nathan C. Ford to contribute £50 each towards the completion of the church provided a sufficient number of subscribers of that sum could be produced to raise funds fully adequate to that object. (fig. 5)

The subscribers were found and "no time was lost in resuming the Building of the Church after the favourable result of the Bazaar."

At a meeting of the Building Committee on May 27, 1837, it was "ordered that the sum of one Hundred pounds be paid to Jonathan Simpson on acct. of his contract and on condition that he proceed forthwith to finish the same." It was further "ordered that an advertisement be inserted in the Gazette, for tenders for roofing and shingling also for lathing and plastering the Church." In addition, "that Simpson & Torvill be directed to complete the cornices, Window frames, Pilasters and such other work on the outside of

THE LADIES BAZAAR,
IN AID OF COMPLETING THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
In this Town, will be held in the
COURT HOUSE,
On Wednesday, the 24th of May next,
Being the Birth-Day of the Princess Victoria.
The following Ladies will hold Tables :

Mrs Jackson	Mrs Law	Miss Murnah	Mrs Barn	Mrs Webster
and	and	and	and	and
Mrs Ritchie	Mrs O'Reilly	Mrs Miller	Mrs King	Mrs Macartney

REFRESHMENT TABLE.
Mrs Wedd, Miss Hamilton, and the Misses Geddes.

The Managers have to request that all Contributions may be sent to one of the above-mentioned Ladies, to Mrs. Sheriff Jarvis (Patroness) or the Rev. J. G. Geddes, on or before the 20th of May.
The Bazaar will open at 10 o'clock, a. m. and continue till the articles are disposed of. Price of admission, 1s. 2s. Children half-price.
Hamilton, May 10th, 1837.

G. B. Hill, Printer, Gazette Office, Hamilton.

FIG. 5. HAMILTON, ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE LADIES BAZAAR IN AID OF COMPLETING THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MAY 10, 1837. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

the Church as may be necessary in order to prepare for the Plasterers.⁴"

At the next Building Committee Meeting, June 15, 1837, it was resolved "That the design submitted by Mr. Wetherall for the spire be adopted." It was further ordered

that Mr. Wetherall [*sic*] be instructed to call upon Mr. Hill to give an estimate for covering the Church with three coats of plaster called "Baillie's Cement," and that in case the estimate do [*sic*] not exceed the sum of three hundred pounds Mr. Geddes be authorized into the necessary agreement with Mr. Hill for the due performance of the work.

In his *The Builder's and Workman's New Director*, Peter Nicholson explains that Baillie's cement, also known as Bayley's composition or Bayley's compo, is "[t]he stucco now in most general use for exterior work." It is composed of one part of sand and three parts of lime tempered and saturated with water to a proper consistency.⁵

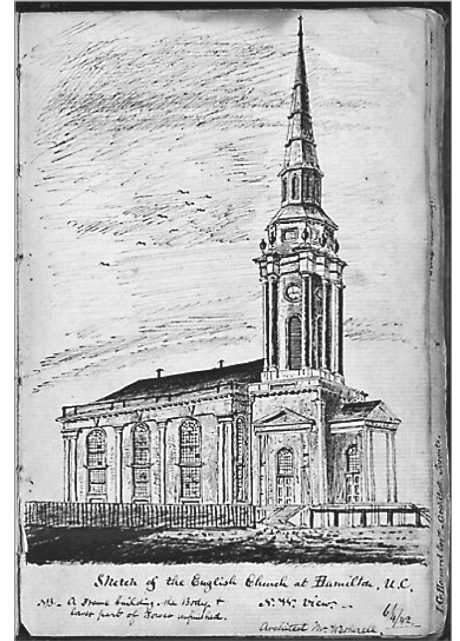


FIG. 6. SKETCH OF ENGLISH CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN HAMILTON, NORTHWEST VIEW, APRIL 6, 1842. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

On Christ's Church, it was reported in *The Church* on July 8, 1837, that "[a] handsome and commodious church is . . . in progress, and likely to be completed during the present year."⁶

Christ's Church was opened for public services on July 31, 1839, and consecrated on October 2, 1842, at which time the tower and spire were unfinished. Ladies raised \$1000. In addition, two liberal grants were obtained from the two great Church societies in England, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

THE EXTERIOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

The illustrations of the exterior of Christ's Church prior to the replacement of Wetherell's nave are as follows: sketch of English church under construction in Hamilton, northwest view, April 6,



FIG. 7. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, ENGRAVING ON A CITY MAP OF HAMILTON BY MARCUS SMITH MADE IN 1850-1851. | NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA C-14086, AFTER COPY IN ARCHIVES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, HAMILTON.



FIG. 9. HAMILTON, JAMES STREET NORTH AND OLD CHRIST'S CHURCH. | COURTESY OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHIVES, HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.



FIG. 8. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, WATERCOLOUR BY FREDERIC MARLETT BELL SMITH [1846-1923], 1871. | ARCHIVES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, HAMILTON. PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 10. HAMILTON, DUNDURN CASTLE, IMITATIVE MASONRY DETAIL, ROBERT WETHERELL. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

1842, by Thomas Glegg, a royal engineer who visited Upper Canada in 1841-1842 (fig. 6)'; engraving on a city map of Hamilton by Marcus Smith made in 1850-1851 (National Archives of Canada

C-14086) (fig. 7); watercolour of Christ's Church (1871) by Frederic Marlett Bell Smith [1846-1923], illustrator for the *Hamilton Spectator* (fig. 8); photograph of James Street North (fig. 9).

Many aspects of the design of Christ's Church are clear from these illustrations. The side walls of the rectangular nave are topped with a frieze and cornice, and have three tall, round-headed windows



FIG. 11. BIRMINGHAM, ST. PHILIP, THOMAS ARCHER (1711-1715) EXTERIOR FROM SOUTHEAST. | [HTTP://WWW.SPEEL.ME.UK/SCULPTPLACES/SCPLACEPICB/STPHILIPSCATH.JPG](http://www.speel.me.uk/sculptplaces/scplacepicb/stphilipsath.jpg), ACCESSED DECEMBER 12, 2016.

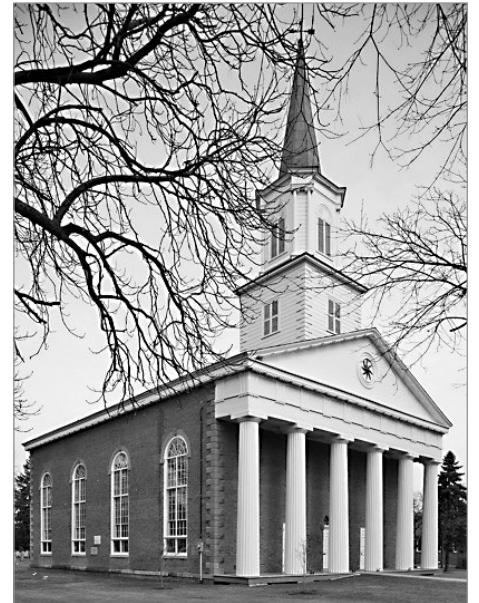


FIG. 12. NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1831), EXTERIOR SOUTHEAST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

separated by pilasters. The same pattern is used on the west wall to either side of the tower porch that projects one bay from the nave. Twin pilasters articulate the ends of the side walls. The windows have a projecting cornice at about one third their height, which corresponds to the division between the aisle and gallery inside. Emphasized keystones ornament the apices of the windows and continue into the frieze. Below the main fenestration, small rectangular windows light the basement. A Tuscan Doric porch with four columns projects to the west in the form of a temple façade. There is a full entablature of continuous architrave, frieze, and projecting cornice. Columns are used here, while there are pilasters on the reduced temple façade on the sides of the tower. The porch is surmounted by a tower with an octagonal belfry and spire. The tower is boldly articulated with two detached columns at each corner, a full entablature, and urns atop the angle columns.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ANALYSIS

Marion Macrae and Anthony Adamson state that Christ's Church is executed in stuccoed wood, lined and painted in imitation of Bath stone.⁸ They do not give the source of this information, but it may be significant that in his role as one of the Crown architects to the Church Building Commission of 1818, Sir John Nash advocated the use of brick for the body of the church covered with Parker's cement "coloured and painted as Bath stone or with Dehl's mastic which would have the same effect without being coloured."⁹ It is plausible to suggest that the exterior of Christ's Church would have appeared much like Dundurn Castle (fig. 10). Macrae and Adamson observe:

For its [Christ's Church] composition Wetherell had drawn on his recollections of two of the impressive Baroque churches of London, St. Paul's, Deptford, and St. John's, Smith Square, designed by Thomas Archer

(1668-1743) a century earlier. Christ's Church, Hamilton was set on a platform-plinth in the Deptford manner—but a plinth of brick and rubblestone which housed a Sunday School in place of a crypt. The first bay of the wooden church, narrower than the rest, formed the base of the tower. The auditorium was one hundred feet in length and sixty feet in width in the aisled area.¹⁰

Other than the classicizing vocabulary, the association between these Thomas Archer churches and Christ's Church is not particularly close. However, the articulation of the exterior of the nave of another Archer church, St. Philip (now Cathedral), Birmingham (1711-1715), shares details with Christ's Church: the large, round-headed windows and the bay division with single pilasters, and the doubling of the pilasters at the ends of the wall in Christ's Church are matched in the western bay of St. Philip's (figs. 6-7 and 11). Archer tops the balustrade of St. Philip's with urns and this



FIG. 13. LONDON, ST. MAGNUS THE MARTYR, LOWER THAMES STREET, SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN, EXTERIOR FROM WEST-NORTHWEST (1668-1687). | [HTTP://WWW.SPEEL.ME.UK/CH/LONDON/CHM/STMAGNUS.JPG](http://www.speel.me.uk/ch/london/chm/stmagnus.jpg), ACCESSED DECEMBER 12, 2016.



