During the summer of 1843, a starting new profile began to arise on the heights above the Cataraqui River to the east of Kingston. Built of local stone to the design of Alfred Varnell Brunel (1818-1887), a recent immigrant from England, St. Mark’s Anglican, Barriefield, transplanted a dramatic English style of historically-derived Gothic Revival church architecture to British North America.\(^2\) Brunel’s detailed two-page plan for the exterior and interior of St. Mark’s—for which the Building Committee paid him seven pounds ten shillings on September 18, 1843—combined a number of typical Georgian arrangements with more recent ones supported by the Church Building Commission (1818-1856), Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852), and the Cambridge Camden Society (1839-1868).\(^3\) Apart from the gallery, most of the work on “this new gothic edifice” was complete, according to the *Daily British Whig* of June 28, 1844 (fig. 1). This plan or a copy of it was also used for the construction of St. George’s Anglican Church in Port Trent, Trenton, in 1845. Like many other churches, St. Mark’s has witnessed a number of changes over the one hundred sixty-five years since it was built, including the addition of a large, Ecclesiological style chancel in 1897.\(^4\) However, with the help of the surviving architect’s plan, some written records, and aspects of the fabric of the building, one can reconstruct a reasonably accurate account of how it looked in 1843-1844 and of the contribution that Brunel made to the development of Gothic Revival styles of church architecture in nineteenth-century Canada (figs. 2-3).
While a number of excellent studies of Canadian Gothic Revival churches have appeared, the chronology and spread of different styles of this genre have only recently started to receive sufficient attention to allow firm generalizations. In *Hallowed Walls: Church Architecture of Upper Canada*, Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson brought forward a good deal of material and organized it into sensible categories, but their study dealt only briefly with the British sources of Canadian buildings. In *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, William Westfall noted that Gothic Revival became the almost universal style of Protestant church buildings in Ontario during the nineteenth century.² In two joint articles, William Westfall and Malcolm Thurlby have demonstrated how and where the Goths triumphed over the Classicists in the building of Anglican and Protestant churches; in addition Thurlby has published a number of valuable studies that record the arrival of Ecclesiological Gothic in Canada West and describe the spread of Gothic Revival styles among Protestant denominations in the province.³ Harold Kalman has examined the impact of English Ecclesiological ideology on the building of Gothic Revival churches in Canada, while Vicki Bennett and Peter Coffman have carried out detailed studies of this in the Ottawa region and in Newfoundland.⁴ One of the problems with these excellent studies, however, stems from their tendency to use the very partisan views of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists as a measure for evaluating all Gothic Revival churches.

Along with my own research into St. Mark’s and its context, the evidence presented in these studies suggests that several styles of Gothic Revival church architecture both coexisted and succeeded each other in Upper Canada and Canada West (1791-1867): (1) Georgian Gothic applied Gothic decorative details to Georgian auditory churches and began in Upper Canada in the early nineteenth century and continued well into the 1830s; (2) historically-derived Gothic built upon historical studies and illustrations of medieval churches (as mediated, in part, by the churches built with the support of the Church Building Commission) from the 1830s until into the 1850s and beyond; (3) historically-derived Gothic informed by Pugin and the Ecclesiologists commenced in the early 1840s and continued into the following decades; and (4) strictly Ecclesiological Gothic started in the early 1850s and became dominant in the 1860s until challenged by the Romanesque Revival.⁵ Individual churches, such as St. Mary Magdalen’s Anglican, Picton, St. Mark’s, Barriefield, and St. George’s Anglican, Trenton, while built in an earlier style, had Ecclesiological additions—especially lengthened chancels—added at a later date and now reflect at least two of these categories.

The earliest Gothic churches in British North America drew upon medieval motifs from different centuries as decoration, but did not display an especially informed knowledge of the stone churches constructed in Britain during the Middle Ages. For example, they did not attempt to reconstruct the stained-glass fenestration of medieval churches, but used clear windows with small square panes like their classical contemporaries, topped by a lovely intertwining of glazing bars to form pointed arches. Their interiors, with gated box or slip pews, classical pillars supporting galleries, a communion table, no separate chancel

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**FIG. 2.** BARRIEFIELD, ST. MARK’S, BRUNEL’S PLAN, ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ONTARIO ARCHIVES. PAUL CHRISTIANSON, 2007.

**FIG. 3.** BARRIEFIELD, ST. MARK’S, BRUNEL’S PLAN, ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ONTARIO ARCHIVES. PAUL CHRISTIANSON, 2007.
or a shallow one, and often the pulpit in the centre of the nave near the east end, mirrored the arrangements of many late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century parish churches in England.9 Examples from eastern Upper Canada include the stone St. James’s Anglican, Maitland (1826), the brick St. Mary Magdalen’s Anglican, Picton (1834), and the stone Apostolic Catholic (Irvingite) Church, Kingston (1837) (figs. 4-6). For the most part, these dressed the proportions of Georgian classical churches with pointed windows and other Gothic details. Historically informed reconstruction had not yet begun in earnest in British North America.

