

THE INVISIBLE TEXT:
READING BETWEEN THE LINES OF FRANK WILLS'S TREATISE,
ANCIENT ENGLISH ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

The English-born Anglican ecclesiastical architect and writer, Frank Wills (1822-1857), was a pioneering transmitter of ecclesiological Gothic Revival church architecture in Canada and the United States, yet he remains a relatively unknown figure in architectural historiography. This study examines the principal blind-spots in Wills's architectural career with the aim of inferring explanations for the existence of these obstacles, together with their impact on his position among his peers as a leading ecclesiological architect and writer in North America both then and now.

These blind-spots, represented by three unelaborated or untold stories relating to interconnected aspects of Frank Wills's design career (architectural, liturgical, and professional), are revealed through a 'reading between the lines' of his architectural treatise, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day*. In a comparison of what is currently known about the architect to the content of his book, an 'invisible text' is rendered visible by missing or incomplete material. Additional writings by Frank Wills on his architectural theory are examined through the organ of the New York Ecclesiological Society, the *New York Ecclesiologist*, as are his critical reviews of his peers' church designs. Reviews of Wills's own work and reputation are examined through the English Ecclesiological Society's journal, the *Ecclesiologist*, together with other contemporary religious and architectural publication.

This study indicates that regional attitudes toward architectural style, liturgical differences in the Anglican and Episcopal Church systems, and issues of ego and architectural authorship comprised the nature of these obstacles merely hinted at in the

pages of Wills's treatise, each instance locating this otherwise successful and ambitious architect in an outsider position. Finally, professional rivalries that existed between Wills and fellow Gothic Revivalist, Richard Upjohn, find Frank Wills's North American architectural career further marginalized in current architectural historiography.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elizabeth McFarland was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Prior to commencing graduate study at Cornell University, Elizabeth received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto, where she majored in the fields of Architecture and Art History.

For Tom
and
my late father, Robert

for their unfaltering belief in me.

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Beyond the halls of Cornell University, warmest regards are due to Douglas Scott Richardson of the University of Toronto, who first kindled in me an interest for ecclesiology as an undergraduate, and who selflessly continues to impart to me his extensive knowledge on this topic. I would also like to thank the Rev. Ledlie Laughlin and Kate Randall for opening the doors of the St. Peter's Church Archives during my research-related visit to Philadelphia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Figures.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Current Essay.....	4
Biographical Sketch of Frank Wills.....	7
Overview of the Treatise.....	9
Chapter 1. An Ecclesiological Apotheosis Stuck in Limbo?:	
Frank Wills’s Design for a Proposed Rebuilding of St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia.....	12
Frank Wills and Ecclesiology.....	13
Wills’s Design for St. Peter’s Church.....	15
St. Peter’s Church and the Gothic Revival in Philadelphia.....	19
The Perseverance of Wills’s Ambition.....	33
Chapter 2. The Wants of Which Church at the Present Day?:	
On the Omission of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, Canada from Frank Wills’s American Publication.....	36
The Want of Cathedrals in America.....	37
A Problematic Design for England.....	41
A Colonial Solution for British North America.....	47
The Ecclesiologists’ Change of Heart.....	52
Frank Wills the North American and Cathedral Architect.....	59
Chapter 3. Wills vs. Upjohn:	

Professional Rivalry and Reputation in America's Gothic Revival.....	63
'Sham' in Theory and Practice.....	66
The Books and the Societies.....	73
Other Rivalries(?).....	80
Conclusion.....	84
Ambition, Opportunity, and Acceptance.....	84
An End...and a Beginning?.....	88
Bibliography.....	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Proposed design for St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia by Frank Wills.....	16
Figure 2: Christ Church, Philadelphia, showing tower and spire by Robert Smith.....	20
Figure 3: St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, by Robert Smith.....	20
Figure 4: Trinity Church, New York, by Richard Upjohn.....	22
Figure 5: Seal of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society.....	27
Figure 6: Seal of the New York Ecclesiological Society.....	27
Figure 7: St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, showing tower and spire addition by William Strickland.....	29
Figure 8: St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, interior, looking east.....	32
Figure 9: St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, interior, looking west.....	32
Figure 10: St. Mary’s Church, Snettisham, Norfolk, England.....	43
Figure 11: Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, BNA by Frank Wills.....	43
Figure 12: Lincoln Cathedral, England, ground plan and legend.....	45
Figure 13: Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, BNA, showing the galilee.....	49
Figure 14: “Ground plans of ancient churches”.....	54
Figure 15: First-pointed church, sketch and ground plan by Frank Wills.....	55
Figure 16: St. Anne’s Chapel, Fredericton, BNA by Frank Wills.....	56
Figure 17: Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal by Frank Wills and T. S. Scott.....	58

INTRODUCTION

More than two decades ago, Douglas Richardson opened his entry on Frank Wills (1822-1857) in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* with these words: “It could be argued that Frank Wills was the most important Gothic Revival architect of his generation in North America, even though he is one of the least known figures today.”¹ Unfortunately, the latter half of Richardson’s statement remains relatively unchanged in American architectural historiography today. Art historians and architectural historians have continually downplayed, or, more often, completely ignored Frank Wills’s role as a major proponent of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in North America, despite his important contributions to its development in both design and writing. It is in the spirit of broadening awareness of this English-born Gothic Revival church architect and his accomplishments that the present study was begun.

Acknowledgement of Frank Wills and his architecture in scholarship, if any, is generally cursory at best. Wills’s architectural production in both the United States and Canada has spawned sporadic research on those designs located within the author’s respective country or region. However, an understanding of the fluidity of his work across the borders of these two countries, as well as the obstacles posed to his designs by two different church systems found therein, has not been adequately addressed in scholarship. Frank Wills’s architectural treatise, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at*

¹ Douglas Richardson, “Frank Wills,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 941; it is interesting to note here that there is no entry on Frank Wills in the *American National Biography*.

the Present Day,² is an important early document of Gothic Revival theory and practice in North America, highlighted by examples from Wills's own design oeuvre. This unique piece of North American architectural literature has fared worse than Wills's architecture itself in historiography, having never garnered more than brief mention. In this study, Wills's book will figure as the main source from which to better understand his transmission and interpretation of Gothic design principles from England to North America. The treatise also serves to illuminate obstacles in Wills's professional career that contributed to his relative obscurity. Two ecclesiastical journals, the *Ecclesiologist* (1841-1868) and the *New York Ecclesiologist* (1848-1853), provide further insight into Frank Wills's architectural theory and design in North America through peer reviews of his work. Wills's own reviews of others' designs and scholarly articles on ecclesiastical architecture were frequent contributions to the *New York Ecclesiologist* and also serve as primary source material for this investigation. Archival material from the St. Peter's Church Archives – vestry records, letters, newspaper clippings and original photographs – directly inform my argument for the rejection of Wills's design for rebuilding St. Peter's Church in Philadelphia.

In contrast to Frank Wills's near anonymity, Richard Upjohn (1802-1878), a contemporary and, I will attempt to conclude in this essay, rival of Frank Wills in pioneering the Gothic style across North America, is today considered *the* progenitor of Gothic Revival design in America. Hardly a textbook, or even chapter, on this topic does not present Upjohn in general, and his Trinity Church, New York (1839-1846) in particular, as the icons of this period in American architectural history. For

² Frank Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day* (Stanford and Swords, 1850); this book will be referred to hereafter as *AEEA*.

example, a perspective sketch by Upjohn of his Trinity Church graces the cover of Phoebe Stanton's survey, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture*³, and Everard Upjohn portrays the same canonical building on both the title page and spine of his biography⁴ on his great grandfather, Richard Upjohn. Indeed the importance, if not even mythic notion, of Trinity Church, New York, as a landmark in American architecture is confirmed in its fictional role as the penultimate site of the long-lost treasure of the Knights Templar in the recent Hollywood film, *National Treasure* (2004). Despite general consensus on its preeminence due to sheer size and the early date in which it was begun, however, it is interesting to note that contemporary assessment of Trinity Church found much at fault with the design of this now iconic structure.

Frank Wills and his works have not enjoyed a similar legacy to that of Richard Upjohn. Richardson poses two reasons for this neglect: "His obscurity must be due partly to the widespread range of his work – from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Lawrence River – and partly to his early death."⁵ Indeed, it has been suggested that Wills was responsible for the design of at least fifty⁶ Anglican churches across the continent; an incredible feat completed before his untimely death at the age of only thirty-five. Such an ambitious career circumscribing the North American continent in less than a dozen years merits greater recognition, though a project of such breadth lies beyond the scope of the present study. While Richardson's assessment of Frank Wills's obscurity is undoubtedly valid, I propose

³ Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture, An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1968).

⁴ Everard M. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1949).

⁵ Richardson, "Frank Wills", 941.

⁶ *Ibid*, 944.

that Wills's treatise contains important historical insight into alternative reasons for this prescribed fate. Using Wills's architectural treatise as a substitute for his own voice, I have chosen a 'reading between the lines' of the information contained in the text and images: a critical examination employing what is already known or what is missing from Wills's treatise is examined in order to understand his presently underrated position. Such a Foucauldian methodology of analyzing the past in order to understand how the present was produced, has required much detective work in excavating the circumstances surrounding these untold or unelaborated stories, how they might have impacted Wills's career, and even informed his anonymity within modern scholarship.

Purpose of the Current Study

This study examines the principal blind spots in Frank Wills's career posed by his architectural treatise, which, in turn, suggest possible explanations for his obscurity in architectural historiography. It also describes a simultaneous defiance of this undeserved obscurity by illuminating the sheer professional ambition of this young immigrant architect in his attempt to overcome these obstacles. This study contains three chapters organized thematically and followed by a separate conclusion. Each chapter emphasizes a different aspect of Wills's design career (architectural, liturgical, and professional), and attempts to elucidate hidden complexities embedded within them that are only hinted at in the treatise.

Chapter One examines Wills's most ambitious *unbuilt* design, appearing as the frontispiece to his book, and describes the underlying regionalist attitude of Philadelphia architects and their architecture that caused this project to remain unrealized. Chapter Two, by contrast, examines Wills's most ambitious *built* design,

which is curiously absent from his book, and locates this omission – through comparative analysis – in a deeper understanding of the differences between the Anglican and Episcopalian church systems in Canada and the United States, respectively. Issues of authorship and ego are also explored as an alternative possibility for this omission. This section presents findings upon which it is possible to speculate a few alternatives based on a comparative analysis of the Anglican Church systems in England, the United States and Canada (then British North America), as well as through an examination of relevant material within Frank Wills’s writings. To this end, much of the referenced material in this section is drawn from Chapter Two of *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*. The material in this chapter of Wills’s book, in turn, finds its source in three articles previously written by Wills and published in the *New York Ecclesiologist*.⁷ Chapter Three investigates the competition and rivalry in the nascent profession of architecture in the mid-1840s and 1850s between Frank Wills and Richard Upjohn. The role of English and American architectural societies in establishing Wills and Upjohn’s positions as their generation’s leading practitioners and authors is also examined. Admittedly, these three sections might serve equally well as stand-alone case studies. On the other hand, together, they illuminate the range of professional difficulties faced by Frank Wills. Furthermore, the organizing concept of *ambition* attempts to weave these three studies together, while Richard Upjohn’s professional career serves a comparative role throughout, against which Wills ambitiously struggled for the course of his short yet fruitful North American career as a pioneering Gothic Revival architect. Finally, the conclusion recapitulates the opportunities and limitations of Wills’s architectural career in Canada and the United States in order to draw conclusions about the nature

⁷ Frank Wills, “Form and Arrangement of Churches”, *New York Ecclesiologist* 1 (October 1848); “Form and Arrangement of Churches No.II, The Nave,” *NYE* 2 (April 1849); and “On the Arrangement of a Cathedral, as Differing from that of a Parish Church,” *NYE* 2 (August 1849).

of the architect's reputation amongst his peers and patrons, as well as his present underrated position in architectural historiography.

In order to maintain the focus of the present study, the broad scope of Frank Wills's architectural career and the various socio-cultural contexts in which it was located, have necessitated certain exclusions. Thus this study does not comprise a strict, in-depth analysis of Wills's text in its own right, either within the larger body of American architectural literature, or in comparison to the written work of Wills's influence, the preeminent English Gothicist, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852). Rather, the treatise serves as a source for the stylistic, liturgical, and professional issues to be explored in the following pages, as well as for answers to some of these issues affecting Frank Wills's architectural career in North America. Within the confined parameters of this project, no attempt is made to provide a monographic work on this architect; however, the issues dealt with here might serve to inform such a future endeavor. Likewise, I do not offer a survey or catalogue of Wills's complete architectural oeuvre, though such an ambitious study is still wanting. Douglas Richardson's unpublished MA thesis, "Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick",⁸ remains the most comprehensive survey of Wills's life and work. This impressive pioneering study, now over forty years old, demands revision and updating. Lastly, I do not intend to place Frank Wills in a position above his colleague and rival, Richard Upjohn, or to downplay the achievements of the latter individual. However, an effort is certainly made to level the playing field between the accomplishments of these two eminent Gothic Revival architects in North America.

⁸ Douglas Scott Richardson, "Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick," unpublished MA Thesis (New Haven: Yale University, 1966).

Biographical Sketch of Frank Wills

Frank Wills was born to Elizabeth Bolt and Charles Wills in Exeter, England, and baptized December 25, 1822.⁹ Wills entered an architectural apprenticeship and, if not apprenticed under John Hayward, Wills later worked in the architectural office of this Exeter Gothic Revivalist. It was likely through Hayward that Wills became acquainted with the Rev. John Medley (1804-1892), who would become the first Bishop of Fredericton, New Brunswick, British North America, and a client of Wills. Medley, an architecturally minded ecclesiastic, had founded the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, to which John Hayward also belonged. Medley was also an active member of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society, an organization begun by Cambridge University students in 1839 with the aim of promoting High Church views of Anglican church architecture and liturgy based on medieval precedent.¹⁰ Frank Wills would also become a Camdenian member in 1849. No doubt inspired by the religious zeal for ecclesiologically correct church building extolled by these societies, Medley proposed to build a cathedral in British North America. He chose Frank Wills as his architect, and in 1845 Wills arrived in Fredericton where he supervised the erection of Christ Church Cathedral (1845-1853) and St. Anne's Chapel (1846-1847). Financial issues continually delayed the cathedral project, and Wills left for America in 1847 in search of more work.

⁹ No record of Frank Wills's date of birth survives, but on account of his baptism date, it is generally assumed, and quite likely, that he was born sometime earlier in 1822.

¹⁰ This information is paraphrased from Richardson, "Frank Wills", 941-944. High Church Anglicans or Episcopalians are those members of the Church who agree with the views of the Tractarians and the Ecclesiologists in reviving a more ritual-based liturgy and corresponding architecture; Low Church members comprise the Evangelical Anglicans and Episcopalians who advocated a continuation of the post-Reformation liturgy, comprising a simplified service based on *The Book of Common Prayer* and emphasizing the spoken word or preaching, as well as congregant participation, over the High Church preference for the mysterious act of ritual.