FIG. 14. LONDON, HOLY TRINITY, FAÇADE, SIR JOHN SOANE (1828). | MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 15. LONDON, HOLY TRINITY, EXTERIOR NORTHWEST (LITURGICAL NORTHEAST). | MALCOLM THURLBY.

As mentioned at the outset, the design of Christ's Church belongs to the tradition of classicizing churches established in England by Sir Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, with a square tower surmounted by an octagonal spire at the west end of a rectangular nave with a projecting temple façade, a "temple-form church" to borrow Terry Friedman's label.¹² Probably the best-known example of the type is James Gibbs' St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, the popularity of which came through his 1728 publication. Reference to this in Canada West is found in James Cooper's St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, 1831 (fig. 12).¹³ While there are obvious similarities between all three buildings in the rectangular box-like nave, the temple façade, and the square tower surmounted with octagonal lantern and spire, the juxtaposition of these elements in Christ's Church is significantly different from the Gibbsian model. Wetherell reworks the temple-façade motif reducing it to a four-columned design for the west wall, yet incorporating a version with pilasters on the sides of the tower which projects to the west wall of the nave rather than being integrated with the west bay of the nave in the Gibbsian mode. Most importantly, with the greater emphasis on the tower, Wetherell creates monumentality that is entirely appropriate for the town church. And for this, reference is made to one of Sir Christopher Wren's city of London churches, St. Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge (1668-1687) (fig. 13). Wetherell is making the very associations that serve to recall the greatest Anglican city churches in the motherland. This would have pleased the patrons as would the use of Tuscan Doric rather than the more richly carved Ionic and Corinthian capitals at St. Magnus. Doric would have been less expensive and it may have proved difficult to find craftsmen in Hamilton to produce either Ionic or Corinthian capitals.

motif is included by Wetherell above the free-standing columns of the west tower of Christ's Church. It is also significant that urns in these settings were

used by James Gibbs at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London (1721-1726), illustrated in his *Book of Architecture* published in 1728.¹¹

The English, and specifically the London, associations do not end there. Harold Kalman compares the tower of Christ's Church with Sir John Soane's Holy Trinity, Marylebone Road, London (1826-1827) (figs. 6-7 and 14).¹⁴ Comparison with this Soane church extends to the tall, round-headed windows subdivided by a cornice to mark the interior division of the gallery (fig. 14), a feature shared with Soane's St. Peter, Liverpool Grove, Walworth, London (1823-1825). The apse at Holy Trinity may also have been repeated at Christ's Church (fig. 15).¹⁵ And, in connection with the rebuilding of St. James' Anglican Cathedral, Toronto, after the 1839 fire, Thomas Young compares the side windows divided into a double range of his proposed design with Soane's Holy Trinity.¹⁶ John G. Howard also refers to the work of Sir John Soane. Both architects appear eager to display their knowledge of English architecture. Young's design—which was built—uses larger windows than the 1829 church and thin internal cast-iron columns instead of wood. Howard also uses tall, round-headed windows in his St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Toronto.¹⁷

Stephen Otto has determined that Robert Wetherell was trained in London where he admired the work of Sir John Soane. It is not known whether Wetherell worked in Soane's office, but he did own copies of Soane's books.¹⁸

It is also worth noting that a Roman Doric façade with four columns to the temple facade was used by George Dance the Elder for the front of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, London (1736-1740).¹⁹ Also, St. James, Bermondsey, London, a Commissioners' Church built to the design of James Savage (1827-1829), provides an analogue for the four-column temple façade with unfluted Ionic columns.

THE INTERIOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

No illustrations of the interior of the 1830s church are known to exist, but an undated floor plan (fig. 16) and a "Plan of the Gallery of Christ's Church," dated 1840-1841, are most informative (fig. 17). The ground floor of the nave has two rows of joined box pews flanked by box pews in the aisles to provide a total of 86 sittings. In the gallery, the pews are arranged in three longitudinal rows behind which there are free seats on benches. The gallery extends west in a semi-circular plan with two rows of pews, and then into the west tower where the choir and organ are located. The pulpit and reading desk are in the nave, in line with the easternmost pair of pillars.

Close examination of the seating plans reveals an important detail; the ground floor has square piers while the gallery has round columns. It is possible that the encircled black dots for the latter indicate the use of cast iron surrounded by wood. Sir John Soane suggested that "the Gallery in small churches be sustained by Iron Pillars . . . and should it be objected that the use of Iron alone has not sufficient Character and apparent stability, it may be enclosed in the manner best adapted to prevent obstruction."²⁰ Thomas Young also used cast-iron columns in St. James Anglican Cathedral, Toronto, in the 1839 rebuilding of the church after the fire.

For the use of columns above square piers, there is precedent in St. George's, Hanover Square, London, by John James (1720-1728),²¹ and in St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Holborn, London, by Henry Flitcroft (1730-1734).²² The arrangement of the interior of Soane's London churches of St. Peter's, Liverpool Grove, and Holy Trinity, Marylebone Road, may

also have been points of reference for Wetherell's Christ's Church. Columns carry the entablature of the ground-floor colonnade while there are round-headed arches to the gallery. At St. Peter's, the ground-floor columns are round, but in the gallery they are octagonal.

The use of four piers on each side of the nave to carry the galleries does not correspond with the three windows on the north and south sides of the church. Similarly, the large, round-headed windows do not reflect the interior divisions of aisle and gallery spaces. Such a lack of correspondence would have horrified Gothic revivalists of the 1840s with its absence of truthful expression on the exterior of the divisions on the interior. It was of course "corrected" in the present Gothic nave.

On the reverse of the "Plan of the Gallery," there is a list of the cost of the pew rents which ranges from five pounds down to one pound ten shillings to provide a total of 83 pounds (fig. 18). Not surprisingly, the more expensive pews were either at the front and closest to the pulpit and reader's desk, or at the west end in front of the choir. Returning to the plan, we see that at the back of both the north and south galleries, there are 32 "Free sittings on benches" (fig. 17). Such a clear expression of hierarchy within the social structure was soon to be challenged within the Anglican Church. John Medley, a canon of Exeter Cathedral who became Bishop of Fredericton in 1845, published a paper "On the Advantages of Open Seats."²³ He described closed pews as "not only contrary to all sound principles of Architecture, and fatal to all excellence in the interior arrangement of a Church, but . . . inconvenient, illegal, and unchristian."²⁴ Medley was to implement his principle of open seats in his

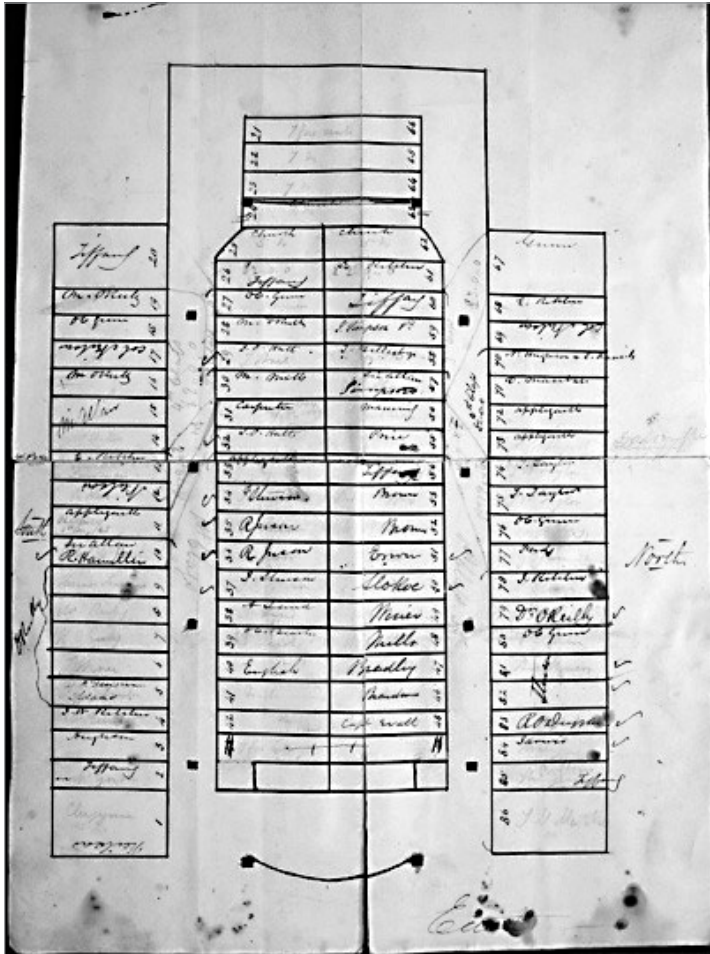


FIG. 16. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, SEATING PLAN OF ORIGINAL CHURCH. | MCMASTER UNIVERSITY, HAMILTON. PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY.

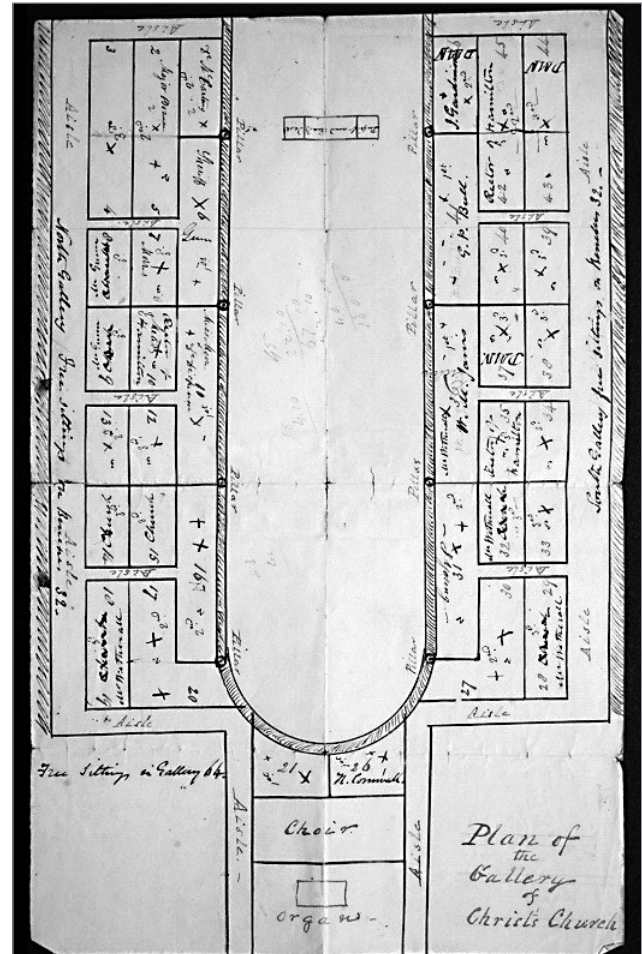


FIG. 17. CHRIST'S CHURCH, SEATING PLAN OF THE GALLERY. | MCMASTER UNIVERSITY, HAMILTON. PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY.

chapel of St. Anne's and the cathedral at Fredericton.²⁵ Less progressive attitudes prevailed elsewhere, as at Christ's Church, Hamilton, where the congregation was reluctant to give up the money generated from pew rents.