A more historically-derived approach reached a wide audience, however, with the publication in 1817 of Thomas Rickman’s, An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture. On the basis of multiple criteria, Rickman divided English medieval church architecture into a series of styles, which he termed Norman, Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular, and included an extensive list of churches that illustrated his interpretation. Rickman also put his learning into use by designing Gothic Revival churches (some Early English and others Decorated or Perpendicular) for a variety of patrons, including the Church Building Commission.10 His historical studies and such contemporary works as Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture Elucidated by Question and Answer, first published in 1829, fed back into the designs of Gothic Revival churches, initially in Britain and then in the Empire.11 Even the early editions of Rickman and Bloxam contained a number of illustrations that could help architects with details, while the excellent plates of such antiquarian collections as those of John Britton provided detailed plates of surviving medieval buildings.12 These sources, plus sophisticated surveys of remaining medieval buildings, made possible a more historically-derived style of Gothic Revival churches that paid more attention both to the overall spatial arrangements of medieval churches and to the details of their furnishings, fenestration, and mouldings.

The revival of Gothic church architecture in England commenced in earnest with the building of hundreds of Anglican churches throughout much of England from 1818 onward, many supported by funds from parliamentary grants administered by the Church Building Commission. Of the ninety-seven churches built between 1818 and 1829 with the aid of these funds, some thirty-three were Classical versus sixty-four Gothic in style.13 From 1827 to 1856, over five hundred additional churches, overwhelmingly Gothic Revival in style, were built with the aid of funds granted by a second Parliamentary grant.14 The Commissioners who approved all of these designs favoured a number of internal arrangements. These included a shallow chancel, “elevated by three steps,” in the east end; an altar and panels printing the Lord’s Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Apostles Creed located in the chancel; slip pews of “a uniform low height,” facing east (except in galleries), which allowed worshipers to view the altar and texts; and a central aisle or aisles (sometimes containing smaller free pews for the poor).15 Disapproving of the ubiquitous central three-decker pulpit, reading desk, and clerk’s desk “because it blocked the view of the altar,” the Commissioners “insisted on separating the reading-desk [for reading the liturgy] and the pulpit, and placing one on each side of the nave” just in front of the chancel.16 They also supported the placement of the baptismal font at the west end, near the entrance, and the construction of galleries as a means of economically using the space, the latter hardly a medieval
arrangement! As with the early work of Pugin, churches built with the support of the Commissioners were erected in a variety of Gothic styles (rarely, but sometimes in the same building), including the Perpendicular, later attacked by the Ecclesiologists. The unprecedented building of over six hundred Commissioners’ churches in less than half a century helped to train a new generation of architects, builders, and craftsmen in the complexities of designing and assembling increasingly historically-derived Gothic Revival structures. Some of these skilled men sought their fortunes in British North America.

The early historic styles of Gothic Revival favoured by the Church Building Commissioners appeared in such Canadian churches as the stone St. John’s Anglican, Peterborough (1837), by William Coverdale of Kingston, flaunting a lofty tower with battlements, striking pinnacles, and Perpendicular windows (all illustrated in early drawings of St. John’s), and various churches by such architects as John George Howard and Henry Bowyer Joseph Lane, who worked out of Toronto\(^1\) (fig. 7). Howard’s Christ Church Anglican, Tyendinaga, started in 1843 under the supervision of George Browne, created a stunning, stone example of early Commissioners’ Gothic, featuring a central aisle, a separate, shallow chancel, a pulpit and a reading desk on the north and south sides of the chancel, relatively shallow buttresses that reached from the ground to the roofline along the sides, a relatively low-pitched roof, a very high steeple, and pointed windows divided by a “Y” frame into double lancets, with exterior drip rails (a feature on most of Howard’s churches) (fig. 8). Lane’s “Little” Trinity Anglican, Toronto (1843), employed lovely red brick, with stone and “white” brick trim to create a warm Tudor style Perpendicular church with a lofty tower, wide windows with exterior drip rails, a flat east wall, a communion table, a separated pulpit and reading desk on either side of the chancel area, and a plain, plaster interior\(^2\) (fig. 9). These churches not only reflected contemporary English trends, they also helped to buttress feelings of continuity by transplanting the shapes of medieval and Tudor England to the towns and countryside of British North America.