The following year Frank Wills opened his own architectural practice in New York City. He was a founding member of the New York Ecclesiological Society, an Episcopal organization composed largely of ecclesiastics at inception, and whose architectural and liturgical sentiments loosely mirrored that of its English counterpart. The organ of the American society, the *New York Ecclesiologist*, provided scholarly papers on all matters related to church architecture, advice to builders and clergy on church building, and reviews of current Episcopal church building efforts. Frank Wills wrote papers for the journal and also served in a distinguished position as the society's first official architect: a position that greatly contributed to the vast geographical range of his design projects. From 1851-1853 Wills was in partnership with Henry Dudley (1808-1891), an elder colleague of Wills from John Hayward's office back in Exeter. While residing in the United States, Wills continued to design and influence designs for church building throughout Canada, particularly in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.¹¹ Wills was strictly an Anglican ecclesiastical architect, designing only for the Church of England in Canada and the American Episcopal Church. The vast majority of his work comprises church and cathedral designs, however, his treatise declares his authorship of funerary monuments near Niagara Falls and in Trinity Churchyard, as well as the Edward Shippen Burd memorial (1849) in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Philadelphia. Wills died suddenly on 23 April, 1857 in Montreal where he was busy erecting Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal (1857-1860) to his own designs.¹²

¹¹ For Wills's church building efforts in Ontario, see Malcolm Thurlby, "Two Churches by Frank Wills: St. Peter's, Barton, and St. Paul's, Glanford, and the Ecclesiological Gothic in Ontario," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 32:1 (2007), 49-58.

¹² Since Frank Wills's name disappears from New York directories in 1856, this year is still commonly mistaken in American writing as the year that he died. The correct date of death, mentioned above and taken from the *Montreal Gazette*, confirms the insular focus of research on Wills to only that country in which the scholar resides.

Overview of the Treatise

Frank Wills's architectural treatise, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day*, holds the distinctive position of being only the second book devoted to Gothic architecture published in America.¹³ Phoebe Stanton suggests the book's design and binding – red cloth featuring a gilt symbol inspired by medieval forms embossed on the front cover and blind embossed on the back cover – to be emulative of A. W. N. Pugin's canonical English text, *True Principles*.¹⁴ While Wills was inarguably indebted to Pugin for much of the book's content and organization, matters of cover design seem more typical of contemporary Victorian binding practices, whereby “covers showed an almost universal employment of blind rules and corner pieces, often with a central motif in blind”.¹⁵ The content of Wills's book, arranged into four chapters plus an appendix, comprises numerous functions: it is a history of medieval English church architecture and theory; a critique of modern church building in England and America; a design portfolio of Wills's own architectural oeuvre (lithographed by the architect himself); and, it contains an architectural glossary. Taken individually, each of these

¹³ The term treatise is used to describe Frank Wills's publication in this study due to its conformity with the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of treatise: “a book or writing which treats of some particular subject; commonly (in mod. use always), one containing a formal or methodical discussion or exposition of the principles of the subject (“Treatise,” Def. 1. a., *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford Publications, 2000

<http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu:2048/cgi/entry/50256967?query_type=word&queryword=treatise&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=E3Ra-A1NaRq-7536&hilite=50256967>). The first study devoted to the subject of Gothic architecture to be published in America is: Rev. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., *Essay on Gothic Architecture* (1836).

¹⁴ A. W. N. Pugin, *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1841).

¹⁵ Douglas Ball, *Victorian Publishers' Bindings* (Williamsburg: The Book Press, Ltd., 1985), 43. Pugin was also undoubtedly a primary influence on AEEA in matters other than cover design; the model for the content of Wills's publication, however, was arguably not *True Principles* but Pugin's slightly later *Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture* (1843). Like Wills's publication, which is based on journal entries written by the architect for the *New-York Ecclesiologist*, Pugin's *Present State* is comprised of two articles previously appearing in *The Dublin Review*. Furthermore, both publications treat many of the same issues: the proper (arrangement of) church forms and furnishings; memorial or funerary architecture; and contemporary attitudes toward church architecture. Numerous examples of the respective author-architect's own designs supplement both treatises.

functions already provided a popular methodology for architectural writing in England by this date. The works of John Britton, Raphael Brandon, and John Henry Parker are exemplary. Along with Pugin, each of these three writers was also influential on the content of Wills's own treatise.¹⁶ In its *combination* of all these functions, however, Wills's treatise is seemingly unique for its time both in England and North America.

The intended audience for Wills's architectural treatise was "the American student," a reference to all individuals involved with Anglican church building other than professional architects – bishops, clergy and general builders. This broad understanding of the term student is informed by Wills's interest in addressing "the want of a volume treating popularly on the above topic [of Ecclesiology]," as opposed to the numerous volumes already "issued from the English press, but most of [which] are adapted for the use of professional Architects".¹⁷ His use of the term "American" is likely a loose reference to British North America in this context also, considering his inclusion of St. Anne's Chapel, Fredericton, New Brunswick, amongst his other illustrations, and his own continued ecclesiological Gothic church building efforts in this British colony. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "American" in the nineteenth century as "belonging to the British colonies in North America."¹⁸ The treatise was only published in the United States in a single edition. Nearly one

¹⁶ John Britton, a colleague and friend of A. W. N. Pugin's father, Charles Augustus Pugin, wrote numerous volumes cataloguing the medieval ecclesiastical buildings of England. His organization of this architecture into Saxon, Norman, Romanesque, and the three periods of Gothic laid out by Thomas Rickman (Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular) provide Wills's own stylistic categorizations. A plate from Raphael Brandon's largely-illustrated book, *Parish Churches: Being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastical Structures* (London: G. Bell, 1848) appears in Wills's publication. In the Introduction to *AEEA*, Wills commends the value of John Henry Parker's, *A Glossary of Terms used in Grecian, Roman, Italian, and Gothic Architecture* (1845), but discounts the ability of a glossary alone to educate a foreign audience in English church architecture (6).

¹⁷ Wills, *AEEA*, Introduction, 5-6.

¹⁸ "American," *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford Publications, 2000-)
<http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu:2048/cgi/entry/50007152?query_type=word&queryword=american&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=E3Ra-CMlwH2-7547&hilite=50007152>

hundred known copies exist today in libraries worldwide, suggesting a substantial solitary publication run.

Reception in both England and North America was favorable: the text is praised in the pages of the English Ecclesiological Society's journal, the *Ecclesiologist*, the American society's eponymous publication, the *New York Ecclesiologist*, as well as later regional American Episcopal publications such as *The Church Review*, and *Ecclesiastical Register*.¹⁹ Most surprising is the favorable review of Wills's High Church (Anglo-Catholic) views obtained in the *Episcopal Recorder*, a Philadelphia-based journal of generally Low Church (Evangelical) sentiments. This particular publication even includes an advertisement for the sale of Wills's book for the rather handsome price in 1850 of three dollars. While the *Ecclesiologist* claimed that Wills's text "could scarcely fail of doing good",²⁰ its influence on subsequent American and Canadian architecture demands future study. During the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the treatise has received little or no attention in architectural historiography on Frank Wills himself, or within compilations on architectural literature. The present study would be impossible, however, without this valuable written work, and it is the aim of this investigation to remedy the long-standing yet undeserved omission of Frank Wills and his architectural treatise from our present understanding of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in North America.

¹⁹ In England: "Mr. Wills on Ecclesiastical Architecture," *The Ecclesiologist* 11 (October 1850), 168-169; Wills's church designs appearing in his book are reviewed in the same issue of *The Ecclesiologist* under "New Churches", 201-202. In America: "Review," *The New York Ecclesiologist* 2 (June 1850), 107-109; "Wills' Ancient Ecclesiastical Architecture," *The Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 3:3 (October 1850), 372-388.

²⁰ *The Ecclesiologist* 11 (October 1850), 168.

CHAPTER 1
AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL APOTHEOSIS STUCK IN LIMBO?:
FRANK WILLS'S DESIGN FOR A PROPOSED REBUILDING OF
ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

*“Not only does Architecture express the religious feeling of a people; it does more, it tells the deep tale of their ambition”.*²¹

-- Frank Wills

In 1850 Frank Wills published one of America's earliest treatises on Gothic architecture, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and its Principles Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day*. Aptly described by one scholar as “a handbook of ecclesiology, its history and theory, and a demonstration of its practice as illustrated largely by examples of Wills's work”,²² the most ambitious design appearing in the book is for a proposed rebuilding of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia (c.1848).²³ This design's importance relative to Wills's other illustrated projects is secured in its position as frontispiece. Despite this prominent placement, however, the design for St. Peter's was never realized. Why, then, does this particular parish church model take pride-of-place in Wills's book, and what were the reasons surrounding its rejection? With little more than a half-page description of the project in the book's appendix to serve as evidence, the answers to these questions can only be speculated.

²¹ Wills, *AEEA*, 8.

²² Douglas Scott Richardson, “Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton”, 26.

²³ The “Introduction to Wills's book is dated February 7, A.D.1850, pg. 6: in the Appendix, the single paragraph description of St. Peter's begins: “Upwards of twelve months since some of the congregation considered...” pg. 108. The combination of these dates suggests a probable date of late 1848 or early 1849 for the design. A claim for 1848 is strengthened, though not confirmed, by a proposal to tear down St. Peter's and erect a new Gothic church in its place recorded in the Vestry Records at St. Peter's Church Archives on April 13, 1848.

An initial probing into Wills' architectural oeuvre, however, as well as into contemporary regionalist attitudes about architectural practice in America may offer some insight into the inspiration, possible controversy, and inarguable ambition surrounding this project for a rebuilding of St. Peter's Church in particular, and of its still little-known architect, Frank Wills, in general.

Frank Wills and Ecclesiology

The English Ecclesiological movement directing Wills's work established itself during the 1830s as "a reform movement within the Anglican Church [under the influence of antiquarian societies based at Oxford and Cambridge] which called for a return to traditional medieval forms both in ritual and in church building". Founded in 1839, the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society was the most influential exponent of this "science of church architecture."²⁴ Its members advocated the adoption of the Gothic style for current building due to its symbolic and functional appropriateness to the administrations of the Christian faith. The model for this new church architecture belonged, historically, to the pre-Reformation Church: Roman Catholic origins that caused much strife between the two denominations and within the Society itself. Fellow Gothicist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) complicated matters further. Pugin and the Camdenians shared many tenets in ecclesiological theory and practice. In fact, the Ecclesiologists appropriated many of his ideas as their own. However, Pugin's conversion to Catholicism in 1835 caused him to "remain a source of embarrassing inspiration for the Ecclesiologists."²⁵ Nonetheless, the English rural parish church formed the approved model for both Pugin and his Anglican counterparts – a model whose economy of scale and

²⁴ William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and their Architects*, v.2, part 1, *Technology and the Picturesque, the Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1980), 152.

²⁵ Pierson, 154.

construction was also well suited to the modest and often times debilitating social, cultural, economic and even material conditions encountered in North America.

Frank Wills was an ardent disciple of both Pugin and the English Ecclesiologists. He immigrated to North America from his native England as an eager young architect in 1845. Arriving first in New Brunswick, British North America (now Canada), Wills began his short but fruitful career in the colonies working with John Medley, the first bishop of Fredericton. It was in this small city that these two Exeter men erected Christ Church Cathedral (1845-1853) and St. Anne's Chapel (1846-1847).²⁶ In 1847 Wills left Fredericton for New York City to set up his own practice. The prospect for commissions was undoubtedly greater in the latter city than anywhere across British North America. The following year Wills helped organize the New-York Ecclesiological Society (NYES) and was immediately "installed as its official architect."²⁷ Like its counterpart in England, the NYES disseminated its ideals through an eponymous publication, the *New-York Ecclesiologist*, with the intent of spreading ecclesiological doctrine across America. Accordingly, Frank Wills became one of the first transmitters of ecclesiological ideals to British North America and the United States.²⁸ In contrast to the *Ecclesiologist* (first published by the English society in 1841), the New York publication was "outspoken in its admiration for A. W. Pugin and his books; unlike the English Ecclesiologists, the Americans did not feel

²⁶ See Richardson, "Christ Church Cathedral" for an exhaustive survey of these two Canadian ecclesiastical buildings by Frank Wills. This unpublished MA Thesis is also the only piece of extensive scholarship to date on the life and work of Frank Wills.

²⁷ Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture*, 161. Beyond mention of Wills's appointment as official architect to the NYES in the first issue of their journal, the *New York Ecclesiologist* (October 1848), nothing is known of the circumstances leading to the choice of Frank Wills for this appointment.

²⁸ Douglas Scott Richardson, "Frank Wills", *DCB*, 942.

compelled to disown Pugin and decry his theories and his buildings out of fear that praise of him would attract accusations of Roman Catholic sympathy.”²⁹

The New York Ecclesiological Society’s admiration for the Gothic Revival’s main proponent, A. W. N. Pugin, is also evident in the content and organization of Frank Wills’s own architectural treatise. He openly praises Pugin within the text and frames his general arguments for the adoption of ecclesiological design around those of his influence (i.e. the appropriateness of Gothic to Christian architecture, and the importance of honesty in the use of materials and construction). In this way, Wills’s publication provides greater geographical scope to Pugin’s own mission of spreading the word that, essentially, architecture matters: that the well being of a society is somehow directly related to the state of its architecture. As a further homage to Pugin’s publications, illustrations of Wills’s work appearing in his book were lithographed by the architect himself. This not only attests to Wills’s artistic as well as architectural merit but the designs transform the book into a sort of portfolio for his own work. These designs, in turn, become models from which other architects, builders or members of the ecclesiastical community might draw inspiration for their own church-building ambitions.

Wills’s Design for St. Peter’s Church

Frank Wills’s church designs appearing in his book “ranged from a small wooden chapel at Albany to a large stone church.”³⁰ The latter is his design for a proposed rebuilding of St. Peter’s (Episcopal) Church, Philadelphia: the most ambitious example among the others in his ecclesiological design oeuvre (Figure 1). The author states at

²⁹ Stanton, 180.

³⁰ Richardson, “Frank Wills”, *DCB*, 943.