The choice of Classical over Gothic for Christ's Church may seem surprising given the rise in the popularity of Gothic with Commissioners' churches in England following the 1818 Church Building Act.²⁶ Be that as it may, the three "Consulting, Attached, or Crown Architects," John Nash [1752-1835], John Soane [1753-1837], and Robert Smirke [1781-1867],

all built Classical churches under the regime.²⁷ Aside from their model churches for the Office of Works,²⁸ the following were all classicizing²⁹: Smirke's St. John, Chatham (1821); St. James, West Hackney (1821-1823); St. Mary, Wyndham Place, St. Marylebone (1821-1823); St. Anne, Wandsworth (1820-1822). Nash's All Souls, Langham Place (1822-1824). Soane's St. Peter, Walworth (1823-1824); Holy Trinity, St. Marylebone (1826-1827); St. John, Bethnal Green (1826-1828). Moreover, the tower of Holy Trinity, Leeds, has been equated with an early Victorian revival of Sir Christopher Wren's church architecture.³⁰

In British North America, St. Paul's Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia (1749), was modelled on James Gibbs' St. Peter, Vere Street, London.³¹ Holy Trinity, Quebec City (1800-1804), followed Gibbs' St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London (1721-1726).³² St. George's Anglican Cathedral, Kingston, Ontario (1839-1842), boasts a temple façade built of local limestone and an octagonal belfry and cupola above the western bay of the nave to the design of William Coverdale [1801-1865].³³ St. James' Anglican Cathedral, Toronto, was rebuilt after the 1839 fire in a Classical design based on the 1829 church. And, as late as 1849, local architect Matthew Stead rebuilt

No.	pew	£	£
41-36-6-11. 21. 26.	6 at 5-	30	
1-46-16-21	4 at 3-	12	
(20.27)(20.17)(25)(22.45)	4 at 2-10-	10-	
(43+44) (3.4)	2 at 2-	4-	
	10 at 10-27.		
	34		£ 83-

FIG. 18. CHRIST'S CHURCH, PEW RENTS. | MCMASTER UNIVERSITY, HAMILTON.
PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 20. VITTORIA, CHRIST CHURCH, DETAIL OF NORTH WALL. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

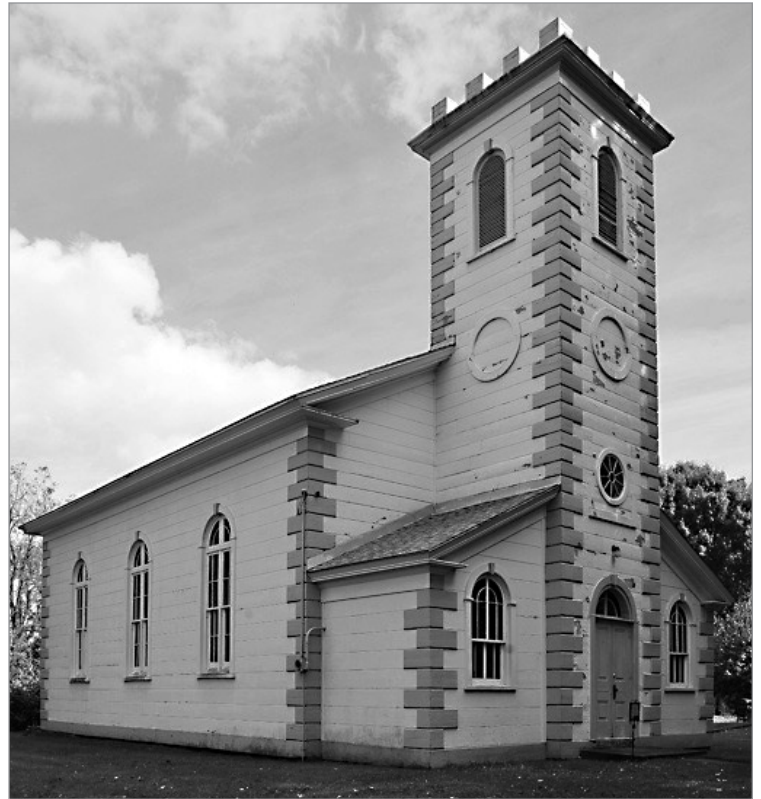


FIG. 19. VITTORIA, CHRIST CHURCH, EXTERIOR FROM NORTHWEST. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

Trinity Anglican Church, Saint John, New Brunswick, and added a temple façade and classicizing west tower after a fire.³⁴

Geographically closer to Hamilton, the classical tradition is also evident in 1844 in Christ Church (Anglican), Vittoria, which is particularly interesting for its mimetic use of wood painted and scored in imitation of ashlar masonry (figs. 19-20).

THE 1852-1854 ADDITIONS

Between 1852 and 1854, a one-bay, square-ended chancel and two bays at the east end of the nave were added to Robert Wetherell's Christ's Church (figs. 3-4, and 8-9). The *Hamilton Gazette* of May 1, 1854, provides a detailed description of the additions which is worth quoting at length so as to understand this work in

relation to the rebuilding of the nave, and the extension of the chancel in 1924-1925.

The enlargement of this church by the commencement of a new edifice, as an addition to the former Building on the east end, took place in 1852, and is now completed, the Church being opened for Public worship, including the enlargement on Easter Sunday last, and considering the difficulties that had to be surmounted in attaching a portion of the new building entirely different in style to the former structure, the general effect obtained is decidedly good, even much better than could possibly supposed to be made, but we hope that the day is not too far distant when we shall see the whole edifice carried out, as from what has been done it leads us to infer that it will be altogether a grand and imposing structure.

The architect of the addition was the English-trained William Thomas (1799-1860) who also superintended the work. Early Decorated English Gothic of the 14th century. Nave and clerestory 36.0 in width; 56.6 high; side aisles 18.0 wide and 35.0 high. The portion of the new building now erected being 70.0 in length.

The description continues:

The Nave Ceiling is groined and paneled with moulded ribs, and various bosses at the intersections, the groins spring from enriched corbels, and with column shafts continued from the floor, through the Nave piers. The Chancel roof has the principals exposed, the roof being open to the interior and the apex being 54.0 in height and paneled with arched and moulded ribs on the flat, and flowers at the intersections,



FIG. 21. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, WILLIAM THOMAS DESIGN. | ARCHIVES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH HAMILTON.



FIG. 22. LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE, WEST TOWER. | BRITTON, ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN, VOL. IV, PL. BETWEEN P.2-3.

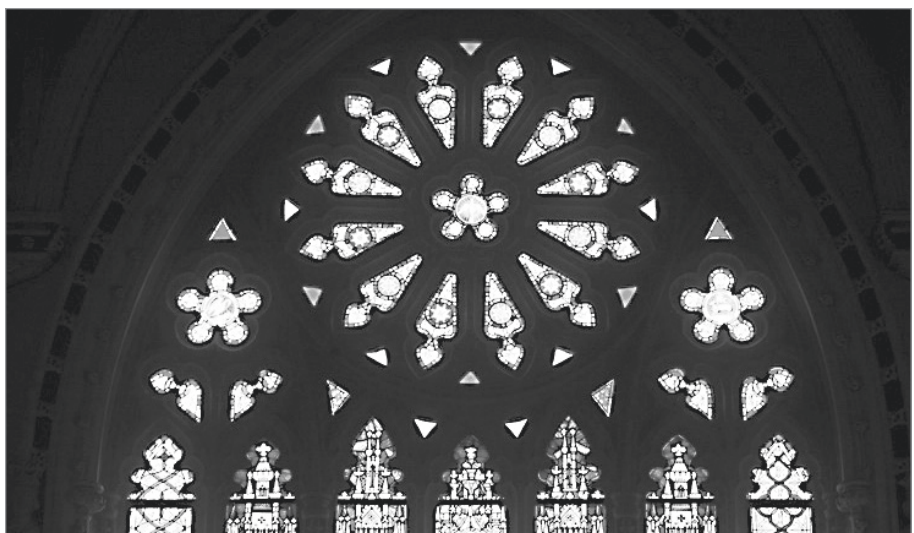


FIG. 23. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, EAST WINDOW, OCLUSUS. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

the panels being further divided into small lozenges with subordinate ribs. The principals are an arched trefoil with pierced tracery springing from moulded and enriched corbels, termination at the wall with crowned angles. On the small transverse beams near the top are encribed with letters in gold "GLORY TO GOD IN

THE HIGHEST." The chancel has an enriched cornice in open work, and the panels and arches of the chancel and large end window are studded with enrichments characteristic of the style throughout. The chancel window of seven lights is now being glazed with stained glass of a beautiful design, executed by Messrs. Ballantine & Allan

of Edinburgh, Scotland. The clerestory windows are emblematic of the Trinity, or three in one, being three quatrefoils in an equilateral arch, and the whole being glazed of stained glass in figures of varied character; it imparts to the interior a rich subdued, and mellowing tone in effect. Some figured portions of the aisle windows are of stained glass, and the windows being otherwise glazed with ground glass in diamond quarries; the appearance of the whole is exceedingly rich.