It has become customary for scholars of Gothic Revival churches to trace the “revival” of “correct” Gothic church architecture to the works of Augustus Welby Pugin, the Ecclesiologists, and the Oxford Movement.\(^3\) These men made important contributions, but it took some time before these became dominant either in Britain or in the British North America. The direct impact of Ecclesiological ideas started in New Brunswick as early as 1846, with St. Anne’s Anglican Chapel, Fredericton (fig. 10). This richly decorated stone church and the early portions of the stunning Christ Church Anglican Cathedral, Fredericton, were designed by the English architect Frank Wills under the patronage of another recent English immigrant, John Medley, the first bishop of New Brunswick, whose *Elementary Remarks on Church Architecture* (Exeter, 1841) showed a strong and educated interest in architecture.\(^4\) Wills later introduced a pure Ecclesiological style to Canada West with St. Paul’s Anglican, Glanford (ca. 1851), and especially St. Peter’s Anglican, Barton (1852), which was modeled on the medieval St. Michael’s, Long Stanton, Cambridgeshire.\(^5\) These pioneering efforts received considerable support from the arrival of William Hay, first as clerk of works supervising the construction of the nave of George Gilbert Scott’s design for the splendid Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in St. John’s, Newfoundland—under the
patronage of Bishop Edward Feild—and later as an architect in Toronto. As early as 1853, Hay published a glowing but critical article on the contribution of Pugin to the revival of Christian church architecture; a second, anonymous article on church architecture followed in 1854; and a third on the type of church architecture appropriate for the climate of Canada appeared in 1856. By then, Hay had designed St. Michael’s College with the attached St. Basil’s Catholic, Toronto (1856), in an Ecclesiological style. During his ten-year sojourn in Canada West, he would design numerous churches, including the Anglican St. George’s, Pickering, St. George’s, Newcastle, and St. Luke’s, Vienna. This lay more than a decade in the future, however, when Alfred Varnell Brunel drew his plans for St. Mark’s.

In Barriefield, no parish existed, no nurturing bishop lived nearby. Anglican settlers in Pittsburgh Township attended services either at the Naval Dockyard Chapel or at St. George’s in Kingston. However, the reduction of the Naval Dockyard (including the removal of the position of naval chaplain) combined with increased settlement in the 1830s, the lack of space at St. George’s to hold all who wished to worship there, and the perceived need for an more visible Anglican presence led a committee of dedicated laymen to bring into existence both the church and the parish of St. Mark’s. Although the Building Committee probably had discussions with the architect over the general nature of the design (a stone Gothic church of specified dimensions and seating capacity, the inclusion of a lofty tower, and space for an organ and choir) and perhaps some of its details (the construction of a three-tiered pulpit, reading desk, and clerk’s desk, or the eastern location of the font), they left no trace in the records of the Building Committee. Members of the Building Committee may very well have held strong views on the nature of Anglican worship. Still, much of the responsibility for the plan of St. Mark’s must have rested in the hands of the young English architect.

Since considerable discussion about the revival of medieval church architecture had taken place before Brunel left England, as seen in the books of Thomas Rickman, Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, and John Britton published from 1817-1841, the first publications of the Cambridge Camden Society, the second edition of Pugin’s Contrasts, and the first edition of his True Principles—all from 1841—Brunel had some opportunity to absorb these messages before he arrived in Upper Canada. He probably also had examined some of the churches built in England with the support of the Church Building Commissioners in the 1820s and 1830s, and medieval churches, as well. Like other English architects, Brunel accepted aspects of these works, while ignoring or rejecting others. The exterior of St. Mark’s reflected in stone a late medieval shape probably mediated through, but not entirely copying the profile of three brick Commissioners’ churches: St. Paul’s, Balls Pond Road, Islington (1826-1828), St. John’s, Waltham Green, Fulham (1827-1828), and St. Paul’s, Cambridge (1840-1841) (fig. 11). From these models, Brunel took a strongly buttressed, tall tower without a steeple. However, he cut the number of bays in the nave to three per side, beefed up the side buttresses, and increased the slope of the roof, all moves that reflected the strictures of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists. Drawing upon traditional and more
recent trends of design, Brunel produced a Gothic Revival church of considerable charm and integrity.

The stone exterior of St. Mark’s has several striking features. The fabric consists of lightly dressed smaller stones; larger stones are scattered in the walls for emphasis, placed on surfaces over which water would flow in the buttresses, and used (in irregular sizes) for the jambs of the windows and the door (fig. 12). The lower stages of the tower have similar surfaces, but the top stage has few large stones, in part probably for visual purposes. In contrast to the fabric of the walls and lower stages of the tower, the narrow bands of stone employed for horizontal emphasis used similar sized stones of the same width. Unfortunately, recent repairs to portions of the tower—especially the south face—have used rectangular stones of a uniform size, which contrast with the early masonry. In 1841, Pugin noted that “in the ancient masonry,” the “smallness of the stones employed” added “considerably to the effect of the building by increasing its apparent scale. Large stones destroy proportion,” a point he illustrated with “two representations of the same piece of architecture differently joined” (fig. 13). He also stressed that the stones used in ancient buildings were not only “exceedingly small, but they are also very irregular in size,” so “that the jointing might not appear a regular feature, and by its lines interfere with those of the building.” 28 Although the drawings in the plan did not fill in the nature of the stonework in detail, the masons followed Pugin’s principles 29 (fig. 14). As a result, the walls of St. Mark’s contrasted sharply with the large and uniform ashlar masonry of the classical St. George’s, the only Anglican Church in Kingston in 1843.