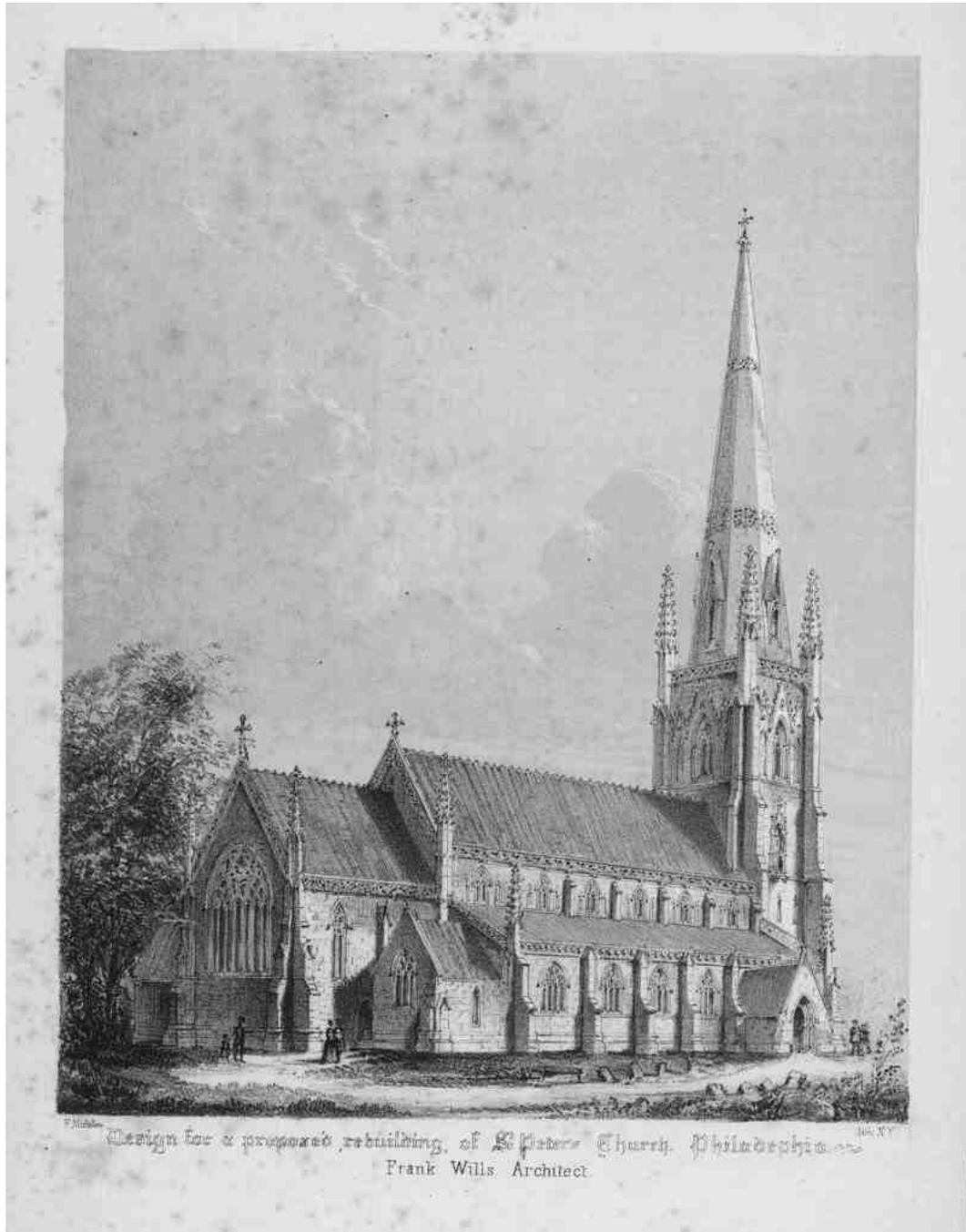


Figure 1: Design for a proposed re-building of St. Peter's Church, Philade[l]phia by Frank Wills.

Source: Frank Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1850), frontispiece.

the beginning of the appendix that, “with the exception of the design for a contemplated rebuilding of St. Peter’s, Philadelphia, (see Frontispiece,) all the other designs for Churches in this volume are of the most simple character.”³¹ Indeed, the St. Peter’s design is more ambitious in size, materials, quality of furnishings and thus, price, than the other projects. The latter are split in number between small churches and modest chapels adorned with little more than a bellcote. These stand in stark contrast to St. Peter’s large stone structure complete with crocketed pinnacles, four-storey tower and fenestrated spire. Such differences are apparent not only among the lithographs themselves but also in the short description Wills provided for the St. Peter’s design:

Upwards of twelve months since some of the congregation of this parish considered that instead of spending large sums of money in repairing the old un-church-like brick edifice, it would be wiser to erect a new building: others thought differently, and for the present the original structure remains. The design here given was prepared for the contemplated new Church. It consists of Nave one hundred feet by sixty feet in the clear. North and south Porches. Tower twenty-six feet square at west end. Chancel thirty-six feet by twenty-five feet in the clear, Chancel Aisles sixteen feet by thirteen feet. The style of the building Second Pointed; windows filled with geometrical tracery; open timber roofs. The Church to accommodate between nine hundred and one thousand persons on the ground floor, (no galleries to be admitted,) to be built entirely of stone externally, its estimated cost including every thing except organ, \$78,000. It is nearly of the same

³¹ Wills, 108.

dimensions as Trinity Church, but costing less than one-fourth the sum expended on that edifice.³²

St. Peter's position as frontispiece within Wills's book further confirms the elevated status this design occupies in its creator's mind, seeing as all of the other illustrations appear in the appendix following the main text. Directly facing the title page, St. Peter's becomes a visual cue or complement to the book's title as well as a physical aspiration of ecclesiological inspiration and instruction laid out in the following text. In this way, the design for St. Peter's exemplifies the ambitious idea Wills had about what Episcopalian architecture should be: a simplified version of its transatlantic Anglican counterpart that is nonetheless dignified by its accordance with general matters of ecclesiological doctrine, including the proper arrangement of masses and furnishings, honest use of materials, and a genuine Christian feeling to guide the construction. The design for St. Peter's thus epitomizes Frank Wills's vision of America's architectural future in church-building: a vision he wished to both present and promote through his treatise. As noted in the description above, however, the design was never executed. Interestingly, this fact is not revealed to the reader until the appendix section following the main text. Wills physically separates his ideal model in the book from its fateful rejection. One wonders if this polarized positioning of the design's fruitful conception (beginning) and equally unfruitful result (end) is not indicative of a larger body of work, if not even attitude, experienced by architects at this time in attempting to graft the rigid doctrine of English ecclesiology – despite attempts at adaptation – onto a continent of far different conditions and circumstances.

³² Wills, Appendix, *AEEA*, 108.

St. Peter's Church and the Gothic Revival in Philadelphia

Financial constraints often played a major role in impeding the realization of architectural projects. This was not the case, however, for the rejection of Frank Wills's design by the St. Peter's Episcopal parish in Philadelphia. The congregation of this church originally belonged to Christ Church, Philadelphia – Pennsylvania's first Anglican parish (founded in 1695) and birthplace of the American Protestant Episcopal Church. Among the members of this congregation were many prominent, patriotic figures in American history, including fifteen signers of the Declaration of Independence.³³ The second house of worship of Christ Church (1727-1744) was constructed as a handsome Georgian structure (Figure 2). St. Peter's Church was originally established as a chapel-of-ease³⁴ for the burgeoning congregation of Christ Church. Robert Smith built the extant church of St. Peter's, Philadelphia (1758-1761) whose style pays direct homage to its colonial predecessor (Figure 3).³⁵ Despite Wills's attempt toward a Gothic rebuilding, Smith's relatively unimposing brick structure – described by Wills as an “un-church-like edifice” in the aforementioned passage – remains today. Indeed the \$78,000 cost of Wills's proposed design for an appropriate rebuilding of St. Peter's according to ecclesiological principles was substantial for its time in typical American church building. However, this established, wealthy parish would have had little trouble raising the necessary funds.

³³ For a complete history of Christ Church, Philadelphia, see: Deborah Mathias Gough, *Christ Church, Philadelphia: the Nation's Church in a Changing City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

³⁴ The term chapel-of-ease denotes a church building erected to house the congregants of an existing parish during the construction of a new primary structure, the latter effort often made necessary by a burgeoning congregation. The chapel-of-ease is generally of simpler design than the main parish church or cathedral that it serves in this secondary capacity. In the case of Christ Church and St. Peter's Church, however, the latter building began as a chapel-of-ease but later gained its present position as a completely independent parish church in the early nineteenth-century.

³⁵ The model for this architecture would likely have been found in the pages of James Gibbs's widely read pattern book, *A Book of Architecture* (1728); this model – St. Martin-in-the-Fields (1721) – is itself a direct descendant of the English Baroque style of Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723).



Figure 2: Christ Church, Philadelphia (1727-1744). Oil painting by William Strickland (1811).

Source: Agnes Addison Gilchrist, *William Strickland: Architect and Engineer 1788-1854* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), Plate 3.



Figure 3: St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia from the northeast by Robert Smith (1758-1761).

Source: St. Peter's Church Archives collection

Wills even suggests his design's affordability relative to a church recently erected for another firmly established Episcopal parish (this one in New York City): a pitch that he likely used on his potential clients in Philadelphia, and a possible explanation for the compelling question of *why* some of the St. Peter's congregation ever considered rebuilding their colonial church in the Gothic style. The church to which Wills refers in his text is Trinity Church, New York (Figure 4) built in 1839-1846 by arch rival Gothicist, Richard Upjohn (1802-1878). Trinity Church has taken pride of place over time as the iconic example – if not apotheosis – of American Ecclesiological Gothic to layman and scholar alike, and this even though fellow ecclesiologists like Wills found much at fault in the design of Trinity in regard to general ecclesiological principles.³⁶ One element generally considered to be defective in the Trinity design was its use of the Perpendicular or Third-Pointed style. Though fashionable in the 1830s when the design for Trinity was first conceived, the 1841 publication of Pugin's, *True Principles* (as well as an updated reprint of his earlier treatise, *Contrasts*), ushered in an aesthetic preference for the slightly earlier Decorated or Second-Pointed style amongst ecclesiological adherents across North America.³⁷ Wills's design for St. Peter's accords with the new taste: geometric tracery consisting of trefoil and quatrefoil forms in the St. Peter's design contrast markedly with Upjohn's weightier, linear bar tracery. Another fault in the Trinity design was considered to be the sham lath and plastering used for the ceilings to

³⁶ See the review, "New Churches," in *The New York Ecclesiologist* (October 1848), 34-38 for Wills's personal critique of Upjohn's Trinity Church, New York.

³⁷ Wills lists the three stylistic periods of Gothic in his book as follows: First Pointed (1216-1272), Second Pointed (1272-1399), and Third Pointed (1399-1509); the first instance of this tripartite division of Gothic based on window tracery is laid out in John Rickman, *Attempt to discriminate the styles of English architecture: from the conquest to the reformation: preceded by a sketch of the Grecian and Roman orders* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1819); Rickman coined the more popular classifications of Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular.

simulate stone groin vaulting. By contrast, Wills proposes an open timber roof for his St. Peter's design. Not only was an exposed wooden roof considered to be more truthful to Gothic design principles, but it was also far less expensive to construct than its ecclesiologically incorrect alternative.



Figure 4: Trinity Church, New York, by Richard Upjohn. Original drawing (1846). Source: Everard Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), Fig. 14.

Even closer to home, the equally wealthy St. Mark's Episcopal parish in Philadelphia followed suit in 1848 with an ecclesiologically inspired design for their own church.³⁸ St. Mark's was also built in the Decorated style and boasts an open

³⁸ The design for St. Mark's was originally thought to be a literal blueprint conceived of by the English Ecclesiological Society member, R. C. Carpenter, and shipped to America for erection under the

timber roof on the interior, the final construction costs having been a close approximation to Wills's own estimation for rebuilding St. Peter's Church.³⁹ Many in the St. Peter's congregation were undoubtedly aware of these developments in ecclesiological church-building, especially among the Episcopal parishes. The choice of Frank Wills as architect of the proposed St. Peter's design would also seem logical, considering his aforementioned position as the New York Ecclesiological Society's first official architect. This new taste of many for the Gothic, as opposed to the Classical, would in fact sweep across the nation with unprecedented popularity. Ecclesiological Gothic rooted itself firmly in the ecclesiastical architectural vocabulary of the Americas: the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and indeed the entire British Empire witnessed the erection of many a glorious pile under the mission of Ecclesiology.⁴⁰

The prospect of procuring an ecclesiologically correct building for one-quarter of the cost of the coveted Trinity, New York, must have seemed desirable for St. Peter's too, and support for rebuilding the church was led by the prominent Philadelphia lawyer and long-time vestryman of St. Peter's Church, Horace Binney (1780-1875).⁴¹ Binney proposed the idea of rebuilding to the St Peter's vestry on 13

supervision of another recent English immigrant and Gothic Revival architect, John Notman (1810-1865) Tatum, 83. However, the extant church is actually of Notman's own design, which he produced after discarding the Ecclesiologists' version due to its unsuitability to American climatic conditions. See "New Churches," in *The New York Ecclesiologist* 1 (January 1849), 73-75.

³⁹ R. A. Smith, *Philadelphia As It Is, in 1852* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1852), 291. These costs (30,000 pounds sterling) include all construction expenses, excluding the tower and spire.

⁴⁰ Barry Magrill has written the following article on the Ecclesiological influence in the Caribbean: "Development and Ecclesiology in the Outposts of the British Empire: William Hay's Gothic Solutions for Church Building in Tropical Climates (1840-1890)," in *JSSAC* 29:1 (2004), 15-26.

⁴¹ Horace Binney was born in the New Liberties, Philadelphia, but moved to Massachusetts as a teenager following the death of his father and his mother's remarriage. Following an education in Letters at Harvard College, Binney returned to Philadelphia himself where he was admitted to the Philadelphia Bar and spent the rest of his life in the service of the Law, and as a devoted member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church [This information is paraphrased from Allen Johnson, ed., "Binney, Horace," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), 280]. Upon his death, Binney provided St. Peter's with its still extant Endowment fund for the purposes of general

April 1848, less than one week after his passionate article on the subject appeared in a local ecclesiastical newspaper pleading for its adoption, and for the congregation to open their heavy purses for this purpose. Despite Binney's appeals, however, the proposal to rebuild was rejected. The St. Peter's description in Wills's book relates that it was the decision of some "others" that led to this rejection; those "others" comprised not only members of the congregation, but of the vestry also, for the motion to rebuild was lost during the same meeting.⁴²

The reason that these "others" refused to rebuild St. Peter's Church in the Gothic style might be understood as a regional resistance. Stanton recounts the following observation made in the 1830s regarding the state of American architecture: "neither New York nor Philadelphia contains a church which has any claim to be called fine architecture, or which is worthy of the wealth and population of those cities."⁴³ Stanton goes on to say that "by 1846 this appraisal was no longer valid" since New York boasted ten new churches of merit within the past decade, nine of which were Episcopal structures.⁴⁴ But what of Philadelphia? Stanton avoids justifying her claim with regard to this city and focuses instead on New York for one simple reason: only one ecclesiologically-inspired church – St. James-the-Less Episcopal Church (1846-1849) – was under erection in Philadelphia by this year. As a

maintenance. This he gave despite his belief "that the architectural taste of the founders of St. Peter's church was inferior to their religious faith, and that the example of the latter would not be lost in erecting, in the place of the old church, a structure which should represent, as far as possible, the best traditions of English Gothic, the architecture of that communion, to the uses of which the building was devoted." (Charles Chauncey Binney, *The Life of Horace Binney with Selections from his Letters* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1903), 417-418.

⁴² The proposal to the St. Peter's vestry appears on April 13, 1848 in the vestry records at St. Peter's Church Archives. The article was published as: "To the Parishioners of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia" in *The Banner of the Cross* (April 8, 1848). Binney may have been the one to approach Frank Wills for a proposed Gothic design for St. Peter's Church, though no concrete evidence to support this claim could be located in the St. Peter's Church Archives.

⁴³ Henry Russell Cleveland, "American Architecture," *North American Review* 43 (October 1836), 372; reprinted in Stanton, 56.