A particular feature in the completion of the interior, and we believe the first introduction of this kind of church decoration in the Province, is that the panels of the nave and chancel ceilings and grounds of the wall enrichments are in positive colors; the ceiling panels being of a beautiful light ultramarine blue, and the grounds of the wall enrichment vermilion red, the moulded ribs and foliage being white. The roof pinnacles of the chancel are picked in with vermilion, gold, bronze and white. The walls are tinted of a red sandstone color and jointed.

The interior of the side aisle roofs are [*sic*] open timbered having principals with pierced tracery on moulded corbels, with ribbed boarding of grained oak. The new part gives an accommodation of 65 additional pews; in the whole 370 sittings.

The change in style from the classicism of Wetherell's 1835 design to the Second Pointed or English Decorated Gothic of Thomas is remarkable, not least in that both styles were considered to be the quintessential English image deemed to be ideal for the Anglican Church. By the time Wetherell produced his design in 1835, the Gothic style had already found favour with a majority of Anglican patrons in England in churches built in response to the Church Building Commission call in 1818 for 600 new churches.³⁵ During

the 1820s, Classicizing churches continued to be erected, as we have seen with Holy Trinity, Marylebone Road, London, by Sir John Soane, a church with which Wetherell's Christ's Church had much in common. Yet in 1836 the publication of Augustus Welby Pugin's privately printed book, *Contrasts, or a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and Similar Buildings of the Present Day Shewing the Present Decay of Taste, Accompanied by an Appropriate Text*, was the death knell for classicism in church architecture.³⁶ *Contrasts* was commercially published in 1841 in which year Pugin's *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* also appeared.³⁷ As the title suggests, for Pugin Gothic was Christian, while Classical was pagan. Pugin was a convert to Catholicism and his churches save one, the Anglican Church at Tubney (1845-1847), Berkshire, were for catholic patrons. In the Anglican church, Anglo-Catholic ideas of High Church Anglicans were expressed between 1833 and 1841 in *Tracts for the Times* from the Anglo-Catholic revivalists at the University of Oxford. This so-called Tractarian or Oxford Movement sought to return Anglican liturgy to the way it was in late medieval England.³⁸

Analogous High Church Anglican principles drove a group of University of Cambridge undergraduates to establish the Camden Society in 1839, so named after the English antiquary, William Camden [1551-1623]. The society started the journal *The Ecclesiologist*, which was published quarterly from 1841 until 1868,³⁹ and produced equally influential pamphlets like *A Few Words to Church Builders*.⁴⁰ Joe Mordaunt Crook observed that "a group of Cambridge undergraduates had succeeded in transforming the appearance of nearly every Anglican church in the world."⁴¹

At the same time in Oxford, the Oxford Society of Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture was inaugurated, renamed the Oxford Architectural Society in 1848. At the first Annual General Meeting of that society, June 30, 1840, Professor William Sewell read a paper on the "Contrast between Grecian and Gothic Architecture," in which he remarked that there is a

necessary connection between Gothic Architecture and Christianity, that the two are inseparably associated in our minds, and that it is impossible to study and appreciate the different parts of a Gothic Cathedral, without a feeling of reverence and awe, and a deep sense of piety, as well as of the munificence and taste of those who could design and erect such an edifice.⁴²

A measure of the impact of Gothic for Anglicans in Canada West in the 1840s is also witnessed with St. James Anglican Cathedral, Toronto. In 1839, fire destroyed the 1829 classicizing church. It was rebuilt largely according to the 1829 design. The church lasted just ten years when fire struck again (the great fire of Toronto in 1849). The call for designs for its reconstruction specified Gothic. Cumberland and Ridout's design was chosen and their church survives to this day.⁴³

In the Hamilton region, the Gothic revival based on the close study of medieval originals was introduced by Frank Wills [1822-1857] in the Anglican churches of St. Peter's, Barton (1851-1852), and St. Paul's, Glanford (1851).⁴⁴

Thomas' 1852 design called for a five-bay nave fronted with a central tower and spire and flanked by gabled chapels. The design of the belfry and spire is based on the west tower of the parish church of St. James, Louth, Lincolnshire, illustrated in John Britton's *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* (figs. 21-22).⁴⁵ The Louth

spire was the tallest of any parish church in England, something that recommended it to revivalists. It served as the model for William Parsons' St. George, Leicester (1823-1826), and Francis Goodwin's St. George, Kidderminster (1821-1824) (without the spire), but significantly Thomas' copy was more authentic.⁴⁶

Sadly, lack of funds precluded the construction of Thomas' complete design. The outcome was the addition of a one-bay chancel and two bays of a Gothic nave and aisles to the east of Wetherell's church (figs. 8-9), which came to be known as the "hump-back church."⁴⁷ St. Andrew's Presbyterian (renamed St. Paul's in 1873), Hamilton, seized the opportunity of taking over Thomas' design complete with the magnificent stone spire and thereby assured great architectural prestige for the congregation over the impoverished Anglicans.⁴⁸

William Thomas was responsible for the St. Paul's Anglican Church (1844-1845, Cathedral from 1857), London, Ontario, and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Toronto (1845). The east end of St. Mary's Cathedral sets a precedent for the design of the east front of Christ's Church, Hamilton, with a seven-light bar-tracery window. It has been suggested that the design was based on the east window of Guisborough Priory, Yorkshire, which had been published in Edmund Sharpe's 1849 book, *Decorated Windows* (figs. 23-24).⁴⁹ While both windows have seven lights, the details of the tracery do not suggest a model-copy relationship. Sharpe's illustration of the east window of Ripon Minster, Yorkshire, provides a source for the unusual detail of the cinquefoil cusps of the roundels of the outer sub-arches (figs. 23 and 25).⁵⁰ The main oculus in the form of a rose window is relatively unusual in English architecture of the Decorated period (c. 1270-1370), but reference may be made to the east window

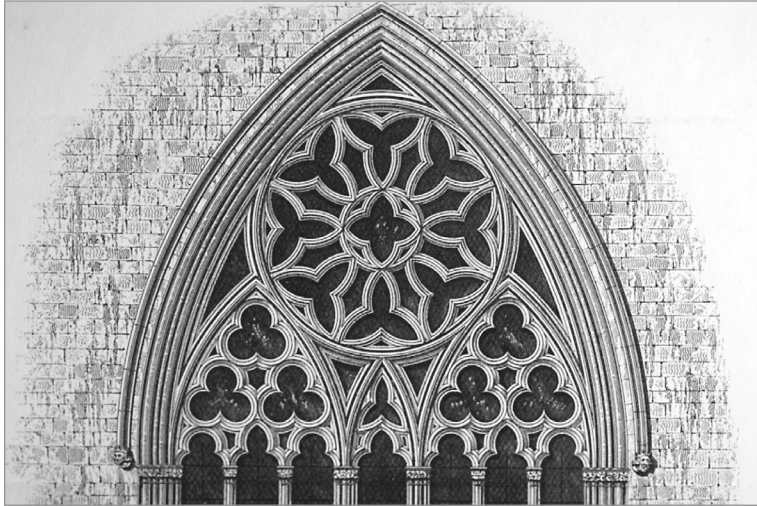


FIG. 24. GUISBOROUGH PRIORY, YORKSHIRE, EAST WINDOW. | SHARPE, 1849, *DECORATED WINDOWS*, PL. 17.

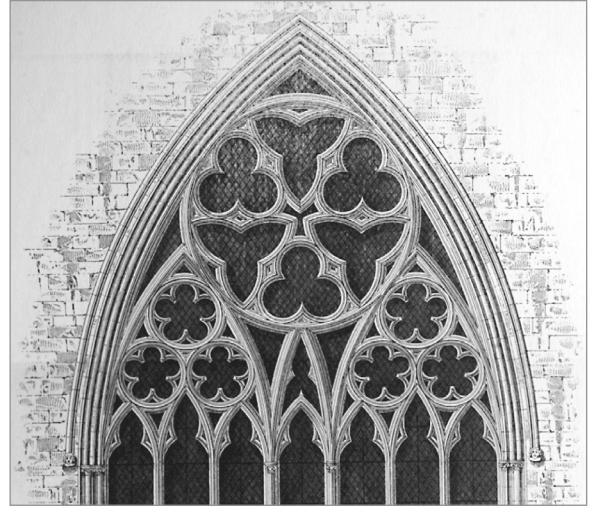


FIG. 25. RIPON CATHEDRAL, YORKSHIRE, EAST WINDOW. | SHARPE, 1849, *DECORATED WINDOWS*, PL. 16.

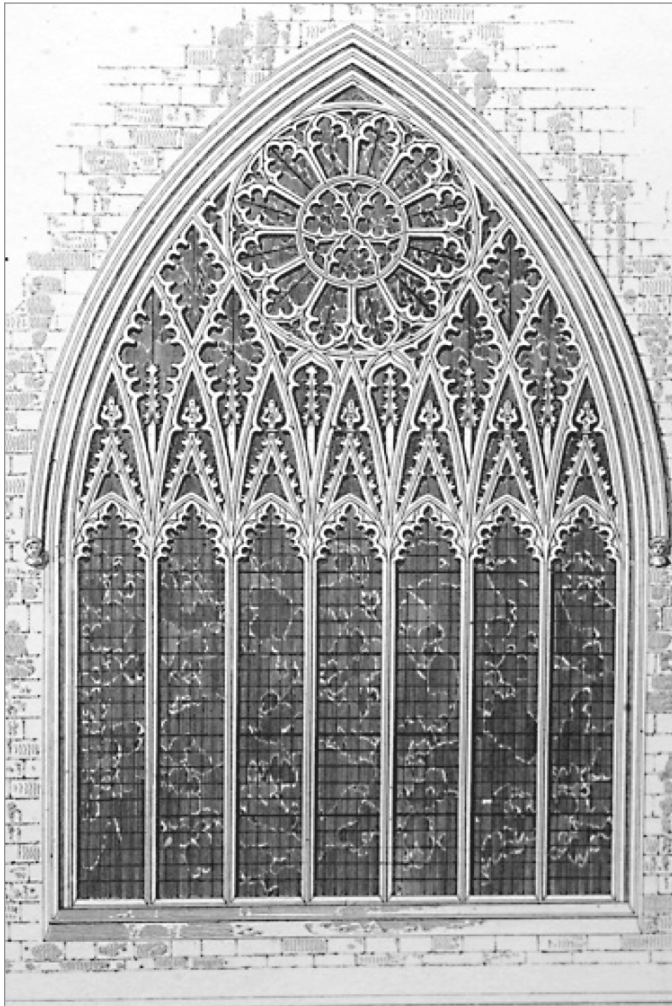


FIG. 26. OXFORD, MERTON COLLEGE CHAPEL, EAST WINDOW. | BRITON, *ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN*, VOL. V, PL. 73.