The tall tower of St. Mark’s stands at the west end, set with one-third of its depth within the body of the church, an unusual configuration, probably derived—along with its heavy buttresses set at forty-five-degree angles to the walls—from St. Paul’s, Islington, or a similar Commissioners’ church. The north and south walls have four sturdy buttresses at right angles to the walls, reaching up to the top of the windows, and even more substantial buttresses running up to the roof at forty-five degrees to the walls in the corners (fig. 15). The wall and corner
buttresses have the solidity and shape of those at St. Michael’s, Long Stanton, Cambridgeshire, the iconic model that the Cambridge Camden Society advocated for colonial churches. The side walls of St. Mark’s each contain three windows set into deeply cut, bevelled surrounds and with wooden frames with “Y” tracery that subdivides the space into two lancets, with a quatrefoil in the shape of Latin cross between their peaks. These follow an Early English pattern, but lack authenticity by being too broad for their height. Horizontal bands of narrow, more finished stone run along the base of the sills and above the peak of the keystones of the side windows and continue around the west elevation, while the lower band was drawn as continuing around the eastern exterior of the nave and around the chancel. As on the tower, these horizontal bands of stone protrude from the wall enough to catch light and create shadows, so that they are clearly visible.

Overall, St. Mark’s displays that higher proportion of wall to window advocated by the Ecclesiologists and a lovely balance between the verticality of the tower, buttresses, and windows, and the horizontal emphasis of the narrow bands of finished stone and the roofline. In Brunel’s plan, the chancel extended approximately five feet beyond the east end of the main structure—much too shallow for the Ecclesiologists, who advocated a chancel one-third the length of the nave—and the fairly high pitched roof measured nearly as high (sixteen feet) as the lowest point on the south wall (eighteen feet), with the tower extending even higher (twenty feet) above the crest of the roof. As built, the roof was five feet higher, but because St. Mark’s was not built on level land, the foundations of the sides at the west end and of the tower also have a greater height than drawn by the architect, so the proportions remain similar. The roofline of St. Mark’s answered some of the criticisms of the Ecclesiologists and Pugin without becoming as exaggerated as those on later Ecclesiologist churches.

The west front has a central tower protruding westward flanked by the west end of the nave which features lancets set between the narrow bands of finished stone and with blind quatrefoils above. The smooth band of stone and octangular caps drawn as finishing the west and east walls were either not built or no longer remained by ca. 1875, the date of the first known photograph of the exterior. An east elevation was not included in Brunel’s plan, but can be reconstructed from it. It consisted of the east wall of the nave, with buttresses reaching from the ground to the roof at a forty-five-degree angle to the walls, and a narrower and shorter extension for the chancel. The latter was shown as about half the width and three-quarters of the height of the nave (five feet deep by seventeen feet wide by twenty-eight feet high), and as containing a graduated triplet high on the east wall: a wider central window with a wooden frame with “Y” tracery that subdivides it into double lancets with a quatrefoil between the peaks, flanked by two shorter lancets, each set in a bevelled stone surround. All of the windows were depicted as glazed with coloured glass on the plan. The chancel extension did not have buttresses on the corners like the nave and tower. The windows in the extended chancel of St. George’s, Trenton, still retain the shape of the original fenestration and provide a good idea of how the original east wall of the chancel at St. Mark’s must have looked.

The tower was built in two stages, the top just slightly smaller than the much longer base, but it appears to be divided into four (or five) stages by horizontal courses of slim, slightly protruding stone on all of the visible sides (fig. 17). However, it also has verticality built into the design both by the increasing narrowness of the buttresses with height and by indenting the central faces of the top two stages by two inches, creating a two-foot wide strip pilaster-like effect (fig. 18). The balance between horizontal and vertical features appears strongly on the west face of the tower which combines horizontal narrow bands of stone that separate the stages with increasingly narrower openings from bottom to top, consisting of: (1) the oak door of the entrance, (2) an Early English window divided by a “Y” frame into two lancets (similar to those on the sides of the nave), (3) a lancet window flanked by two shorter blind lancets that reflects the graduated triplets of the east end, placed on a further indented plane, and (4) a lancet-like, wooden louvered bell opening (on all four sides). On the north and south sides, the tower has narrower lancets at the same level as the windows on the west, north, and south sides of the nave. In the drawing, two narrow bands of finished stone marked the upper edge of the tower; these appear, as well, in photographs from 1875 and ca. 1895; since then, the top band has either decayed or was covered by the roofing material (fig. 19). Rather than stone pinnacles, four square bases supporting elongated pyramids topped by spheres crown the upper corners of the tower, a more Renaissance rather than medieval detail.

The substantial buttresses at forty-five-degree angles to the front corners of the tower have three stages, marked by a narrowing of depth, but one of these did not match the stages marked by the horizontal stone bands. Even so, the buttresses at the corners of the walls and tower add a perception of strength, weight, breadth, and verticality to the composition of the whole. Brunel fashioned a very plain exterior style for St. Mark’s, with minimal
non-structural ornamentation, perhaps in an attempt to keep costs within the tight budget of the Building Committee or perhaps out of a sense that this would be appropriate in a structure that recreated a style from the old world in the new. With its dramatic tower, smaller stonework of mixed sizes, variations on Early English windows, and sturdy buttresses, the exterior of St. Mark's, Barriefield, came closer to medieval models than any of its Gothic Revival predecessors or exact contemporaries in Canada West.