⁴⁴ Stanton, 56.

direct derivative of a particular English church revered by the Ecclesiologists (St. Michael's Church, Longstanton), the importance of St. James-the-Less for ecclesiological design in America is inarguable but ultimately isolated. Furthermore, it represents the simplified Early English or First Pointed style rather than the preferred Decorated.

Overall, Philadelphia did not embrace the Gothic Revival church as did other cities such as New York. It remained instead a patriotic stronghold of colonial architectural forms. Ironically, the transmission of this classically-inspired style to America was also largely by way of England; its origins, however, were ultimately non-Anglo. For Philadelphians, the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome spoke more to the democratic aspirations of the young republic than did the complex religious issues surrounding English medieval architecture and its equally religiously-charged revival.⁴⁵ Despite this, it is important to note that America was not without its own religious tensions between the Episcopal and Roman Catholic denominations. Tensions within the Episcopal Church itself were also prevalent: the anti-Catholic riots of 1844 in Philadelphia resulted in several Roman Catholic churches of that city being burned to the ground, while the High Church and Low Church division within the Episcopal communion found St. Peter's own current rector, Henry Ustick Onderdonk, placed on trial for suspicion of Romanist sympathizing, and suspended from his position in the prominent Philadelphia church the following year. Alonzo Potter, a noted Low Church Episcopalian, took over the rectorship and remained in that position until his death in 1868.

⁴⁵ By mid-century, St. Mark's Episcopal Church represented the only other Gothic Revival style building erected for this communion.

This is not to say that Frank Wills was insensitive to these inherently English issues affecting adoption of the Gothic Revival for American church-building. One scholar correctly observed that Wills was a prominent figure among his peers in advocating the need for a physical and liturgical adaptation of the English formula to better suit American needs.⁴⁶ This goal Wills achieved particularly through his writing, and a comparison of the English and American Ecclesiological Societies' seals further confirms his adaptive efforts (Figures 5 and 6). Pugin and Wills designed the seals of the Cambridge Camden Society (1841) and the New York Ecclesiological Society (1848), respectively. These insignia, under which the sister societies wrote, share certain features: both are in the form of a mandorla enclosing figures within intricate Gothic detailing and tabernacle work. Though it is not surprising that Wills imitated Pugin's design so closely, there are also important stylistic and iconographic differences. Mary and Child sit enthroned at the center of the Cambridge seal, immediately flanked by the standing figures of St. George and St. Etheldreda. St. John the Evangelist and St. Luke, the patron saints of architecture and of painting and the arts, respectively, flank these two figures. To the left is a church in ruins and to the far right is the church restored. Directly below Mary and Child stands the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also known as the Round Church, representing the English Society's first restoration efforts. By contrast, the New York seal, described as "perfectly simple" in meaning, places St. John at the center (easily identified by his appropriate symbol – the eagle – directly below), flanked by two angels and standing with the model of a church in his hands. The dominant position of St. John reflects the American society's interest solely in architecture as opposed to the overtly Roman Catholic importance placed upon the Virgin Mary in the design of the English seal. Thus the New York seal presents the younger society as being devoid of the time

⁴⁶ Pierson, 202-205.



Figure 5: Seal of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society.
Source: *The Ecclesiologist* 3 (September 1844), 184.



Figure 6: Seal of the New-York Ecclesiological Society by Frank Wills, 1848.
Source: *The New York Ecclesiologist* 1 (October 1848), title page.

worn, notorious religious unrest in England that had likewise plagued the English Ecclesiological Society from its inception. Furthermore, the New York seal's less refined Gothic detailing echoes the "distinctive, very spare, almost austere quality"⁴⁷ of Wills's ecclesiastical architecture in comparison to contemporary trends in England as well as the medieval sources from which the latter country drew its ecclesiological inspiration.

Nonetheless, this version of English Gothic adapted by English architects to what they saw fit for American needs was not necessarily what American-born architects envisioned for their country's architectural expression. The first and extant St. Peter's was built when English and Scottish immigrants dominated architectural practice – Robert Smith himself was a Scotsman. America could not yet boast its own native practitioners and, thus, its own ideas about what a distinctly American architecture should be. Thus buildings were erected following directly (though in a simplified version) contemporary trends across the Atlantic. Not surprisingly then, both Christ Church and St. Peter's were built in the English Baroque manner of Sir Christopher Wren and James Gibbs. Favored almost exclusively across North America in the eighteenth century, this classically-inspired vocabulary would retain its influence with particular vigor on the city of Philadelphia well into the nineteenth century as well, for one historian notes that, "as late as the 1850s the classical style was still being used in Philadelphia for churches."⁴⁸

In 1842 the classically-inspired tower and steeple of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia (Figure 7) were erected to the designs of a man who could rightfully

⁴⁷ Richardson, "Christ Church Cathedral", 28.

⁴⁸ Tatum, 73.

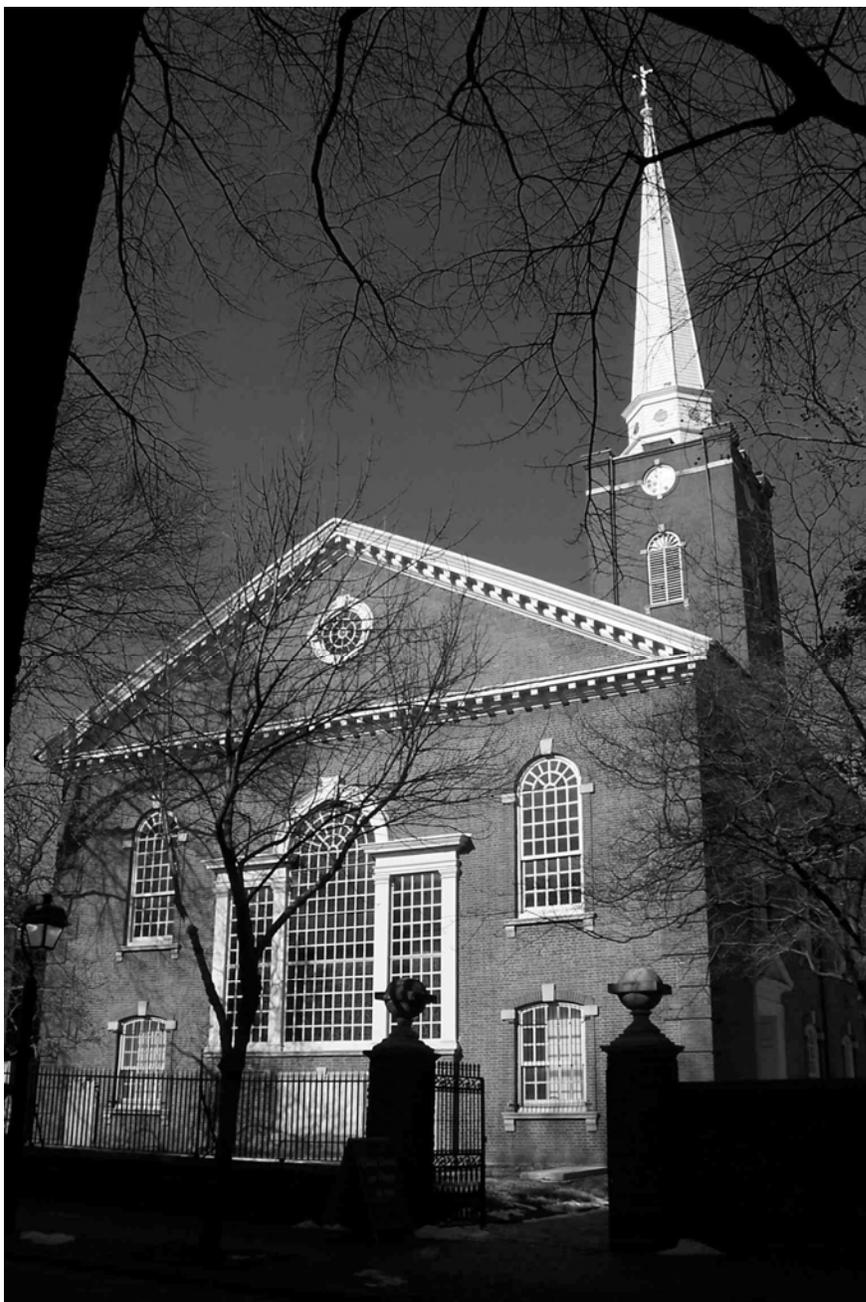


Figure 7: St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, from the east, showing the tower and spire addition by William Strickland (1842).
Source: author's photograph, 2007

identify himself as a member of the first generation of American-born architects, William Strickland (1788-1854). Strickland's long and fruitful architectural career found him capable of working in many different architectural styles, as was common in an era when tastes were in constant flux. However, Strickland was ultimately a neo-classicist. This architect and his architectural imprint on this city have been described thus: "as of Rome and the Emperor Augustus, he found Philadelphia a city of brick and left it a city of marble."⁴⁹ The design for his well-known Second Bank of the United States (1818-1824) in Philadelphia is based directly on the Parthenon in Athens. Strickland's architectural interventions continued the classical style of architecture embedded in Philadelphia by previous classically inspired architects – most important among them being Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820), to whom Strickland was apprenticed as a pupil.

Considering his influence on architecture in Philadelphia, it is tempting to think that Strickland may have played a role in the rejection of Frank Wills's proposal. Surely Strickland would not have wanted to see St. Peter's Church and his recently erected addition razed and replaced with an English Gothic structure. Though completely speculative in nature, this proposition is not entirely unqualified considering that Strickland was himself a some-time parishioner of Christ Church, Philadelphia (for which it will be remembered St. Peter's Church originally served as a chapel-of-ease).⁵⁰ The sensitivity that Strickland showed in replicating the style of St. Peter's as built by Smith in the use of red brick and multiple compass windows is, in turn, complementary to the older Christ Church located nearby. Such close

⁴⁹ Tatum, 68-69.

⁵⁰ It is interesting to note here that Nicholas Biddle (1786-1844), American patriot and president of the Bank of the United States and admirer of Strickland's architecture, was also a parishioner of Christ Church, Philadelphia, and is buried in the cemetery surrounding St. Peter's.

inspection of the classical-ness of Strickland's addition to St. Peter's, however, ironically brings its un-classical qualities into sharper focus. Thus the naïve Gothick intimations of Strickland's crenellated tower design would have fueled Wills's interest in the need to rebuild St. Peter's Church in an ecclesiologically correct fashion.⁵¹

Even without Strickland's intervention, the interior arrangement of St. Peter's posed design problems from an ecclesiological point of view, not least among them being the inclusion of closed pews and galleries. These elements, abhorred by the Ecclesiologists, were nonetheless common to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestant Evangelical worship: the rented pews provided income for the church, while the galleries functioned as additional elevated seating space from which the communicants could easily see and hear the preacher in a service that emphasized the spoken word over the ecclesiologically-preferred act of ritual.⁵² Furthermore, although St. Peter's Church was properly oriented with the altar at the east end of the building, the pulpit was – and remains – curiously located at the west end (Figures 8 and 9). This rare and impractical arrangement “required the minister to walk the length of the aisle to deliver the sermon.”⁵³ Accordingly, the layout of furnishings in this chapel-of-ease provided no such ease with regard to the (ecclesiologically prescribed) administration of the faith.

⁵¹ Wills would have also known – and abhorred – Strickland's earlier St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (1822-1823), which is also designed in the naïve “Gothick” manner that predates a sufficient understanding of ecclesiological principles.

⁵² For a better understanding of Evangelical Episcopalianism, see: Robert Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, revised edition (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999; 1st edition, 1991); also, Allen C. Guelzo, “Ritual, Romanism, and Rebellion: The Disappearance of the Evangelical Episcopalians, 1853-1873,” in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 62 (Dec. 1993), 551-577; for a survey of architectural forms associated with Evangelical worship, including the auditory configuration, see: James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1964) and G.W.O. Addleswhaw and Frederick Etchells, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Inquiry into the Arrangements for Public Worship in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949).

⁵³ Charles E. Peterson, *Robert Smith: Architect, Builder, Patriot 1722-77* (Philadelphia: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 2000), 63.



Figure 8: St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, interior from the west, looking toward the altar.

Source: author's photograph, 2007



Figure 9: St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, from the east, looking toward the pulpit.

Source: author's photograph, 2007

The Perseverance of Wills's Ambition

Wills had already built his own notable chapel-of-ease at St. Anne's, Fredericton, New Brunswick, however, lack of funds required it be carried out in the simplest of the Gothic styles – First Pointed. This stylistic consideration alone positions St. Anne's as an ultimately less ambitious project than that of St. Peter's Church, even though the latter project was never realized. It was the next period of Gothic – Second Pointed – which Wills and the Ecclesiologists advocated for use whenever funds permitted, for they believed that, “it is in this style that Pointed Architecture is seen in all its matchless glory.”⁵⁴ Wills had used this style successfully at Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, and also proposed its use in his 1849 design for St. James Cathedral, Toronto. Indeed, the ambitious nature of these cathedral designs is inarguable; therefore, possible reasons for the omission of Fredericton cathedral from Wills's treatise comprise the focus of the following chapter in this study. The application of the parish church plan to the needs of a cathedral at Fredericton was, however, ultimately less correct (according to early ecclesiological doctrine) than the design for St. Peter's Church, for the latter combined the appropriate church model with the preferred stylistic period of Gothic design. Thus the prospect of rebuilding the once chapel-of-ease for a wealthy parish such as Christ Church, Philadelphia, would undoubtedly find an Ecclesiologist like Wills eager to incorporate this aesthetically superior style of Gothic for St. Peter's.

Though Frank Wills succeeded in converting many American Episcopal parishes to the ecclesiological Gothic style,⁵⁵ he could not convince this

⁵⁴ Wills, 31.

⁵⁵ Richardson's “Christ Church Cathedral” includes the only extensive effort thus far to catalogue all of Wills's known and attributed built projects as well as design proposals. An updated inventory is long overdue.

denomination's sister congregation in Philadelphia to give up its colonial ways in church architecture. The unique position of Philadelphia's architectural history in the development of the American nation presents a viable reason for this rejection of Wills's design and, conversely, the strength of influence the classical styles held over this particular city. The parsimony of the St. Peter's congregation was also an issue, despite "the assessed value of the property of whose pew-holders rumor estimates, perhaps not falsely, at millions of dollars".⁵⁶ This parsimony, however, was likely due to the unwillingness of many in the congregation to adopt for their church a style correspondent with papist views on Episcopal liturgy. Horace Binney and Frank Wills might have seen their Gothic vision become a reality under the leadership of the recently suspended, High Church sympathizer, H. U. Onderdonk. However, the Low Church ideals of St. Peter's succeeding rector, Alonzo Potter, would certainly not have approved the ecclesiological design.⁵⁷ Furthermore, if the matter were merely one of discontent with Wills's particular design – rather than the Gothic style itself – there were plenty of other ecclesiological architects the parish could have appealed to by mid-century for a more fitting proposal.