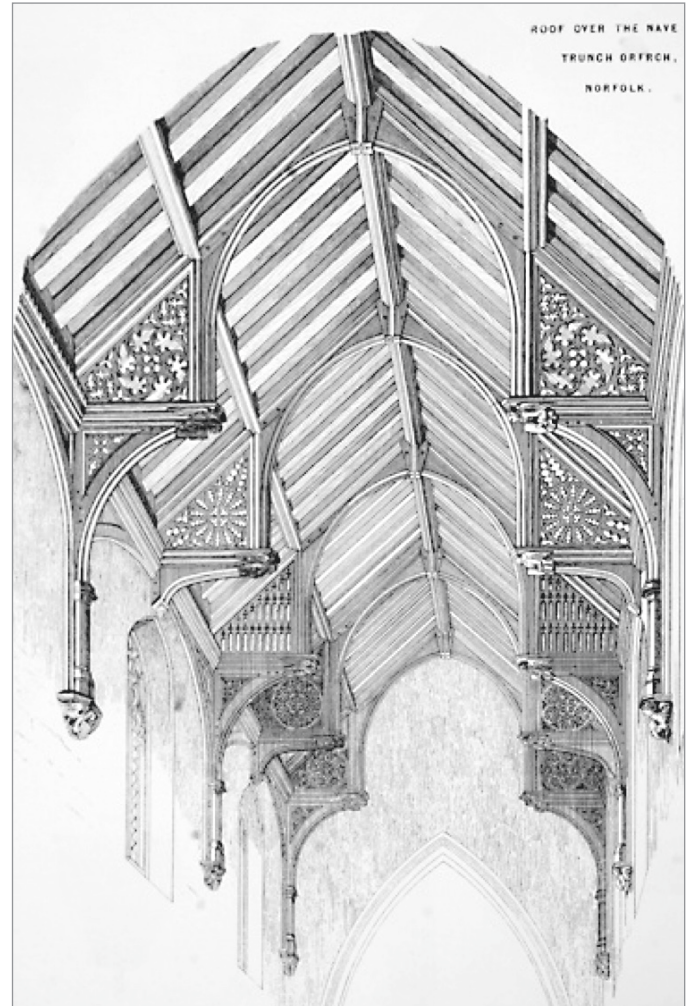


FIG. 27. NORFOLK, TRUNCH CHURCH, NAVE ROOF | BRANDON, *THE OPEN TIMBER ROOFS OF THE MIDDLE AGES*, PL. XIX.



FIG. 28. NORFOLK, WYMONDHAM CHURCH, NAVE ROOF. | RAPHAEL, *THE OPEN TIMBER ROOFS OF THE MIDDLE AGES*, PL. XX.

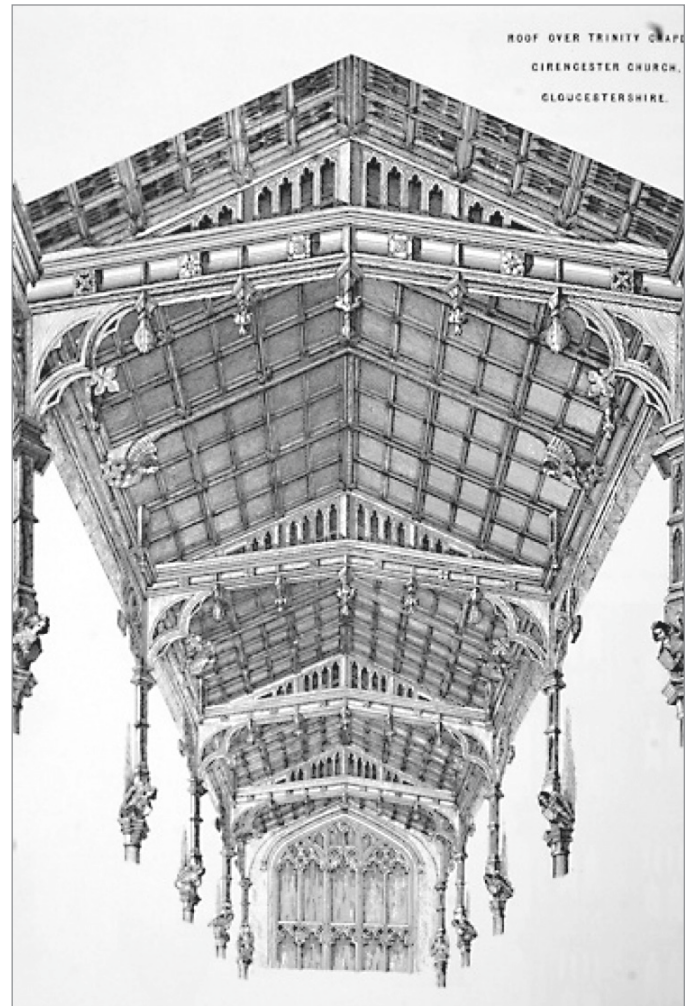


FIG. 29. GLOUCESTERSHIRE, TRINITY CHAPEL OF CIRENCESTER CHURCH, ROOF. | BRANDON, *THE OPEN TIMBER ROOFS OF THE MIDDLE AGES*, PL. XIII.

of Merton College Chapel, Oxford, illustrated in Britton's *Architectural Antiquities* (figs. 23 and 26).⁵¹ The east window oculus of Christ's Church may also be read as a reduced version of the south transept rose window at Westminster Abbey.

A precise model for Thomas' sanctuary roof could not be found, but the principles for its design are expounded in Raphael Brandon's 1849 book, *The Open Timber Roofs of the Middle Ages*.⁵² The use of tracery between the arched braces and the hammer beams, and above the

hammer beams, occurs in the hammer-beam roof over the nave of Trunch Church, Norfolk, (figs. 4 and 27), and the nave of Wymondham Abbey Church, also in Norfolk (figs. 4 and 28). The design of the nave roof is similarly adapted from English medieval models. The panels are enlarged versions of those of the roof over the Trinity Chapel of Cirencester Church, Gloucestershire, also illustrated by Brandon (fig. 29). Thomas also incorporates much larger roof bosses and introduces some figurative details such as the *Agnus Dei* at the junction of the ridge rib and the

major transversal between the eastern and second clerestory windows, a feature usually associated with stone vault bosses (fig. 30). A similar adaptation of medieval models explains the use of demi-angels carrying shields for the corbels next to the stiff-leaf capitals in the sanctuary (fig. 31).

Thomas' awareness of medieval design principles is evident in his use of richer detailing on the chancel arch than in the nave arcades so as to emphasize the importance of the entrance to the sanctuary. Specifically, the enrichment



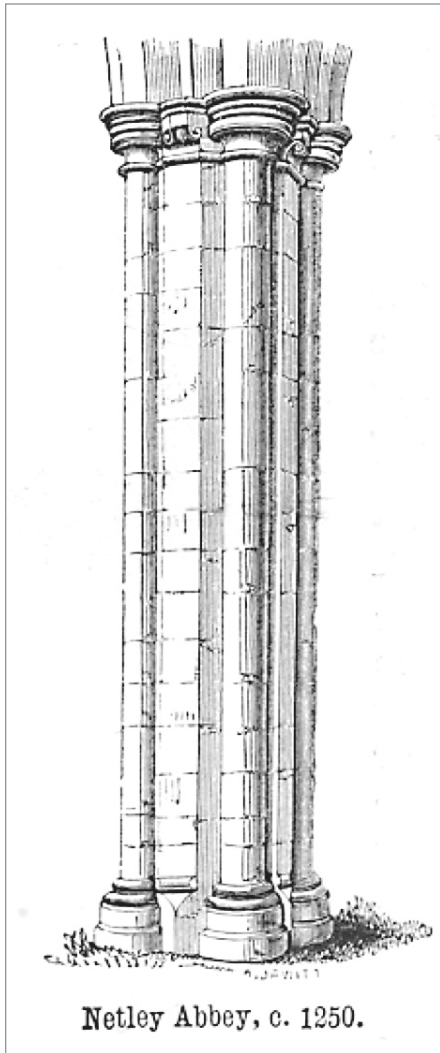
FIG. 30. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, NAVE ROOF BOSS. | MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 31. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, SANCTUARY NORTH WALL DETAIL. | MALCOLM THURLBY.



FIG. 32. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, CHANCEL ARCH, DETAIL, NORTH. | MALCOLM THURLBY.



Netley Abbey, c. 1250.

FIG. 33. HAMPSHIRE, NETLEY ABBEY, PIER. | RICKMAN, *ATTEMPT TO DISCRIMINATE THE STYLES OF ARCHITECTURE IN ENGLAND*, P. 100.