The interior proposed by Brunel contained many medieval elements, some of which we know were built. Instead of the peaked or rounded plaster ceilings featured in most contemporary Gothic Revival churches in British North America, it was drawn with and has a hammer-beam roof. Hammer beams extend from the walls supported by curved braces resting on corbels below with supporting beams at a right angle and curved braces that come together at the middle of the ceiling and a hidden supporting cross beam above (fig. 20). As the Gothic Revival gained support and became even more historically derived, such roofs would be exposed up to the rafters, but at St. Mark's (and originally at St. George's Trenton) the spaces between the beams at the sides and above the cross beam at the top were enclosed with lathe and plaster. The main interior space is over fifty-eight feet long, nearly thirty-two feet wide, and about thirty feet high. Hidden by plaster, the internal peak of the roof stands five feet higher. The soaring beams and ceiling help to define a more medieval worship space than ever seen in British North America, while aspects of the interior layout and decoration help to enhance that impression.

According to the plan, everyone entered through the west door into a vestibule in the interior of the tower, with stairs to the left and right leading to the gallery and a door straight ahead leading into the nave. As built, a staircase on the north side led to the gallery, while that space on the south side was enclosed for a vestry. Under the gallery, Brunel drew five rows of free seats on either side, and continued down the aisles with twelve rows per side of long, conventionally panelled, rented slip pews facing east, sixteen rows short free pews for those less prosperous in the centre of the aisle, and two pews facing west on the south side just to the west of the chancel. He calculated that the rental pews would seat two hundred fifty people in the nave, with free seating for two hundred on the ground floor, and an additional one hundred fifty seats (some probably for the choir) in the gallery, where he also drew an organ (fig. 21). Since Anglican churches in the nineteenth century often received the bulk of their income from pew rents, it would have been unusual to have such a high proportion of rent-free seating.

The combination of longer rental pews at the side, shorter free seating in the centre, and two aisles was vividly drawn in the floor plan and shown in the “transverse section looking towards the gallery.” The westward facing pews nearest the chancel on the south side probably were included to provide seating for the clergy and clerk, or perhaps one pew for the clergy and clerk and another for the church wardens (fig. 22). The plan did not include seating in the chancel. The placement of free pews in the midst of the aisle sought to overcome the objection of many clergy (including the Ecclesiologists) that the poor received highly inferior seating in churches with rented pews. The architect’s plan for seating was not followed, however. On March 11, 1844, the Building Committee decided to “contract for the erection of the pews, according to the plan
and specifications drawn by Mr. Hunt instead. An article on the new chancel in the Daily British Whig of December 20, 1897, reported that St. Mark’s originally had “old square pews, with high sides.” And an account from July 7, 1844, listed forty-nine pews, with thirty-nine rented, plus one for the clergy, one for officers, two for seamen (all on the ground floor), and six in the gallery, “presumably for the choir and ‘free sittings.’” The high proportion of free pews drawn by the architect was rejected.

Just west of the chancel on the north side, Brunel drew a wooden structure to house, from shortest to highest, a desk for the clerk to read the replies of the people in the liturgy, a desk for the incumbent to read his portion of the liturgy (including appropriate scripture passages and prayers), and a pulpit (fig. 23). A three-decker pulpit was very common in Georgian English Anglican churches, but Brunel proposed to move it from a central location in front of the chancel, over to one side, to answer the objections of those, including the Ecclesiologists, who saw central pulpits as detracting from the altar and giving too high a place to preaching. The tops of the pulpit and reading desk were shown as covered with overhanging blue cloth and the pulpit with a sounding board above to help to project the preacher’s message out to the congregation. Brunel drew the pulpit with an octagon shape and adorned the whole ensemble with two tiers of blind trefoil arches, an early Decorated motif. However, according to a later article in the Daily British Whig, the “reading desk and pulpit” originally were “two story ‘high deckers’” probably on either side of the nave just west of the chancel, a more normal early nineteenth-century arrangement.

A large stone octagonal baptismal font, decorated on the faces of the shaft with incised quatrefoils, was drawn as located just west of the chancel and slightly north of centre. The form was Decorated Gothic, as favoured by the Ecclesiologists who strongly recommended large, stone fonts, but the location was closer to the late eighteenth-century preference for baptisms at the east end of churches than to that of the Church Building Commissioners, Augustus Welby Pugin, and the Ecclesiologists for the font to be located near the entrance. A large stone octagonal font was purchased for St. Mark’s, but not until 1857; while its decoration varied from that portrayed in the plan, it used motifs consistent with the original interior design.