What is certain, however, is that Wills felt his design to be the most ambitious to appear in his architectural treatise and thus placed it at the beginning as frontispiece to the text. This claim might be furthered through an exploration of the impact of this particular design and even the complete contents of Wills's book, in general, on ecclesiological design across the Americas. Such an investigation might even aid in advancing awareness of Frank Wills's already-established and important – yet poorly

⁵⁶ Horace Binney, "To the Parishioners of St. Peter's Church," in *The Banner of the Cross* (April 8, 1848).

⁵⁷ Worth noting here is Horace Binney's resignation from his position as first warden to the rector (1836-1844), in the same year that H. U. Onderdonk was removed as rector of St. Peter's Church. The dates of Binney's appointment were gathered from the St. Peter's Church Archives.

documented – contribution to the Gothic Revival in North America. Within the scope of the present paper, however, it suffices that Wills’s design for St. Peter’s mirrors his vision of ecclesiastical architecture as expressed in his book and quoted at the beginning of this essay: a vision in which ambition in design rises to the same level of importance as religious feeling. In contrast to the strictly religious preoccupations of English ecclesiology, the ideal composition of equal parts religion and ambition that comprise the design for St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, finds this project striving to be nothing less than Frank Wills’s own Trinity Church, New York.

CHAPTER 2

THE WANTS OF *WHICH* CHURCH AT THE PRESENT DAY?:

ON THE OMISSION OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, FREDERICTON FROM FRANK WILLS'S AMERICAN PUBLICATION

Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton, Canada (1845-1853) marked Frank Wills's most ambitious built design by the time his book was published in 1850. This project represented the first Anglican cathedral based on ecclesiological principles built in Canada, it was the reason for this English architect's immigration to North America, and it was already five years into construction. Yet Christ Church Cathedral does not appear among Wills's other works illustrated in his book. One scholar suggests the design represented an awkward moment in Wills's career,⁵⁸ its form being opposed to generally-held English ecclesiological doctrine as it stood for much of the 1840s. But ecclesiologists' interpretation of this liturgical and architectural dogma was fickle and their views changed often. Increased financial constraint and climatic fluctuation across North America demanded an architecture with greater sensitivity to these circumstances than English construction methods. By 1848 the English society conceded the need for adaptation of colonial cathedrals in the mode of a dual form that included both cathedral and parish church. Wills's design for the Fredericton cathedral represented the first example in North America of a symbiosis of these two church building types.

Thus, this young, ambitious architect from Exeter had actually pioneered a new cathedral form for use in North America: an accomplishment – not a detriment to his oeuvre – that he defended and continued in his writing and practice. The reason for

⁵⁸ Richardson, "Frank Wills," *DCB*, 943.

the omission of the design from his book then, must lie elsewhere than as a result of its formal deviation from an English ideal. It is clear that Wills's book was intended for an American audience, while the cathedral was built for a province of Canada. Considering the absence of Protestant Episcopal cathedrals in the United States at mid-century, it is not unreasonable to believe that liturgical and design differences between the American Episcopal and Canadian Anglican Church systems may account for this omission. However, design interventions at the cathedral by the famed English Gothic Revival architect, William Butterfield, offer an alternative possibility, by raising the issues of authorship and ego in examining Frank Wills's role in the completed design of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton.

The Want of Cathedrals in America

Wills proclaims the want of cathedrals in America within the text of his architectural treatise by claiming that, "a cathedral is as essential to a due external exhibition of the Church's system, as is a bishop to the internal life thereof."⁵⁹ The Ecclesiologists themselves were in complete agreement: "the American Church must come to cathedrals, sooner than later, therefore we say, let it be as soon as possible".⁶⁰ Thus one suspects that illustration in Wills's book of Christ Church Cathedral, already designed and under construction in Canada, would have had incredible marketing appeal for his already burgeoning career in America. This was certainly a prime motive for the inclusion of his other works. Why then does the Fredericton cathedral design not appear among the other lithographs of Frank Wills's designs for both Canada and the United States?

⁵⁹ Wills, *AEEA*, 78.

⁶⁰ "Churches and Cathedrals in the United States," *Ecclesiologist* 13 (February 1852), 19.

Wills supposed the reason for the absence of cathedrals in America to be financial: “the cost—the cost—the dollars—the dollars strangle the infant thought”.⁶¹ While this was an inarguable reality for poorer parishes, it could not be the only reason, especially in light of wealthy dioceses such as New York and Philadelphia. The *Ecclesiologist* agreed with the Rev. John H. Hopkins, Jr. of the American Episcopal Church that it was the corruption of the primitive design of England’s own cathedral system since the Reformation that accounted for its unsuitability as a model in America.⁶² From this viewpoint, the Church of England had become increasingly secularized in nature following the Reformation, as evidenced by the ‘cleansing’ of its formerly Roman Catholic architecture and ecclesiastical fittings with whitewash, and the diminished authority of (and respect for) the heads of this hierarchical system – the bishops – by both the laity and the government. Positioned as the national church in England from its inception, the Church of England entered into what the Ecclesiologists and their followers regarded as a period of debasement of the Anglican faith resulting from an uneasy marriage of church and state in which the Church was stripped of its own governance in the spiritual realm and replaced with temporal authority. It was this diminished sense of piety and reverence for the Church of England and its architecture that the Ecclesiologists and their followers proposed to rectify through a return to pre-Reformation practices in design and liturgy. Thus many like-minded ecclesiastics and laity in America saw this ‘corruption’ of the Anglican Church in England as a model for avoidance rather than adoption.

⁶¹ Wills, *AEEA*, 79.

⁶² “Transactions of the NYES,” *Ecclesiologist* 19 (February 1858); such ideas were initially set forth in two papers read before the NYES in 1855 by the American Episcopal ecclesiastic, the Rev. John H. Hopkins, Jr.: “The Cathedral System in the City” and “The Cathedral System in Rural Dioceses”.

In the book, *English Cathedral in the Nineteenth Century*,⁶³ the English politician and long-time Ecclesiological Society member, A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, felt the resistance to cathedrals in America to be a sign of fierce independence: “the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U. S. has not yet sufficiently divested itself of republican prejudices to adopt cathedrals by name.”⁶⁴ Indeed serious contention arose over the eventual establishment of an episcopate for the Church of England in America. This hierarchical church system based on the power of bishops (‘episcopal’ meaning ‘rule by bishop’) seemed too close to the English model for some in America to bear, but it was eventually instituted. Following the War of Independence, America’s first bishops were ready for ordination into the American Protestant Episcopal Church, but, given their newfound freedom from England, they were forced to travel to Scotland to carry out the ordinations. By the 1830s, opinions on Tractarianism (also known as the Oxford Movement or Anglo-Catholicism) stirred further disagreement in religious politics within the Church of England and even the American Episcopal Church itself. Formed at Oxford University 1833, the Tractarians became known as such for their published tracts on church doctrine calling for a resurrection of medieval (Roman Catholic) liturgy as a method for reinstating authority in- and respect for- the Anglican Church.⁶⁵ By extension, liturgical alterations necessitated complementary church arrangement. The latter architectural considerations were taken up in the efforts of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society, formed at that same university in 1839. The English Gothic church provided the model for this liturgical and architectural reform from which the Gothic Revival phenomenon burst forth in the form of church restoration and building

⁶³ A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, *English Cathedral of the Nineteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1861).

⁶⁴ Beresford-Hope, 106.

⁶⁵ For a better understanding of the Tractarians, see: Owen Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1960).

spanning far beyond the borders of England itself. English Anglican architects working in America in the 1840s, including Frank Wills, embraced the new style for the American Episcopal Church also. However, many Episcopalians felt the new forms and services therein to be dangerously close to the Roman Catholic faith, not to mention it was a theological model that the American Church was apt to reject on its very English-ness alone.⁶⁶

Canada, by contrast, initially followed more closely the Anglican ecclesiastical system of England, due to its status as a British colony. Unlike the American Episcopal Church that was not founded as a true episcopate nor legally attached to the Church of England following Independence, the Anglican Church in BNA *was* established from the start on the hierarchical system of episcopate, with bishops even continuing to be appointed by the king or queen until the 1850s.⁶⁷ This successful replication of the Anglican Church in England abroad necessitated the erection of cathedrals in which to house its bishops. Thus cathedrals functioned somewhat more like outposts of the long-established Church of England in BNA. This is not to say that the Anglican Church in Canada was free from disagreements with its English predecessor on matters of church governance, liturgical considerations or even church architecture, but the dates at which fundamental changes would take place in the Canadian Church and its relationship to the Church of England lie beyond the temporal scope of the present study. It suffices to say then, that before the 1860s the erection of cathedrals and the English models of church governance for which they

⁶⁶ For a comprehensive survey of American Episcopal Church history, see Robert Prichard's, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, 2nd edition (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999).

⁶⁷ Alan L. Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada: Controversies and Identity in Historical Perspective* (Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 2004), 83; Hayes provides a comprehensive overview of the history and development of the Anglican Church in Canada as well as a comparative analysis with the English, American and Irish models of Anglicanism.

stood, were not an object of contention in BNA to the same degree as they were until the closing decades of the nineteenth century in the United States. Thus the Anglican establishment in England was not the only Church that Frank Wills was obliged to appease in his writing or practice. Nor were the American Episcopal and Canadian Anglican churches free of their own internal tensions regarding matters of cathedral building.

A Problematic Design for England

As early as 1842 the English Ecclesiological Society had warned against mixing parish church and cathedral forms. This was an admonition the Ecclesiologists justified by the apparent differences between forms during the Gothic period, as evidenced by the society's extensive knowledge base of extant examples of both types throughout England.⁶⁸ An article of this year appearing in the *Ecclesiologist* entitled, "On Some Differences between Cathedral and Parish Churches"⁶⁹ spells out, in typical doctrinal fashion, the apparent absurdities resulting from the combination of these two building types in the erection of a single structure, because the functions carried out within them differed markedly. While parish churches functioned as houses of prayer for local communicants or parishioners within the diocese, cathedrals served the more elaborate services and ceremonies connected with the bishop and clergy of the entire diocese. Thus the Ecclesiological Society maintained that during the past the exterior and interior forms as well as the general arrangement of internal fittings and furnishings had corresponded to the particular needs of the building, whether a

⁶⁸ From an early date, the Cambridge Camden Society employed the participation of amateurs and professionals in recording the exterior and interior arrangements and details of parish churches across England using a prepared checklist, commonly referred to by members as a Church Scheme. For information on the society's methods in amassing their extensive resources, see James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 54-57.

⁶⁹ (August 1842), 181-183.

cathedral or a parish church. Visual expression of this truth about the building's function or intent was first extolled by A. W. N. Pugin, the English Gothic Revival's main protagonist and source of much of the Ecclesiologists' own ideals.⁷⁰ Continuance of separation between these liturgical and constructional differences of the past was thus promoted as the only correct way to undertake present church building campaigns.

The Rev. John Medley, first bishop of New Brunswick, BNA, proposed the fourteenth-century parish church of St. Mary's, Snettisham, Norfolk (Figure 10) to serve as the model for his cathedral at Fredericton (Figure 11), even though the latter building was conceived of from the start as a cathedral – not as a parish church. Drawings of St. Mary's Church were prepared by Frank Wills, and would accompany the architect to New Brunswick to serve as the footprint for Medley's new colonial cathedral. The beautiful flowing window tracery and general conformity of the building's style to the preferred Decorated or Second-Pointed period of English Gothic church design undoubtedly appealed to Medley and Wills, forecasting Nikolaus Pevsner's later description of the structure as "the most exciting Dec[orated] parish church in Norfolk".⁷¹ Indeed, Wills relates in his treatise that he himself was responsible for the restoration of the west window at the partially ruined church at Snettisham,⁷² and it is likely this connection that informed Bishop Medley's decision to employ Wills as his architect and to use St. Mary's Church as his model. Furthermore, Frank Wills and his teacher, John Hayward, were both members of the

⁷⁰ The two great rules in Pugin's *True Principles* provided the mantra for all followers of ecclesiological Gothic design: "1st, that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety; 2nd, that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building." (1).

⁷¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-west and South Norfolk* (Middlesex, Baltimore and Victoria: Penguin, 1962), 316.

⁷² Wills, *AEEA*, 35.

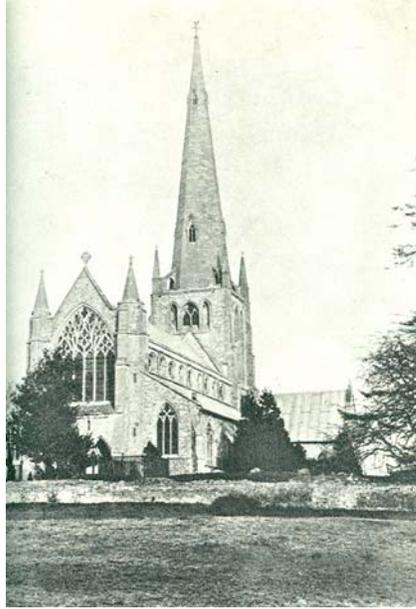


Figure 10: St .Mary's, Snettisham, Norfolk (14th century). From the south-west. Just visible behind a tree to the lower left is the galilee porch.

Source: Pevsner, *The Buildings of England* (London: Penguin, 1962), plate 9.

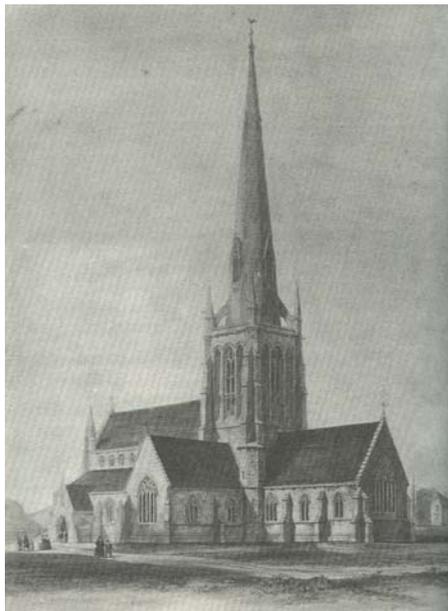


Figure 11: "The Proposed Cathedral Church at Frederickton, New Brunswick, adapted from St. Mary's, Snettisham, Norfolk." Signed "Frank Wills, Architect, Exeter" (1845). View from the south-east.

Source: Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 146.

Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (EDAS): a regional offshoot of the English Ecclesiological Society that Medley himself founded in 1841.⁷³ Hayward had done previous architectural work for Medley, and Richardson even suggests that Wills may have designed the canopied Gothic tomb in St. Thomas's Church, Exeter, for Medley's first wife.⁷⁴ Despite Bishop Medley's good intentions, the Ecclesiologists lamented the design: "we do very much regret that so holy an undertaking should not have been perfect in externals...[St. Mary's] though magnificent as a parish church, is essentially such, rather than a cathedral".⁷⁵ Evidently the Ecclesiologists' opinion was, for the present time at least, both opposed to Medley and Wills, and absolute.