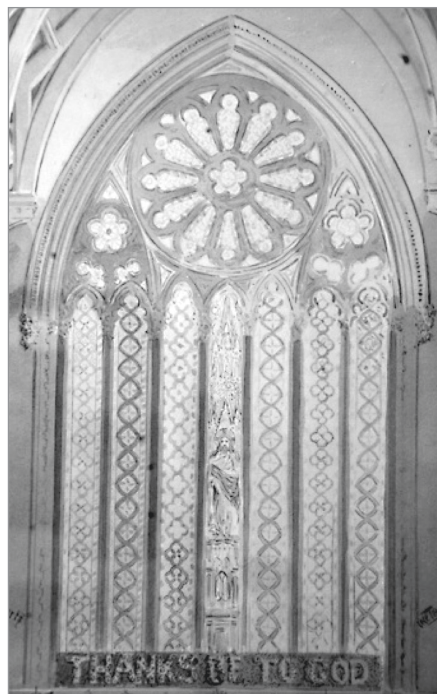


FIG. 35. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, DETAIL OF FORMER EAST WINDOW OF CHANCEL. | ARCHIVES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, HAMILTON. PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY.

of the chancel arch with stiff-leaf capitals, foliage between the shafts and the two orders of the arch, and the dog-tooth ornament on the hood is far more elaborate than the moulded capitals and absence of foliage and dog-tooth ornament in the nave arcades (figs. 3-4 and 32).

The design of the octagonal nave piers with shafts on the cardinal axes and moulded capitals is taken from Netley Abbey (1238), Hampshire, which was illustrated in the fifth (1848) edition of Thomas Rickman's popular and influential *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England* (figs. 3-4 and 33).

A precious survival from Thomas' chancel is the figure of Christ from the east window supplied by Messrs. Ballantine & Allan of Edinburgh, Scotland, and now



FIG. 34. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, CHRIST FROM FORMER EAST WINDOW OF CHANCEL BY MESSRS. BALLANTINE & ALLAN OF EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, NOW RESET AT THE EAST END OF THE SOUTH NAVE AISLE (1853). | MALCOLM THURLBY.

reset in the east wall of the south nave aisle (figs. 34-35). While the style of the figure owes nothing to English Decorated originals, the inclusion of stained glass speaks clearly of the desire to adopt medieval design principles in an Anglican church in Canada West.

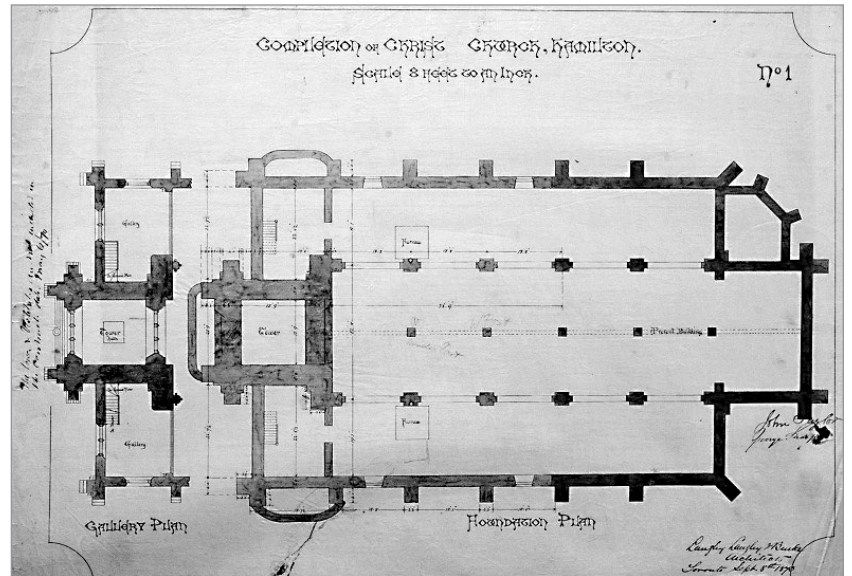


FIG. 36. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 1, THE FOUNDATION AND GALLERY PLAN. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

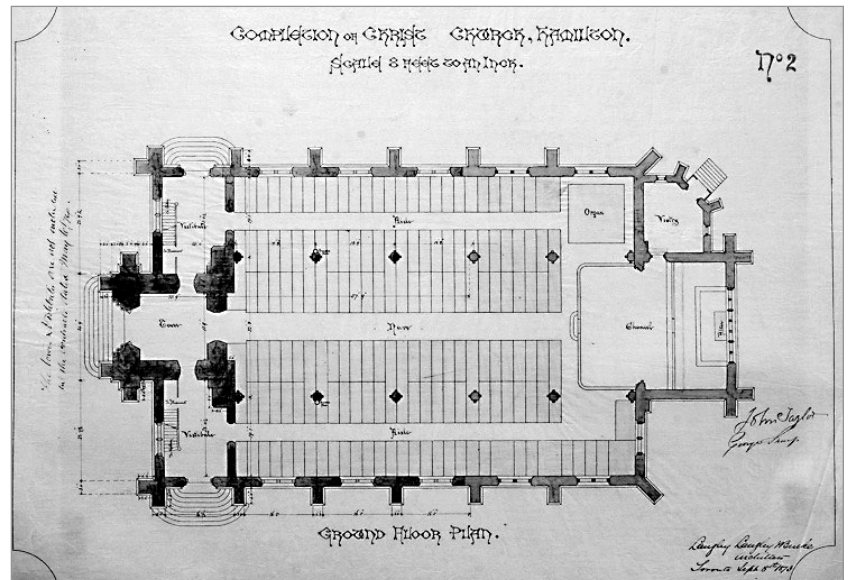


FIG. 37. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 2, GROUND FLOOR PLAN. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

THE 1873-1876 REMODELLING

At a Special Vestry Meeting held on July 4, 1873, a Building Committee was formed "to raise by way of Loan such funds as may be necessary over and above subscriptions and donations, for

the immediate completion of Christ [sic] Church."⁵³ A Letter from the Trust and Loan Company of Canada, July 2, offered the advance of \$10,000. As with the funding of the first Christ's Church, the Ladies were active on the fund-raising process. At the July 4 meeting, it was moved that

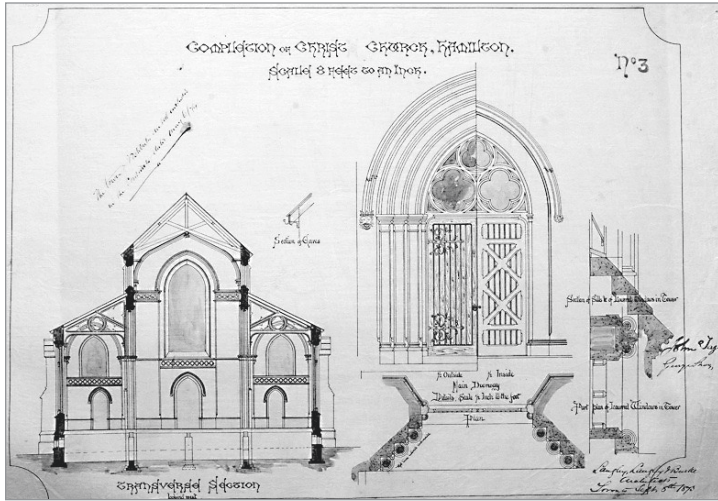


FIG. 38. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 3, TRANSVERSE SECTION AND PLAN AND ELEVATION OF WEST DOORWAY. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

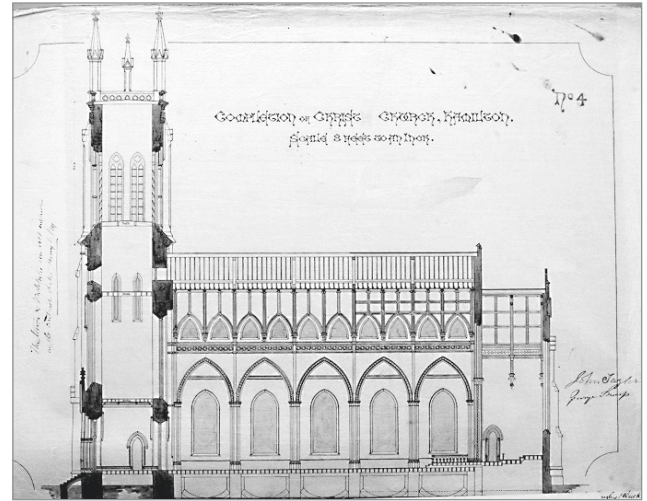


FIG. 41. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 4, LONGITUDINAL SECTION. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

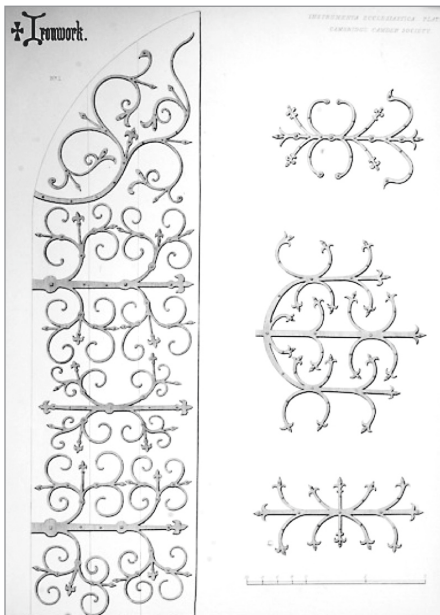


FIG. 39. INSTRUMENTA ECCLESIASTICA, 1847, IRONWORK, PL. XXI. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

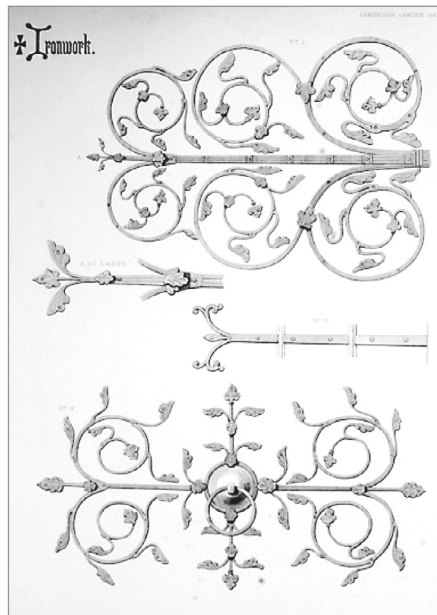


FIG. 40. INSTRUMENTA ECCLESIASTICA, 1847, IRONWORK, PL. XXII. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

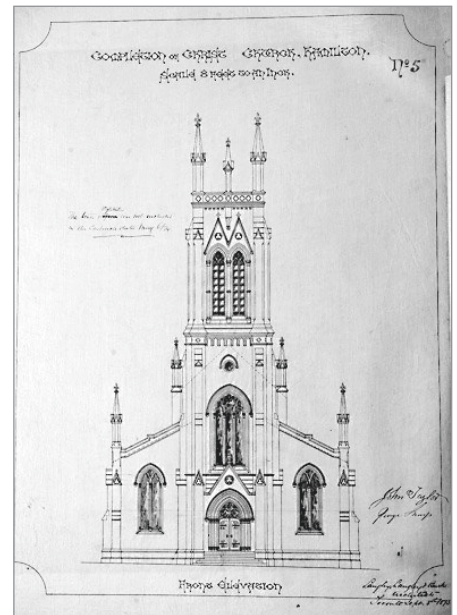


FIG. 42. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 5, FRONT ELEVATION. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