Brunel proposed a raised chancel with internal dimensions that extended five feet beyond the main body of the church and also projected into it by five feet, creating an open space about ten feet deep by fifteen feet wide by twenty-four feet high, flanked by spaces at either side measuring eight feet wide by five feet deep behind wooden screens (fig. 24). He drew the easternmost set of hammer beams with pierced wooden quatrefoil
decorations in the lower curved braces and pierced decorated arches in the upper, presumably to mark the special sacred space of the chancel. The chancel was shown as raised three steps above the floor of the nave (the Ecclesiologists recommended “at least two steps”), with a central entrance three feet wide, flanked at the top by sturdy posts supporting two foot high communion rails that extended another six feet on either side, followed by two wooden screens seven feet high by eight feet wide that extended to the side walls. The lower portion of the screens was shown as decorated with one or two rows of eleven blind trefoil arches, topped by an upper row of open trefoil arches backed by a blue fabric. The benches or wardrobes sketched in the space enclosed by the screen on the south side may have indicated that it was to serve as a vestry or a sacristy, for the storing of the bread, wine, and vessels for communion, vestments, and robes and for the robing and unrobing of the clergy. On the whole, Brunel took care to separate the chancel visually as well as physically from the nave, something strongly advocated by both Pugin and the Ecclesiologists and rarely seen in early churches in British North America.

At the eastern end of the chancel, directly below the tripartite windows, Brunel placed a stone altar that measured three feet high by six feet wide by nearly three feet deep, covered by a white cloth that draped to within six inches of the floor (fig. 25). Since communion tables, mandated by the Injunctions of 1559, were still common in Anglican churches both in England and in British North America, this would have marked a significant change. Only a few stone altars had replaced communion tables or wooden altars in England before 1843, and the attempt to do so by the Ecclesiologists at the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge in 1843, set off a ferocious dispute. In 1841, John Mason Neale recommended a stone altar “desirable” and “a solid mass of masonry about six feet by four in size, and about four feet in height,” as “the most suitable form” to “be raised on one, two, or three flights of three steps each.” The stone altar portrayed by Brunel was not dressed with candlesticks and candles, something disappointing to the Ecclesiologists. It seems highly unlikely that a stone altar was erected in St. Mark’s.

Behind the proposed altar, Brunel drew a wooden reredos (twelve feet high by ten feet wide) with three pointed panels containing the texts of the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostle’s Creed. “Most Anglican altar-pieces erected during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of which have survived, provided handsome frameworks for the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord’s Prayer.” In Kingston, a photograph of the chancel of St. George’s Anglican Cathedral taken before 1890 showed plaques with the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer and Creed on the wall on either side of the east window. Plaques displaying these texts had been strongly attacked by Pugin as inappropriate Protestant intrusions into sacred space, but had received some support from the Ecclesiologists.

Brunel’s drawings for St. Mark’s would have marked a significant shift in the internal design of an Anglican church for contemporaries. With its hammer-beam
ceiling, its elevated, railed, and deeper than normal chancel, its Decorated Gothic wooden pulpit, reading desk, clerk’s desk, rails, screens, and reredos, its stone altar and font, and its stained-glass windows on the east and west ends, the plan for St. Mark’s projected the most significant Gothic Revival interior from the early 1840s in Canada West. Unless an early picture turns up, it will be difficult to know precisely how much of the plan was constructed. The gallery pews and hammer-beam ceiling still exist, but archival evidence attests to the original construction of box, rather than slip pews. The projection of the original chancel into the nave was probably built and accounts for the line of boards in the floor four feet west of the present chancel. This means that such important portions of Brunel’s plan as the hammer-beam ceiling, the extended chancel, and perhaps the reredos were built, but the Building Committee did not accept all of his advice.

Archival evidence also suggests that a number of changes to the plan were made during or shortly after construction. The purchase of a stone baptismal font was postponed for over a decade, indicating that it was not a high priority for the Building Committee. Yet, on January 8, 1844, the Building Committee did decide to add a vestry at the rear of the nave, paying the carpenters, Houston and Lannin, seven pounds ten shillings to build a room on each side of the vestibule with “four Gothic doors with frames, Half Beads, locks and Hinges, all complete to correspond with the other doors of the church.”59 This decision created the still existing room on the southwest side, with its entrances into the nave and the vestibule, the door from the vestibule to the stairs to the gallery, and the door from the nave to the vault. Had the screens drawn by Brunel for the chancel been built, the need for this vestry may not have seemed so pressing. On December 23, 1844, the treasurer of St. Mark’s noted the purchase of “cloth and napkin for the Communion Table, 15s,” indicating that the parish did not build a stone altar.60 The stone altar and baptismal font may have seemed too ritualistic for members of the Building Committee in 1843, but they did accept the extended chancel. As always, negotiations between the plans of the architect and the views of the Building Committee took place. Even with some compromises, St. Mark’s helped to reshape the image of an Anglican church for the greater Kingston area; three additional Anglican churches would be built before the end of the 1840s, all of them Gothic in style.