Of interest at St. Mary's, Snettisham, is the problematic character of the church within the English medieval tradition of distinct cathedral and parish church types. Instructive here is Wills's inclusion of Lincoln Cathedral (Figure 12) in his treatise as the exemplar of the English cathedral. The selection of Lincoln, a choice commended in a review by the English Ecclesiologists, rested on the completeness of its form relative to current ecclesiological doctrine. For Wills, only Lincoln Cathedral "possesses or was intended to possess, every feature with the exception of a lady chapel, which we see combined in other examples. It consists of Nave, Choir, major and minor Transepts, two western Towers, central Tower, Galilee, Lavatory, sixteen small Chantries or Chapels, Cloisters, Vestries, Chapter House, Library and Well."⁷⁶ Such a large number of spaces and details were deemed necessary to the building's

⁷³ For a comprehensive overview of Medley's theological position and achievements in BNA, see: Barry L. Craig, *Apostle to the Wilderness: Bishop John Medley and the Evolution of the Anglican Church* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson U. Press, 2005). For Medley's complete but problematic biography, see: W. Q. Ketchum, *The Life and Work of the Most Reverend John Medley, D.D.* (Saint John: McMillan, 1893).

⁷⁴ Richardson, "Frank Wills", *DCB*, 942.

⁷⁵ "Fredericton Cathedral," *Ecclesiologist* 5 (February 1846), 81.

⁷⁶ Wills, *AEEA*, 49.

appearance and proper function as a cathedral. The parish church, by contrast, requires only a nave and chancel to be classified as such, though additional forms and details can be added where function and funds permit, resulting in an infinite variation on the type. Indeed a large, well-equipped parish church such as St. Mary's, Snettisham, may appear not unlike the form of a cathedral, though on a much smaller scale and without the ancillary structures common to cathedrals (i.e. library, cloisters, chapter house). On the interior, medieval English parish churches were not fitted with a bishop's throne, but all other furnishings seem to overlap freely between church and cathedral.⁷⁷ The differing services carried out within the two building types were more instructive of their individuality.

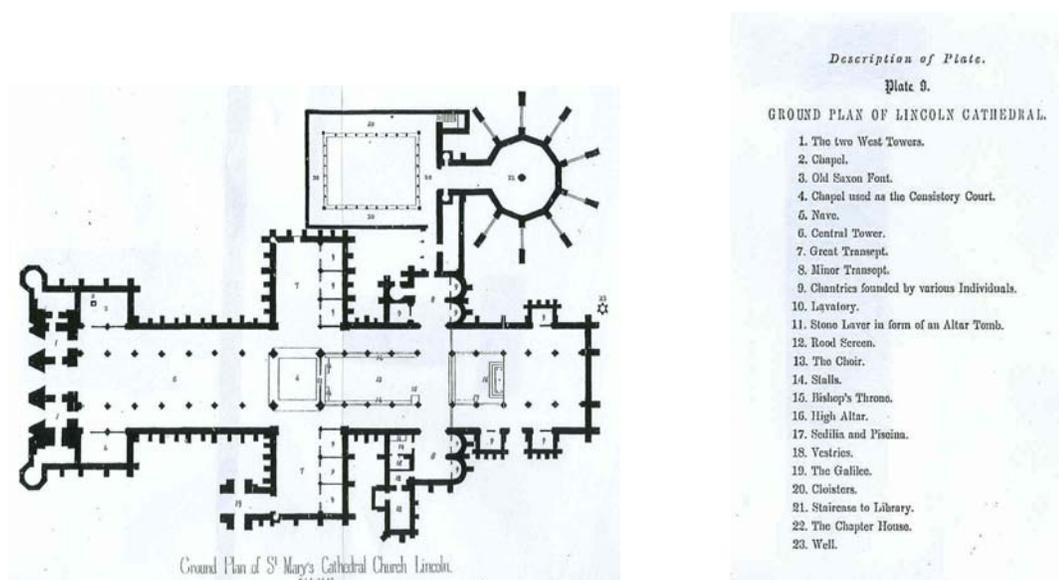


Figure 12: Ground plan of Lincoln Cathedral by Frank Wills and corresponding legend identifying the various elements characteristic of English Gothic cathedral design.

Source: Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 47-48.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 60-82.

The Ecclesiologists were forced to acknowledge the presence at St. Mary's, Snettisham, of several features anomalous to the parish church form. First among these is the presence at St. Mary's of a western galilee or triple arched entrance – a feature commonly found as the main entrance to a cathedral. Parish churches, by contrast, generally comprised any combination of single entrances on the western end and/or side porches, but “there is never a galilee,” according to the *Ecclesiologist*. A footnote in the same article duly records, however, that a rare occurrence of this does exist at St. Mary's, Snettisham. Though speculative in nature, St. Mary's parish church itself could have been intended as a cathedral but was scaled back with a change of program early in the construction process. At any rate, to deal with this matter the anomalous instance is ambiguously labeled “a questionable case”.⁷⁸

The plan of St. Mary's is also antithetical to ecclesiological doctrine as laid out in the same 1842 article. The *Ecclesiologist* mentions that in parish churches, “the T form is never in use”.⁷⁹ Once again this is a feature present at St. Mary's. Also known as a Latin cross or cruciform plan, this cathedral-type footprint is composed of nave and chancel (as is a parish church), but here the two spaces are intersected at a right angle by one or two projecting arms known as transepts. Perhaps to avoid a similarly vague prescription for the use of this cathedral plan for a parish church, as at Snettisham, no mention is made at all of this particular heresy in the *Ecclesiologist*.⁸⁰ The English society's obsession with compartmentalizing each church and cathedral of medieval England both formally and stylistically into neat and tidy categories was, in itself, evidently problematic.

⁷⁸ *Ecclesiologist* 1 (August 1842), 182.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Frank Wills, however, does point this fact out in the first of three of his own such articles that appeared in *The New York Ecclesiologist*, “Form and Arrangement of Churches”, *New York Ecclesiologist* 1 (October 1848), 54.

Bishop Medley was undoubtedly aware of these formal peculiarities at Snettisham and selected this particular church accordingly, declaring the chosen English model to be, “ in its architecture and proportions, betwixt an English Cathedral and a Parish Church and therefore better adapted to this Province, and to the means of its inhabitants.”⁸¹ As an active member of the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society and founder of the aforementioned EDAS, Medley was for some years already interested in church building, an interest befitting an ecclesiastic embarking on missionary work in the colonies. Thus the recently ordained bishop was aware of the funds necessary for church construction at home, and the reality of building in the colonies would have immediately posed the impossibility of modeling his structure on the great scale and luxury of medieval English cathedrals.

A Colonial Solution for British North America

Not unlike Medley, Frank Wills was also a member of several ecclesiastical and antiquarian societies, one of which he was involved in founding. However, Wills’s particular situation proved more difficult, for the societies to which he belonged included not only the like-minded English Ecclesiological and Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (EDAS) organizations, but also the New York Ecclesiological Society (NYES), an American offshoot of the earlier English society but increasingly opposed to its English counterpart’s rigid doctrinal views. Differing climatic, material and, in particular, economic conditions between the two countries found Frank Wills and others within the New York society increasingly skeptical of the strict, exclusionary ideals initially adopted from the English Ecclesiologists. In his book, Wills expounded the necessity for adaptation of English ideals in America: wood and

⁸¹ Richardson, “Frank Wills”, *DCB*, 942.

brick are advocated as alternative building materials to expensive and often unattainable stone. Likewise it was admitted that the costly Decorated or Second-Pointed style favored by the English Ecclesiologists (and even by Wills himself) would have to be given up in many cases for the sake of practicality in favor of the simpler, less expensive features inherent to Early English. In his unique position as ‘sitting on the fence’ between the two societies to which he belonged, Wills continued to accept and, where possible, adhere to general ecclesiological principles, including the necessity of a nave and chancel and, of course, the use of Gothic as the only proper style in which to build ecclesiastical buildings. Considering the new circumstances encountered in the eastern United States, however, Stanton quite rightly points out that, “by 1850, less than two years after its foundation, the New York Ecclesiological Society had wandered far from orthodoxy”.⁸²

Christ Church Cathedral at Fredericton presents a prime example of the differing viewpoints on formal and stylistic matters held by the English and American organizations at this particular moment. Based on the model of St. Mary’s parish church in Snettisham, the Fredericton cathedral comprises several of the features found in the design of this medieval English parish church. As a cathedral, the Fredericton structure adopts the features more befitting of a building of this higher status: the western galilee porch and the cruciform plan (Figure 13). Such amendments might be assumed to satisfy the English ecclesiologists, but because the size of Christ Church Cathedral is similar to that of its model, the visual effect created was of a mere parish church and had little of the grandeur that should be rendered explicit in the form of a traditional Anglican cathedral.

⁸² Stanton, 207.

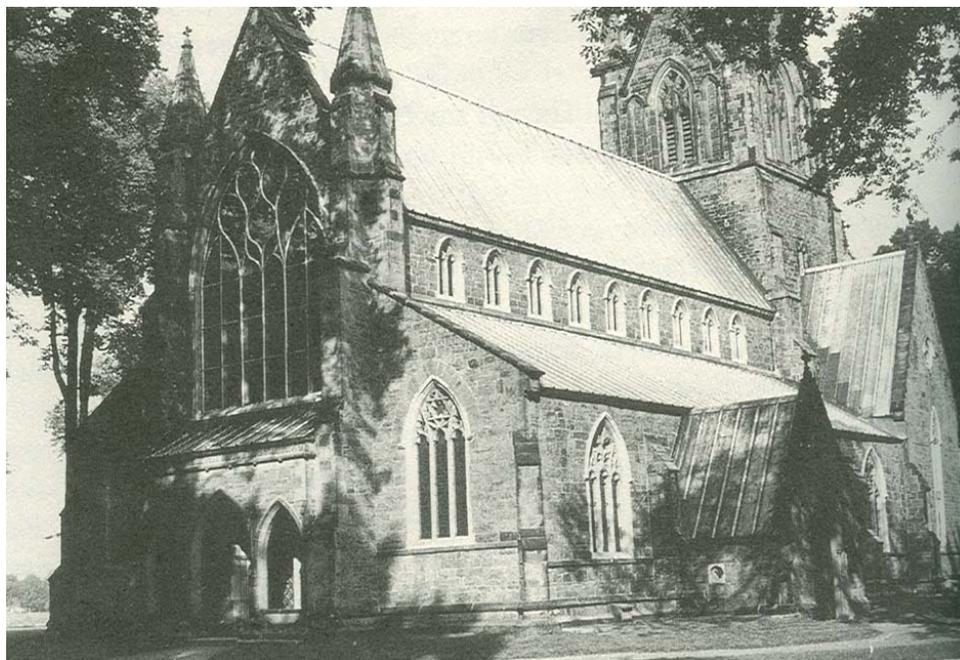


Figure 13: West end of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton showing the galilee porch.

Source: Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture*, 144.

What the English Ecclesiologists could not initially admit or accept was that this colonial structure was at once both a parochial church and a cathedral. In describing and distinguishing the two building types in English history, Wills writes in his treatise: “the one was the Church of a Parish; the other, the Church of every Parish in the Diocese, and was built in the city where the Bishop and his chapter resided”. Wills continues: “the two were built with different intentions—the services celebrated therein were different”.⁸³ At first it seems Wills’s claims are made in contradiction to his own composite work at Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton. Of key importance here, however, is the fact that Wills is writing in the past tense to describe the situation of medieval English ecclesiastical architecture – not modern North American practice.

⁸³ Wills, *AEAA*, 49.

Frank Wills had developed a new cathedral type that synthesized the forms and functions of cathedral and parish church, a ‘hybrid’ that was initially rejected by the English Ecclesiologists. Nonetheless, this form was appropriate to the wants of the *cathedral* at the present day, and this Wills himself stood behind and perpetuated for North American use in both his theory and practice. For example, as if to call out the shifting character of English ecclesiological doctrine that cast St. Mary’s as problematic, Wills cites the function of the galilee in ecclesiastical history. Thus the author claims in his text that the galilee’s western location (the west being the opposite end of the church from the most sacred east end where the altar is located), and even its name, suggests its less sacred character, as does the disagreement between contemporary authors as to its function and by whom it was to be used.⁸⁴ By presenting the galilee as ambiguous in its function and in the sacredness of its location, Wills strips this feature of its previously cathedral-only status (as maintained by the Ecclesiologists). He simultaneously defends his Fredericton cathedral design.

Though never actually specified, Wills similarly seems to be invoking the Fredericton cathedral design when he writes of the “sin of modern Church Architecture in England until these last few years”.⁸⁵ In the following passage England is referred to not exclusively as the physical location of these heresies but also the body judging these church-building efforts – namely, the Ecclesiologists. In seeming opposition to his work at Fredericton, Wills protests:

⁸⁴ Ibid, 51. Wills cites Parker’s *Glossary of Gothic Architecture* here in its definition of ‘galilee’ as alluding to the “Galilee of the Gentiles”; Wills otherwise doesn’t reveal any of the sources for his argument.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 44; the only time Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton is named in Wills’s book is in a caption describing his lithographed examples of Second-Pointed window tracery. One of these examples shows the recently restored west window at St. Mary’s, Snettisham, which is duplicated at Fredericton. No mention is made, however, of Wills’s position as architect for the Fredericton cathedral.

“[this sin] has not been in the badness of detail, for it has oft times been most pure, yet the building where it is found has been most wretched. It has consisted in the misapplication of those details; sometimes by copying them on too small a scale, thereby rendering them absurd, as the building [of] churches for dolls or cathedrals for babies: sometimes by misplacing them, as in putting windows well suited for a flank elevation in a western front, or a cathedral doorway in a village porch, and vice versa.”⁸⁶

The first portion of the quote refers to incorrect proportions relative to a building’s function as either a parish church or cathedral – the overarching issue the Ecclesiologists found with the Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton design. The quote also condemns the presence of a triple galilee porch on a church-sized building. So far the Fredericton cathedral is guilty of both of these “sins”. Furthermore, Stanton points out that since the choir and north transept of St. Mary’s, Snettisham, were in ruin at the time that Wills made drawings of the medieval church for his plan at Fredericton, these forms were simply reconstructed for the cathedral from other existing specimens. Thus the south window of the extant south transept at St. Mary’s was duplicated to replace the missing east window.⁸⁷ This translation, in turn, informed the proposed east window at Fredericton. The example Wills gives in his passage admittedly refers to a west window but, taken in conjunction with the two other “heresies,” Fredericton cathedral seems the obvious reference. His proposed substitution of a flank window for an eastern one (the east being the most sacred and

⁸⁶ Ibid, 44.

⁸⁷ Stanton, 142.

thus most richly embellished window in the building) only serves to compound this issue of inappropriateness as far as his English counterparts were concerned.

Having laid out these “sins” of modern English church architecture, Wills’s following paragraph opens with a defense of his own design choices by challenging the relevance of this separation in the present day and context: “we shall see that something beyond a mere correctness of detail is necessary to produce a perfect building.”⁸⁸ For Wills that “something” is the expression of intention or purpose of the building attained through a combination of beauty and utility.⁸⁹ Issues of materiality, size, etc., in turn, express the building’s ‘reality’. Wills draws here from his inspiration, Pugin, in his insistence upon truth or reality in architecture. The ‘reality’ for Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, BNA, was the need to adopt an English model capable of fulfilling the dual wants of a colonial cathedral.