“the Ladies District Visiting Society be requested to resume their monthly canvas for subscriptions to the building fund from House to House in their respective Districts.” At the same meeting, it was “moved that “the Secretary be instructed to pay Mr. Leith, architect, the sum of \$50 being the balance due him for preparing

the plans of Christ [sic] Church, and that Mr. Langley of Toronto be employed as the architect to prepare plans and specifications, and also to superintend the work.” William Leith [1835-1880], a local architect in Hamilton, had been employed by Christ’s Church in 1869 to build a Sunday school addition to the

church.⁵⁴ In 1872 he was the architect for All Saints Anglican Church in Hamilton.⁵⁵

A meeting on September 8, 1873, was attended by Mr. Langley at which “the general plans were submitted by Mr. Langley, the architect, and were explained by him to the committee and

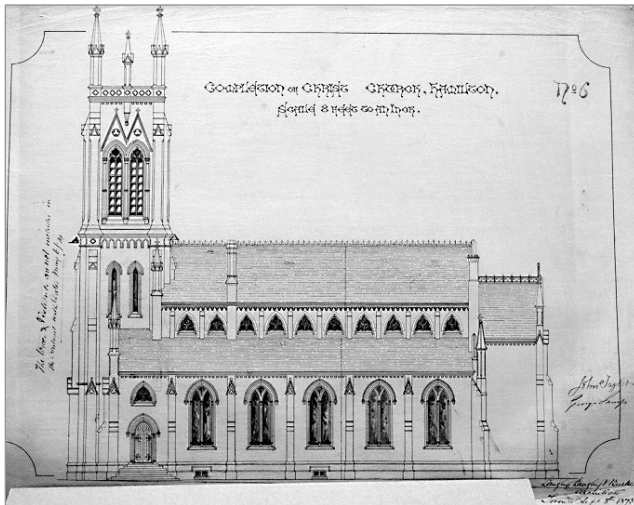


FIG. 43. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING NO. 6, SOUTH ELEVATION. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

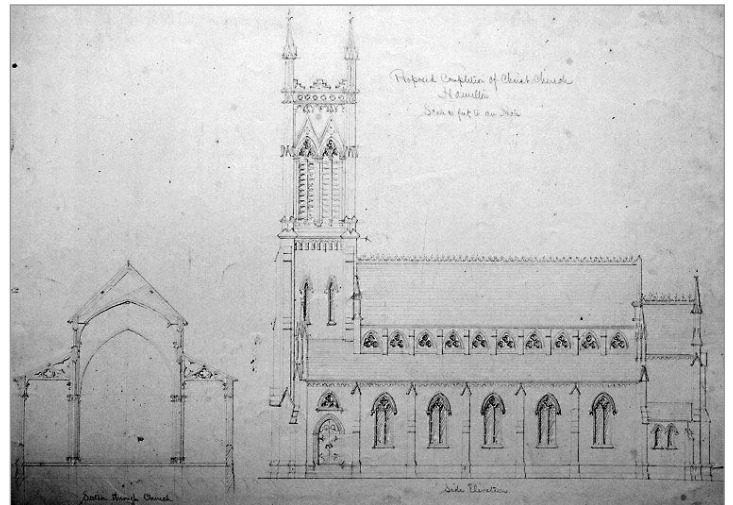


FIG. 44. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING, PROPOSED COMPLETION OF CHURCH, SOUTH ELEVATION AND CROSS SECTION. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

approved—after discussion the secretary was directed to advertise for tenders for the work to be open until noon on Saturday 20th September."⁵⁶

These plans are preserved in the Archives of Ontario.⁵⁷ Drawing no. 1 (Langley and Burke, Architects, September 8, 1873), foundation plan, shows the addition of three bays to the nave of Thomas' church and a central west tower and flanking vestibule with stairs to ground floor (fig. 36). There is a note written to the left of the tower and gallery plan: "The tower and Vestibule are not included in the contract dated May 6/74." This note is repeated on subsequent drawings. Drawing no. 2, ground floor, shows an entrance through the west tower and north and south entries up steps to the vestibules (fig. 37). Drawing no. 3 is a cross section looking west without any window tracery, along with the plan and exterior and interior half-elevation of the main west doorway with details of the ironwork on the door which follows the principles of the ironwork illustrated in *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica* (figs. 38-40).⁵⁸ Drawing no. 4 is a longitudinal section which shows that Thomas' design of the

existing two eastern bays is adopted for the extension (fig. 41). Drawing no. 5 shows the front elevation with a three-light tower window with moulded capitals, geometric bar tracery with side lights with cinquefoil cusps in the heads, a lower central light with trefoil head surmounted by a sexfoil (fig. 42). Drawing no. 6 illustrates the south elevation (fig. 43). An undated sketch provides a variant on the south elevation in which there are modifications to the top of the tower and the addition of a room to the south of the chancel (fig. 44). Another undated sketch illustrates a more elaborate design for a west tower with spire, which is crocketed in the upper part, and includes crockets and finials on the gables above the belfry openings (fig. 45).

At a Building Committee meeting held on October 9, 1873, "A letter from Mr. Langley was read." It proposed "reduction in the work with a view to reduce the cost." On February 26, 1874, another meeting was called to consider that Christ's Church should be erected in a more central location. At the subsequent March 9 meeting, a statement printed

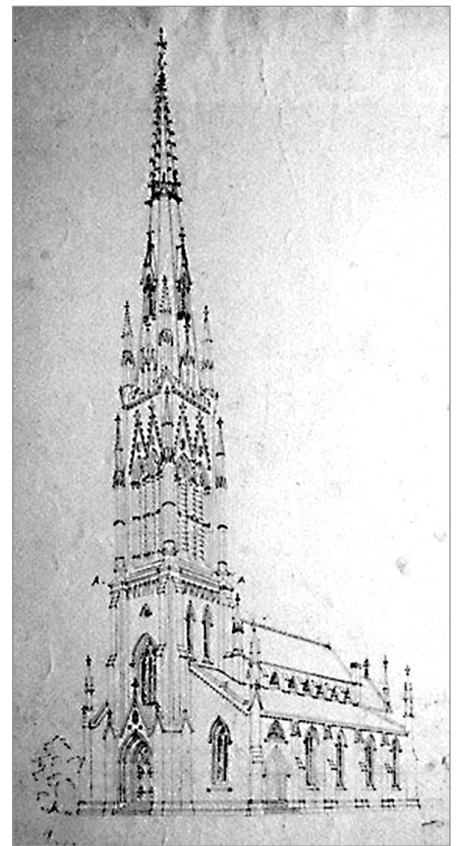


FIG. 45. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY SKETCH, EXTERIOR FROM SOUTHWEST. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

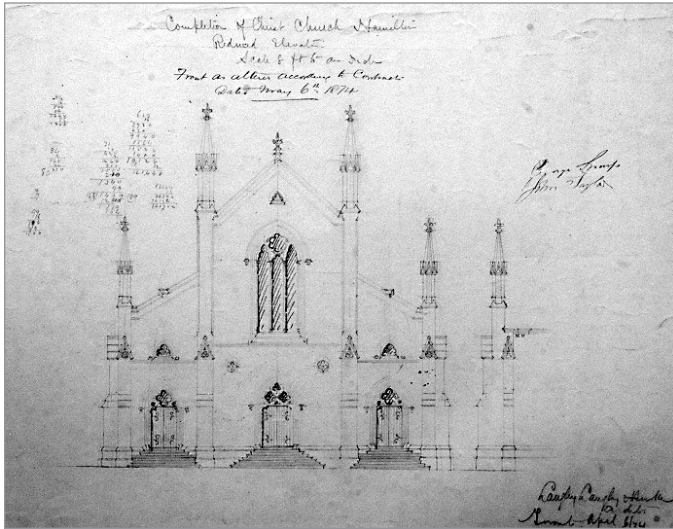


FIG. 46. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING, COMPLETION OF CHURCH. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