The categories of Gothic Revival design outlined near the start of this paper attempted to provide a way of discussing Gothic Revival church architecture in a more open manner than judging earlier and contemporary buildings on the basis of the criteria supplied by the Ecclesiologists and by Augustus Welby Pugin. Discussion of Gothic Revival churches as Georgian, historically derived, influenced by Pugin and the Ecclesiologists, and Ecclesiological, provides a reasonably neutral and non-ontological set of categories that should make it easier to appreciate the positive characteristics of a wide variety of styles. The example of St. Mark’s, Barriefield, suggests that the introduction of the ideas of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists into British North America took place in
a much more meandering, initially incomplete, and compromising manner than architectural historians and other scholars have tended to see.

This detailed examination of the plan and structure of St. Mark’s Anglican, Barriefield, has attempted to distinguish churches of this sort from the historically-derived Gothic Revival Churches built in the early 1840s by such Toronto architects as John George Howard and Henry Bowyer Joseph Lane, and from the purely Ecclesiological churches that followed a decade later. St. Mark’s began a trend to combine some aspects of Georgian design with a historically-derived understanding of medieval Gothic filtered, in part, through of the ideas of the Church Building Commissioners, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, and the Ecclesiologists. Brunel combined a three-tiered pulpit (albeit moved to the north side), a font near the east end, and a textual reredos (all part of the Georgian legacy), with a fabric of smaller stones, substantial buttresses, Early English windows, stained-glass windows in the east and west ends, a hammer-beam roof, an expanded chancel, and a stone altar (all responses to the teachings of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists). A number of other prominent churches built in the decade after St. Mark’s, especially Holy Trinity, Toronto (1850-1853), made their own mixtures. All made compromises between Georgian and Ecclesiological traditions, indeed sometimes between the High Church and Evangelical views of those who commissioned their construction, without seriously interfering with the building of attractive, useful worship spaces. They helped to ensure the triumph of Gothic Revival over Classical style Anglican churches in Canada West and to pave the way for the more Ecclesiological structures of the future. These churches need to be judged on their own terms, not primarily on those of their critics or successors.

NOTES

1. I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of my good friend Professor J. Douglas Stewart, who encouraged me to write it and offered many helpful suggestions.


3. Patterson, William J., 1993, Courage, Faith, and Love: The History of St. Mark’s Church, Barriefield, Ontario, Barriefield, St. Mark’s Church, p. 15. See p. 10, 12 for a coloured reproduction of Brunel’s plan. Plans courtesy of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario Archives (Kingston, Ontario), St. Mark’s Church (Barriefield) fonds. (I would like to thank the diocesan architect, Paul Banfield, for permission to print these plans and details from them.) The original used brown watercolour to indicate wood and grey to represent stone.

I have not discovered where or how Alfred Brunel was trained; born in 1818, he came to British North America in 1842; after having little success in competitions for public buildings in Kingston, he spent most of his life in Toronto as a civil engineer, militia officer, and leading civil servant. (See Hodgetts, J.E, 2000, Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, [http://www.biography.ca], under Brunel, Alfred. For English architectural ideas at that time, see David B. Brownlee, 1985, “The First High Victorians: British Architectural Theory in the 1840’s,” Architecture, vol. 15, p. 33-46. (I would like to thank Professor William Westfall for this reference.) See also notes 10, 12, 26, 27, and 47 below.)

4. The exterior remains much the same as in the plan, but the interior has changed substantially. The doors were removed from the original pews in 1874; the current seating was installed in 1887. In 1896-1897, E.J.B. Pense donated a new oak reredos and altar and then a new, extended chancel, which included an oak “prayer desk, clerk’s desk, pulpit with brass reading desk and bronze panels, communion rail, and choir seats.” (Patterson, p. 76-77, 88, 94.)


8. For a suggestion of categories 1, 2, and 4, see Thurlby, 2007, p. 57-58.


through numerous editions, increasing from 79 pages in 1829 to 228 in 1843 to 348 in 1849.

12. For examples, see: Rickman, 1825, op. cit.; and Bloxam, op. cit.; see also Britton, John, 1806-1826, The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain, 5 vols., London, Longman; and his volumes on The History and Antiquities of the Cathedrals of England, starting with Salisbury in 1814 and finishing with Worcester in 1835. These preceded the founding of the Cambridge Camden Society in 1839 and were recommended, along with other works, in such early publications of that society as [4th ed.] 1843, A Few Hints on the Practical Study of Ecclesiastical Architecture and Antiquities, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 17. This, along with other early works (1829-1843), is reprinted in Webster, Christopher (ed.), 2003, “Temples...Worthy of His Presence”: The Early Publications of the Cambridge Camden Society, Reading (GB), Spire Books. My quotations from these works shall cite by the original title and pagination.

15. Id., p. 98.
18. For photographs of the exterior and interior from c. 1880, see Hayes, Alan L., 1991, Holding Forth the Word of Life: Little Trinity Church 1842-1992, Toronto, Corporation of Little Trinity Church, p. 12, 18.
38. The plan calls for the lowest band of narrow protruded stone to continue around the tower buttresses, but the builders extended them over to the deep bevelled surround of the door. This intrudes more horizontality into the front elevation than intended by the architect and slightly weakens the composition in comparison to St. George’s, Trenton, which more nearly follows the plan in this detail.