The Ecclesiologists’ Change of Heart

Frank Wills does also relate in the abovementioned quote that these “sins” were only considered as such until “these last few years”. April 1848 to be exact. On this date the *Ecclesiologist* printed an article on the form of colonial cathedrals, admitting – though somewhat reluctantly – to the necessity in the colonies “of designing a church which shall be at once cathedral and parochial”. The English society remained skeptical as to this hybrid’s success, however, believing that “the fusion of the two ideas is almost impossible,” and presuming that, “perhaps all that can be done is to avoid the more offensive incongruities”.⁹⁰ What exactly these “incongruities” were is not elaborated, but the term unequivocally underscores the English society’s

⁸⁸ Wills, *AEEA*, 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁰ “Colonial Church Architecture,” *Ecclesiologist* 5 (April 1848), 276-77.

reluctance to concede completely on their previous position. A similarly surprising event appearing in this same issue is the announcement of Frank Wills's election as an official member of the English Ecclesiological Society. Wills himself was undoubtedly aware of these concessions when an article he wrote, treating broadly on the subject of parish church and cathedral forms, appeared in the first issue of the *New York Ecclesiologist* (*NYE*), just six months later.⁹¹

In his article, "Form and Arrangement of Churches," Wills seeks to instruct readers in both the history of English Gothic church design and its application in nineteenth-century North America. This article would also comprise a section of Chapter Two in the author's future treatise. Perhaps not surprisingly, Snettisham is invoked here as a parish church example in which a galilee porch is presented as an acceptable substitute for entering and exiting in the absence of a western tower with entrance. The related issue of the T-form or cross plan with central tower is likewise approached. Wills does not freely advocate its use, however, for he proposes that these forms could result in "a very clumsy appearance externally"⁹² when improperly employed. Indeed, the purely subjective position of such a claim seemingly suggests instead a sense of territoriality or possession on the part of Wills toward his 'hybrid' form at the Fredericton cathedral, as well as an alignment of himself with those medieval church builders who alone were able – through their understanding of Gothic design principles – to successfully combine these details.

Various typical ground plans are illustrated in Wills's *NYE* article for the reader's clarification. Wills borrows these plans from Brandon's *Parish Churches*,⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid, 291.

⁹² Wills, *AEEA*, 67.

⁹³ Raphael Brandon, *Parish Churches* (London: G. Bell, 1848).

to which he appends the ground plan of St. Mary's, Snettisham to the bottom of the original illustration (Figure 14). This appropriation of a plate from a very popular guidebook in England and America presents a very clear statement about Wills's position on a particular (though rare) parish church form in Gothic England that Brandon had perhaps overlooked, the Ecclesiologists wished to ignore, but North American practice should readily adopt, where necessary. Thus Wills's addition functions as a commentary on, if not even a re-writing of, English Gothic architectural history as understood by the English Ecclesiologists and their followers. The altered plate is also featured in, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*.

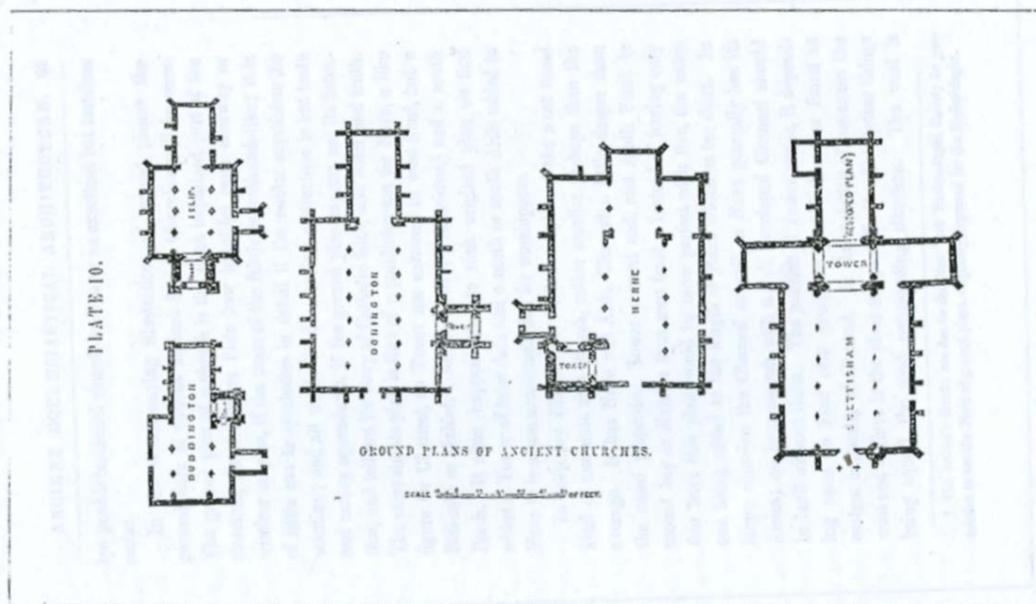


Figure 14: Ground Plans of Ancient Churches from Brandon's *Parish Churches*. The plan of Snettisham was added by Frank Wills and published in the New York Ecclesiologist and his own architectural treatise.

Source: Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*, plate 10.

Frank Wills perpetuated his interest in mixing church and cathedral details in a sketch he designed for the *NYE* exactly one year later (Figure 15). This drawing of “A First Pointed Church” was evidently not exactly what some individuals at the *NYE*

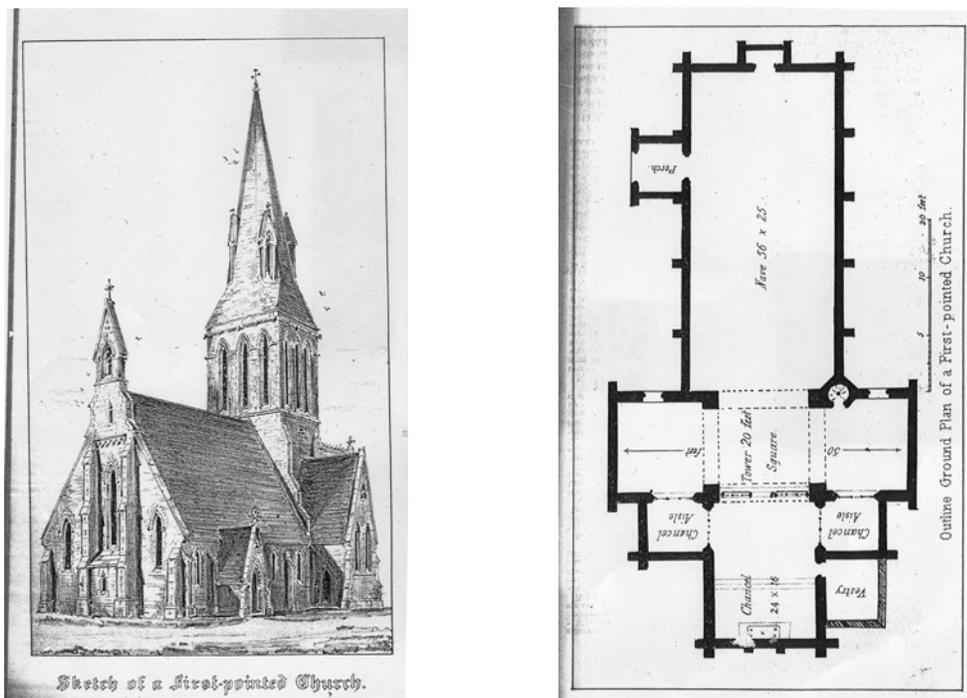


Figure 15: Sketch and ground plan of a First Pointed church by Frank Wills. This hybrid design is composed of two church types he used at Fredericton: the chapel with bell-cote at St. Anne’s and the cruciform plan with crossing tower of Christ Church Cathedral.

Source: “A First Pointed Church,” *New York Ecclesiologist* 2 (October 1849), 18-19.

were contemplating when they asked Wills to provide “ a sketch and ground-plan of a simple, but correct Church, which might serve as a guide to those of our friends who are about to build Churches, and which might dispose them to make choice of a correct design”.⁹⁴ What they received instead was the sketch and plan of a cruciform building incorporating both ecclesiastical forms used by Wills at Fredericton: the cross plan of Christ Church Cathedral and the chapel form with bellcote he employed for the

⁹⁴ “A First-Pointed Church,” *NYE* 2 (October 1849), 18.

cathedral's chapel-of-ease, St. Anne's (1846; Figure 16). Seeing as parish churches and cathedrals in North America were everywhere still contained within a single building, Wills evidently intended his hybrid form as much for the small, rural churches with little financial ability as for wealthier parishes. The unidentified author

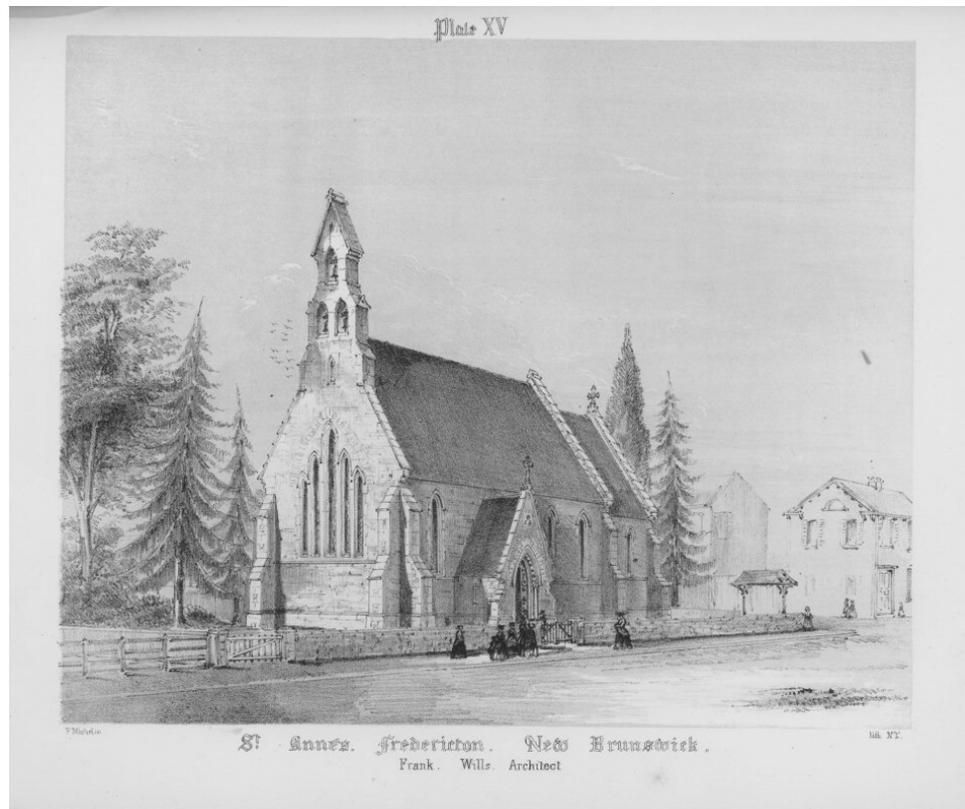


Figure 16: St. Anne's Chapel, Fredericton, New Brunswick, British North America (1846-1847) by Frank Wills.

Source: Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*, appendix, 109.

of the *NYE* article unfortunately misunderstood this organic, accretive design to which the parish could add, over time, as funds became available. He chose instead to side with the Ecclesiologists' earlier stance on the topic: "In numbers II, III, and IV, of the *Ecclesiologist*, are mentioned the objections to the cross form for parishes Churches,

which has of late found great favor among us.”⁹⁵ Evidently the author hadn’t read the more recent number of the English journal in which its members had changed their opinion towards this type of ground plan in colonial church building.

With the English Ecclesiologists’ change of heart, due praise for the hybrid design Frank Wills advocated came with his next (and unfortunately, last) cathedral commission. Given his death in 1857, the architect had little time to relish their commendation of his design for Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal (1857-1860).⁹⁶ As opposed to their decade-old negative reaction to the Fredericton effort, Wills’s English brethren announced in the *Ecclesiologist* eight months after his untimely death that, “Montreal Cathedral will, when completed, mark an epoch in transatlantic ecclesiology”.⁹⁷ Indeed their dislike of the Fredericton design and all its previous faults had by this time completely abated, even though these same issues reappear once more at Montreal: “the existence of an open projecting western porch of three arches, the example for which Mr. Wills found at Snettisham church, Norfolk, the prototype of the nave of Fredericton Cathedral...it is a feature not unsuited to a church of more than parochial dignity, and not undesirable, we should imagine, in the Canadian climate”⁹⁸ (Figure 17). Ironically, the Snettisham model that Wills had advocated for use in the colonial context (which found the want of a building that could serve as both parish church and cathedral) was now also triumphant in its use for a pure cathedral, devoid of an attendant congregation.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁶ Wills’s design replaced the original James Gibbs-style cathedral structure that burned down in 1856.

⁹⁷ “Sydney and Fredericton Cathedrals” *Ecclesiologist* 18 (December 1857), 359.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 358.

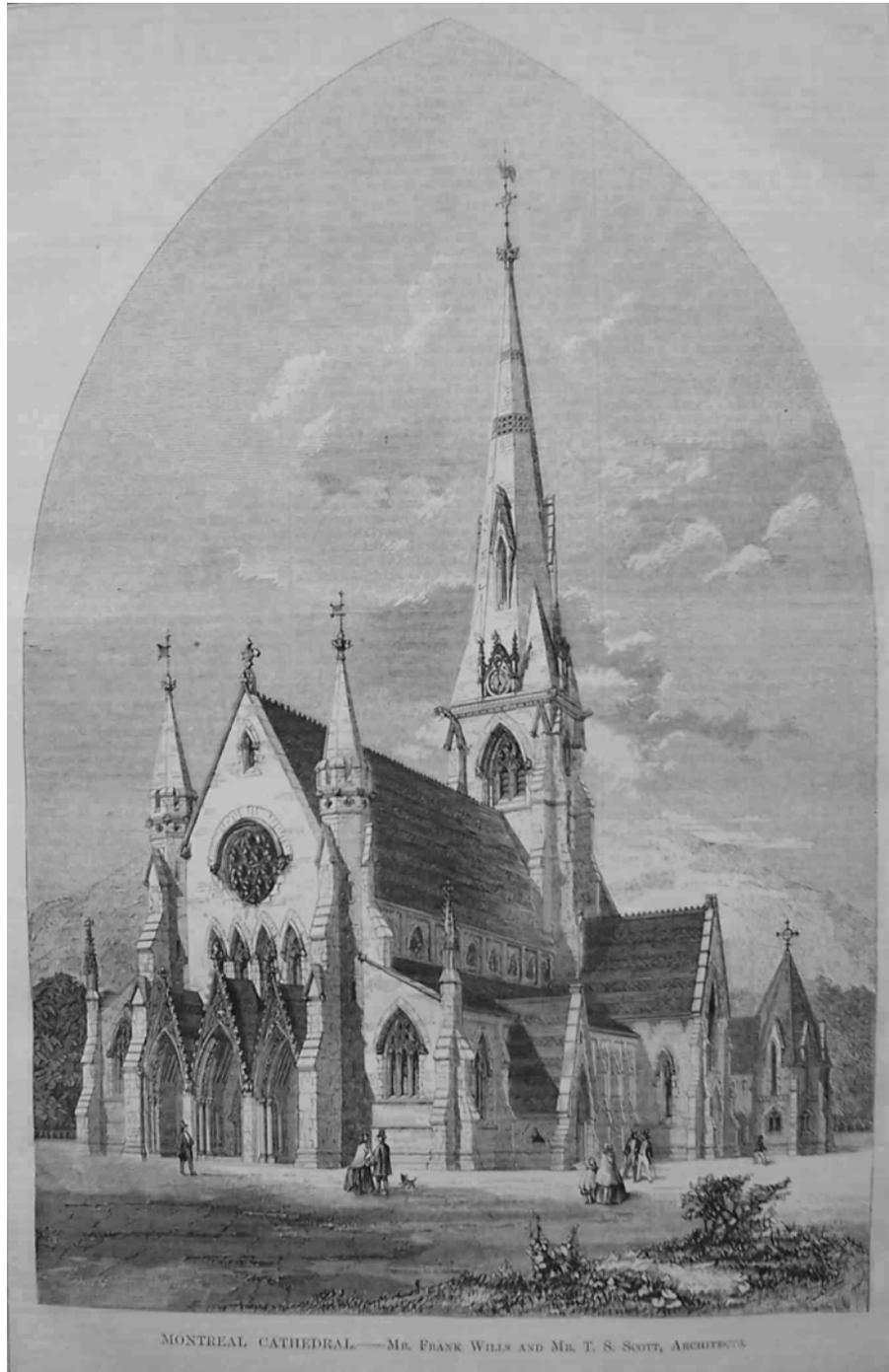


Figure 17: Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal (1857-60). Erected by T.S. Scott to the designs of Frank Wills. St. Mary's, Snettisham once again provides the inspiration (including the galilee porch), as earlier at Fredericton.
Source: Anonymous. "Montreal Cathedral," *The Builder* (January 9, 1958), 27.