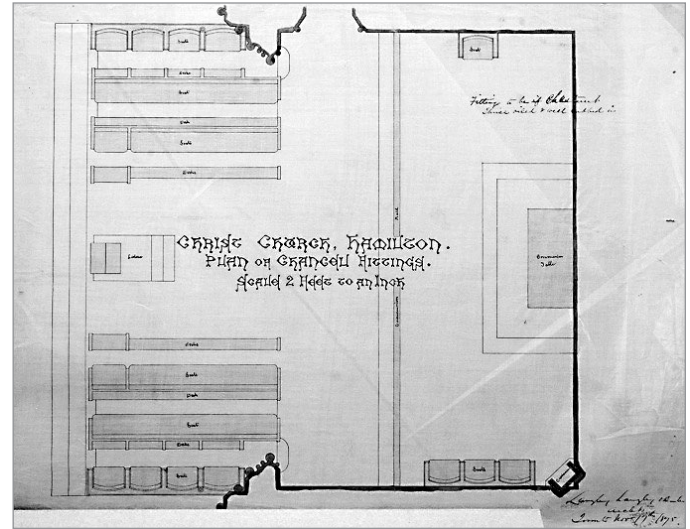


FIG. 48. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING, PLAN OF CHANCEL FITTINGS. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

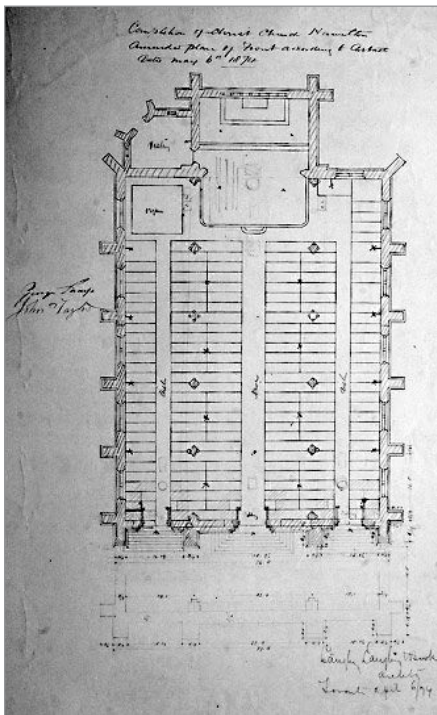


FIG. 47. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING, COMPLETION PLAN. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

March 2, 1874, was read; it discussed the probability that Christ's Church would become the new Diocesan Cathedral. Then, at its April 15 meeting, the Building Committee reported that the thorough canvas presented at the March 9 meeting to move the site was unsuccessful. It then was resolved to build the church on its present site.

A "Reduced Elevation" of the west front "altered according to Contract Dated May 6th, 1874," dated April 6, 1874, has removed the tower from the original design while the tracery and doorway details remained as originally proposed (fig. 46). This is also recorded in a revised plan (fig. 47). The minutes of the May 6, 1874, Building Committee Meeting, where Mr. Langley and Mr. Sharp the builder and Mr. Taylor the contractor were present, reported "Revised plans and specifications were submitted for the completion of the church together with the contract and tenders on the amended plan." Tenders were accepted from "Mr. John Taylor for mason work \$14,000," and "Mr. Geo. Sharp for carpentry etc. \$6000."⁵⁹

At the Building Committee meeting of April 1, 1875, Langley was present and was authorized to advertise for tenders, after having presented plans and tenders for lathing, plastering, painting and glazing, and for heating the church.

A drawing, dated November 17, 1875, shows the intended chancel fittings. The retention of Thomas' one-bay chancel means that the choir stalls are located in the eastern bay of the nave to the west of the chancel arch, an arrangement far from satisfactory for those who favoured ecclesiological correctness (fig. 48). However, it is worth noting that there is precedent for locating choir stalls in the eastern bays of the nave in English medieval cathedrals, for instance at Norwich Cathedral (1096-1147). The label "Communion Table" would also have incensed the Ecclesiologists as would the central placement of the pulpit between the flanking choir stalls, rather than to the north of the chancel arch with the lectern to the south. The sedilia are "correctly" located—three seats on the south side of the sanctuary for the officiating priest, deacon, and sub-deacon. Set on

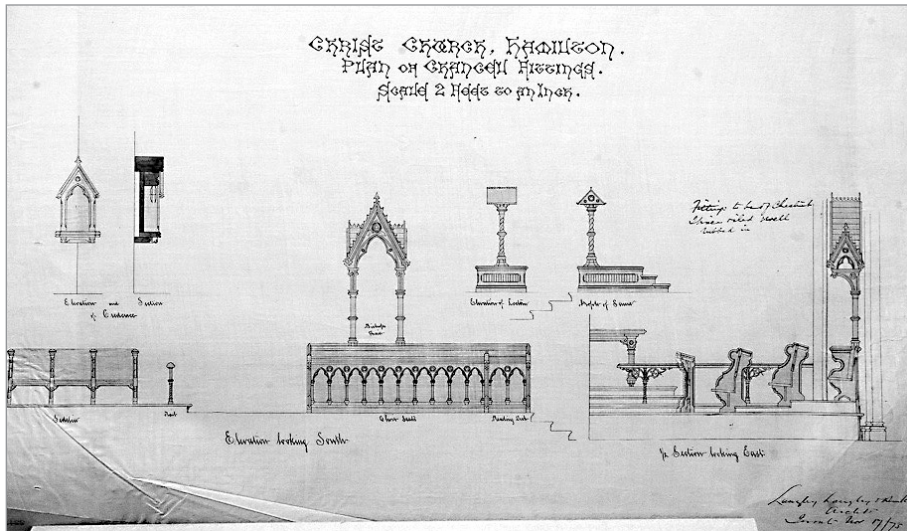


FIG. 49. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, LANGLEY DRAWING, PLAN OF CHANCEL FITTINGS. | ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO.

an angle in the southeast corner of the sanctuary is the credence niche to hold the elements of the Eucharist before they are consecrated. Against the north wall there is a seat for a visiting bishop or archbishop. Another drawing (fig. 49) of the same date shows details of the chancel fittings including the Bishop's chair with richly gabled canopy and reading desk at the west end of the south choir stalls. A note states that the fittings are "to be of chestnut thrice oiled well rubbed in." Attention to the detailing of the furnishings in Langley's design follows the principles of Augustus Welby Pugin and the Ecclesiologists. Similarly, the label stops on the doorways of the west front are a testament to Langley's appreciation of medieval Gothic architecture (fig. 50).

CONCLUSION

In 1876, Christ's Church was designated as the cathedral church of the new Anglican Diocese of Niagara. There can be little doubt that the congregation was pleased to have a completed stone building in which to worship, especially after the more than twenty years in

the "humpback church." However, the reduced design without the proposed west tower must have been a disappointment for the Anglicans.

The decade of the 1870s was one of ambitious church building in Ontario, often with intense denominational rivalries. The city of Hamilton is an excellent example of this trend.

The foundation stone of Zion Tabernacle Methodist Church, Pearl and Napier Streets, Hamilton, was laid on June 6, 1874.⁶⁰ The architect was Joseph Savage, who had been in partnership with Richard Cunningham Windeyer in Montreal from 1863 to 1865, and that alliance was recreated from 1873 to 1875, with Windeyer based in Toronto and Savage in Hamilton.⁶¹ In an article on "Church Architecture" in the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, it was stated of Zion Tabernacle that "The design . . . is the first of the kind, we believe, in the Dominion."⁶² The novelty is the amphitheatrical seating plan for 900 people in the sanctuary with an additional 400 seats in the gallery.⁶³ The

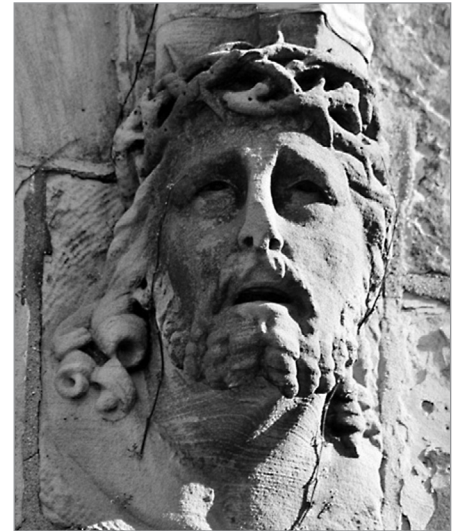


FIG. 50. HAMILTON, CHRIST'S CHURCH, WEST DOORWAY, SOUTH LABEL STOP. | MALCOLM THURLBY.

monumental red-brick edifice also boasts a twin-towered façade with spires that suggests cathedral-like associations.⁶⁴

On June 27, 1875, the foundation stone of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was laid. The architect was Toronto-based Joseph Connolly, who had trained in Dublin with James Joseph McCarthy, the "Irish Pugin."⁶⁵ Connolly's design called for a tower and spire on the liturgical southwest corner of the façade. The tower was effectively built, but not the spire.

Joseph Connolly was also the architect of James Street Baptist Church, which was erected between 1879 and 1882 and sadly demolished, except for the facade, in 2014.⁶⁶ As at St. Patrick's, Connolly proposed a liturgical southwest tower and spire for the James Street Church façade and, similarly, the spire was not constructed. Connolly's design was adapted from his cathedral-like Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Guelph (1876), which suggests that the James Street congregation had aspirations for a "Baptist cathedral" in the city.⁶⁷

It is difficult to gauge the reaction of the Anglicans of Christ's Church to such architectural rivals. While the great church associations of the Zion Tabernacle, twin towers, and spires might have been envied, the red brick would not have been appropriate for an Anglican cathedral. While red brick was popular for Anglican churches in England from 1850, and even made an early appearance just south of Hamilton in Frank Wills' church of St. Paul, Glanford,⁶⁸ there is no medieval precedent for their use in an English cathedral. And, much as the tower and intended spire of St. Patrick's might have appealed, the Irish medieval sources for the Roman Catholic church would have been entirely out of place in an Anglican cathedral. Sad as the Anglican may have been not to have the intended tower for their cathedral, it should be noted that the completed façade has been compared to that of Winchester Cathedral.⁶⁹

NOTES

1. I am indebted to The Venerable John Rathbone, Diocesan archivist, Anglican Diocese of Niagara, and to the staff of Hamilton Public Library, Mills Archives at McMaster University, and the Archives of Ontario, for their help with research for this paper. I am also most grateful to the ever-generous Stephen Otto for help with Robert Wetherell. Research funding was kindly provided by the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada.
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