39. The plan shows this pilaster-like effect on all sides of the tower as built at St. George’s, Trenton; at St. Mark’s, however, it was constructed as drawn on three sides, but on the west face only on the top two stages (compare figs. 17 and 18). The lack of these details at St. Marks clearly shows in the photographs from c. 1875, c. 1894, and December 1897. (Patterson, p. 72, illus. 15, p. 84, illus. 19, p. 89, illus. 22.)

40. A broad, peaked shape subdivided into lancets, much like those on the entrances flanking the central portion of the west front of Peterborough Cathedral.

41. The second and third stories of the towers on the west front of Ripon Cathedral for Early English examples of graduated triple lancets and a lancet between two blind lancets. The lancet as built seems even narrower than that in Brunel’s plan. The Ecclesiologists welcomed a tri-plet in the east end, but opposed three windows in the west end; with the blind lancets, Brunel both kept symmetry and avoided this taboo.

42. Patterson, p. 72, illus. 15, p. 84, illus. 19.

43. The 1850 contract drawing for St. James’s Cathedral by William Storm for Cumberland and Ridout shows a similar, but more adorned, hammer-beam roof decorated with trefoil arches and extending to the internal peak of the roof. Another design was used when it was built. (See Cooke, William (ed.), 1998, The Parish and Cathedral of St. James’, Toronto 1797-1997, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. 207, fig. 5.22.)

44. These proportions contrasted sharply with St. Anne’s Chapel, where the nave is “42 feet high, 54 feet long, and 21 feet wide.” (Stanton, p. 132.) However, the roof at St. Mark’s is higher by at least five feet that indicated on the plan.

45. Durandus, William, 1906. The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, ed. and intro. by John Mason Neale, and Benjamin Webb, London, Gibbings, p. cxxx-cxiii. My quotations come from the introduction, which was written in 1842; the edition of 1906 reprinted the original edition of 1843. Neale and Webb were leading members of the Cambridge Camden Society. The concern of providing adequate seating for the poor in an age of rented pews was a long-standing issue; discussions of this issue took place in the early eighteenth century. (See du Prey, Pierre de la Ruffinière, 2000, Hawksmoor’s London Churches: Architecture and Theology, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 59.) Some of the churches supported by the Church Building Commission had seats for the poor in the aisle. (See Port, p. 208, plate 189, and p. 219, plate 195.) Old photographs of St. James Anglican Cathedral from c. 1884 illustrate aisle seats. (See Cooke, p. 231, fig. 6.5, p. 233, fig. 6.6.)

46. Anglican Diocese of Ontario Archives, St. Mark’s Vestry Minute Book, March 11, 1844, unpaginated (the contract was signed on March 18, 1844); and Patterson, p. 34, 36-77. William Hunt, a member of the Building Committee, owned a sawmill in Barriefield. (See Patterson, p. 24.)


48. Daily British Whig, December 20, 1897. For a more elaborate example of this style of decoration in stone, see the chapter house at Southwell Cathedral.

49. According to the Ecclesiologists, an octagonal form symbolized regeneration and, therefore, became mandatory; for the location of the font, see [Neale], A Few Words to Church Builders, p. 14-15 and, for its location and shape, see Durandus, p. lxxvi-lxxvii, cxxi. A location near the west end had been favoured by high churchmen such as George Hickes in the early eighteenth century. (See du Prey, p. 142.)

50. Patterson, p. 52-53; see p. 53, illus. 11, for a photograph of the font.

51. For a slightly later chancel extended into the nave in order to enlarge it, see the original plan of Holy Trinity Anglican, Toronto (1846), where the architect Henry Bowyer Lane drew the extension in pencil. (Arthur, 1964, p. 84, illus. 119.)

52. [Neale], A Few Words to Church Builders, p. 11; see p. 19-20, for setting the chancel apart.

53. The Church Commissioners of 1712 called for chancels to be raised “three Steps above the Nave” and for the building of “two small Rooms” at the east end. “One for the Vestments, another for the Vessells or other Consecrated things.” (See du Prey, p. 144.)


55. [Neale], A Few Words to Church Builders, p. 11-12.


57. Yates, 1991, p. 41; canon 82 of 1604 ordered that the Commandments be displayed in churches.

58. For St. George’s, see Swainson, Donald (ed.), 1993, St. George’s Cathedral: Two Hundred Years of Community, Kingston, Quarry Press, p. 32, plate 1. Some of the churches supported by the Church Building Commission had seats for the poor in the aisle. (See Port, p. 208, plate 189, and p. 219, plate 195.) Old photographs of St. James Anglican Cathedral from c. 1884 illustrate aisle seats. (See Cooke, p. 231, fig. 6.5, p. 233, fig. 6.6.)

59. Quoted in Patterson, p. 18.

60. Id., p. 28.