Frank Wills the North American and Cathedral Architect

Frank Wills was sensitive, if not fully committed, to the Episcopal Church in America. He identifies America as “our” country throughout his writings, though the appeal this would have for his American audience is obvious and perhaps even a motivating factor. A more telling example, perhaps, is his attitude towards Tractarianism or Anglo-Catholicism in America. In a somewhat negative and almost heretical statement with regard to his ecclesiological sensibilities and associations, Wills retorted to an unfavorable review of one of his projects in the *Ecclesiologist* that: “with us more than in any other country, the fixedness of our faith should be indicated as opposed to the shifting character of the various heresies around us”.⁹⁹ This is not to suggest that Wills aligned himself with Evangelical Episcopalianism – that white-washed and seemingly impious faction of the Anglican faith and its correspondingly inappropriate auditory plan church architecture that the Ecclesiologists sought to eradicate – but he similarly doesn’t seem convinced of the necessity in America for certain fineries and exclusions imposed by the English Ecclesiologists and their followers.¹⁰⁰

Likewise, the Anglican Church in BNA was also not without its own native desires for church building separate from those transmitted directly from England. In

⁹⁹ Frank Wills, “To the Editor of the *New York Ecclesiologist*,” *NYE* 2 (March 1849), 94.

¹⁰⁰ One point of contention between Wills and the Ecclesiologists was the erection of a weathercock (Wills) versus a cross (Ecclesiologists) atop the spire of Wills’s design for Trinity Church, San Francisco, Wills, “To the Editor of the *New York Ecclesiologist*,” *NYE* 2 (March 1849), 94. It is interesting to note here that within the last ten years (1842) horns locked at St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia (the church for which Wills provides a design and places as the frontispiece to his book, and the topic of the previous chapter in this study) regarding the addition of a cross to Strickland’s recently completed tower and spire for fear of similar Romanizing tendencies. The vestry was apparently hung on the decision and it was the rector who broke the tie in favor of raising the cross. This information was gathered from the vestry records of St. Peter’s Church Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

contemplating the choice of an architect to design the new cathedral at Montreal, many able and ‘ecclesiologically-approved’ practitioners in England were available. One member of the English Ecclesiological Society notes, with some disdain, however, that “local prejudices” compelled the bishop to hire Frank Wills.¹⁰¹ This decision at once suggests the interest in employing a resident of North America (despite Wills having been born an Englishman), and the elevated position Wills held among his peers as capable of carrying out this cathedral project. With the first appearance of cathedrals in the United States in the following decades, it is not difficult to imagine what an influential role Wills would likely have commanded had he lived beyond the tender age of thirty-five.

Despite, or perhaps aside from, his convictions about the American Episcopal Church in the face of English Ecclesiology, Wills returned to Canada by early 1857 to raise Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal. At the time that the Montreal commission arose, debates continued over the issue of cathedrals in the United States. Thus it remained unclear if a similarly autonomous cathedral form would ever develop in that country, despite the relentless efforts of High Church ecclesiastics and architects like Frank Wills in advocating its adoption. In his choice to accept the Montreal cathedral commission, Wills may also have agreed with the *Ecclesiologist* on the “reflex influence which they [cathedrals] must have upon the Church of the United States,”¹⁰². Either way, Frank Wills was offered the unprecedented opportunity to design a true cathedral (with no attached parish) in North America, and on a grander scale than his previous attempt at Fredericton. Wills prepared the plans but unfortunately died before the building rose above the level of its foundations. The subsequent architect

¹⁰¹ Beresford-Hope, 97.

¹⁰² *Ecclesiologist* 18 (December 1857), 359.

and English-born resident of Montreal, Thomas Seaton Scott (1826-1895), remained sympathetic, however, to Wills's original vision in completing the project.

Christ Church Cathedral at Fredericton, however, was not so lucky in retaining its original and singular design intention. During a lull in construction in 1847 that sent Wills to New York in search of more work and Bishop Medley to England in search of more funds, the Ecclesiological Society's favorite English Gothic Revival architect, William Butterfield (1814-1900), was invited by Medley to alter the Fredericton plans. Thus Butterfield proposed "a more economic profile with a short sanctuary, no transepts, and a simplified central tower."¹⁰³ Bishop Medley ultimately overruled much of Butterfield's external alterations though, likely on the grounds of both financial and aesthetic want. Nevertheless, the invitation to amend the original drawings ensured for the Ecclesiologists the satisfaction of a more correct cathedral design at Fredericton, as well as the opportunity for self-congratulation for their role in its genesis.¹⁰⁴ Indeed this intervention is undoubtedly the source of a new and improved opinion bestowed upon the cathedral by the English Ecclesiologists without requiring amendment to their current ideals but rather a physical submission to them. For Wills this result must have been bittersweet. Upon completion, the *Ecclesiologist* proclaimed the success of Fredericton Cathedral on account of "its distinctive work of directly influencing the Church of North America, a work, the importance of which cannot be overstated. In an ecclesiological aspect moreover, it has had the advantage of having been finished under the advice of Mr. Butterfield".¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Richardson, "Frank Wills", *DCB*, 943.

¹⁰⁴ Butterfield's interest in raising the choir roof to the same height as that of the nave and transepts suggests that this aspect of Wills's original design must have represented one of those aforementioned "incongruities" that the Ecclesiologists would write about in the following year.

¹⁰⁵ "Sydney and Fredericton Cathedrals," *Ecclesiologist* 11 (October 1853), 352.

Frank Wills was no longer the sole architect of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton. In the face of his struggle to establish a distinctly North American church architecture, the English Ecclesiologists' subsequent interventions undoubtedly affected Wills's vision at Fredericton. Perhaps worse was the appropriation of the project from abroad by William Butterfield himself who enjoyed the same position as official architect to the English society as Wills did with the New York one. Though Butterfield's planned alterations to the building's exterior were ultimately minimal, his contribution is prevalent in the design of the interior furnishings at the east end as well as the church plate and brass eagle lectern. Such a blow to Wills's ego might suggest an alternative reason for the omission of the Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton design from his architectural treatise. Clearly the situation was also indicative of the increasing competition among architects in nineteenth-century North America. Evidence of this competitive atmosphere is suggested by Frank Wills in his treatise, particularly in reference to fellow Gothicist and rival, Richard Upjohn, and it is to this topic that we now turn in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 3
WILLS vs. UPJOHN:
PROFESSIONAL RIVALRY AND REPUTATION IN
AMERICA'S GOTHIC REVIVAL

Frank Wills represented a principal source of competitive irritation to the career and reputation of fellow Gothicist, Richard Upjohn: Wills was at least twenty years younger than Richard Upjohn; he had only been in North America since 1845 but had trained as an architect in England where he also gained first hand knowledge of English Gothic architecture; he was a member of the Exeter and English Ecclesiological Societies; he co-founded the New York Ecclesiological Society for which he served as official architect and frequent writer; he had written a book; he had been awarded at least one commission originally handed to his famed colleague; and Frank Wills could rightfully claim to have designed and erected a building of cathedral status.

There can be little doubt that a sense of rivalry on the younger man's part, existed between architects Frank Wills and Richard Upjohn. Though no written correspondence or other evidence exists to argue the exact nature of any professional relationship between Wills and Upjohn, unmistakable examples of professional rivalry are subtly revealed in Wills's writings, including his architectural treatise, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*. From these sources it is clear that "Wills held Upjohn in some disdain".¹⁰⁶ Indeed their very existence suggests that Wills himself was likewise feeling the competition given him by the elder Upjohn. The assertive talent of Wills often put his rival on the defensive, provoking a seeming reactionary

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Richardson, "Frank Wills," *DCB*, 942.

competition by Richard Upjohn. This paper examines those areas of overlap in Wills and Upjohn's theory and practice, particularly in writing and membership in various architectural societies, in order to gain a better understanding of the professional tensions that existed between these two Englishmen working in the same style and jockeying for top position amongst their peers and the future history of the American Gothic Revival. Frank Wills's role in this battle has been far too often overlooked and underrated.

Phoebe Stanton writes that a comparison between Wills and Upjohn is difficult.¹⁰⁷ This assertion, based on age difference and personal stylistic preferences, is unsatisfying. Despite subtle mannerisms that distinguish each designer from another, both Wills and Upjohn were working in the same style – Ecclesiological Gothic – with the same religious and moral beliefs about what that architecture meant to them and to society as a whole. This is not to say that Wills and Upjohn were designing identical churches but rather that they were working within the limits of a loosely proscribed architectural doctrine whose ideals every ecclesiological architect strove to fulfill to the best of their ability. Preferences in architectural detail are what lend these structures their individuality, interest and even competitive edge. This paper is concerned not with a comparison of formal and stylistic qualities of these two architects' church designs but with closely examining those very instances of competition and rivalry underlying the great theoretical and practical achievements of both men. Stanton does, however, seem to stake the only claim in Gothic Revival historiography for Wills's position as one of irritation, if not even threat, to Upjohn.¹⁰⁸ This paper sheds more light on this dynamic, particularly in the case of Wills's

¹⁰⁷ Stanton, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Stanton, 183-185.

reaction to Trinity Church, New York, in his book and in several *New York Ecclesiologist* (*NYE*) reviews. In addition to examining this “conflict between Upjohn and the New York Ecclesiological Society,”¹⁰⁹ I will also touch upon the strategic role that the American Institute of Architects (AIA) played for Richard Upjohn within this power struggle.

Architectural competition increased steadily in the 1840s and 1850s. In American Episcopal parishes, this phenomenon arose alongside the increasing wealth and competition of their respective clergy and congregations.¹¹⁰ Mary Woods writes in her book, *From Craft to Profession*, that “Henry Van Brunt, a young architect and early institute member, later recalled the 1850s as a period when architects were set against one another. They regarded books and drawings, he continued, as trade secrets to be kept from competitors.”¹¹¹ Moreover, the rising number of practitioners gave clients the upper hand to pick and choose their architects. This issue would become the main impetus for Richard Upjohn’s organization of the AIA in the late 1850s to be discussed later in this paper. The extent to which the Institute was successful at eradicating this rivalry is, however, questionable at best: opinions on the topic of competition were divergent.¹¹² Not only did the number of architects steadily increase but so did the number of these individuals being professionally trained as such in America – Upjohn’s office is exemplary of this development.¹¹³ Their credentials and

¹⁰⁹ Stanton, 183.

¹¹⁰ The situation in England was a similar one, leading the *Ecclesiologists* to publish the article, “On Competition Amongst Architects,” *Ecclesiologist* 6 (March 1842), 65-67, deploring the absurdities of this “fashion of the age”.

¹¹¹ Mary N. Woods, *From Craft To Profession: the Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1999), 33.

¹¹² Everard Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1949), Chapter 8 “Foundation of the Institute,” especially 163-165.

¹¹³ Judith S. Hull has written a very informative piece on Upjohn’s office that gives insight into the organization and workings of his practice, including its known members and library contents, “The School of Upjohn: Richard Upjohn’s Office,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52:3 (September 1993).

native provenance would find increasing favor with clients over the earlier domination of the field by multiple generations of English immigrants like Wills and Upjohn.

Today the figure of Richard Upjohn is essentially synonymous with the term, American Gothic Revival. His Trinity Church (1839-1846) at Broadway and Wall Street in New York is arguably *the* iconic symbol of American Gothic Revival church architecture. Frank Wills, however, had a problem with both. Wills was continually critical of Upjohn's work, particularly in matters of the latter architect's choice in detailing. This was a double insult considering Upjohn's background in the skilled trade of cabinetry, not architecture – a highly skilled and meticulous trade requiring a large degree of finishing work. Wills even refers to alterations to Trinity's chancel screen as “only an unmeaning piece of expensive cabinet-maker's work,—confused in detail, and, with its shallow, empty niches, an excrescence, rather than an ornament”.¹¹⁴ This description might even serve equally well as Wills's opinion of Upjohn's entire oeuvre of ecclesiastical architecture. Indeed, Upjohn's use of the Perpendicular style at Trinity was a point of contention with both Wills and the Ecclesiologists in England, for whom the Decorated or Second-Pointed was thought to reflect the pinnacle of Gothic beauty.

'Sham' in Theory and Practice

In *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, A. W. N. Pugin implores the necessity for truth to materials. Any self-respecting English ecclesiological architect strove to uphold this basic tenet. For Pugin and his Gothic Revival followers, the honest construction that characterized medieval church architecture was an essential element for modern church building in order to rekindle the spirit of that

¹¹⁴ Frank Wills, “Church Notes,” *NYE* 2 (October 1849), 29.

past time and the associated sense of elevated piety for the Christian faith. Only by embracing the design principles and spirit of Gothic architecture could modern society's woes be cured.

Not least among these contemporary ailments was what ecclesiologists saw as the degradation of many medieval Anglican churches from the Reformation to the early nineteenth century with the rise of Evangelical Anglicanism.¹¹⁵ In England, the transformation of many existing church interiors into veritable auditoria for the preachers paid little respect to their original form, fittings and functions. Until the advent of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists, new church construction in England and North America was often built to serve this didactic program. The buildings were decorated either in the mutually abhorred classical vocabulary, or a naïve Gothick style in which Gothic-like ornament was applied to an otherwise classically planned structure. The eradication of this 'sham' or deceit, in both liturgy and architecture alike, through a return to medieval forms and administration of the faith, was the mission of Pugin, the Ecclesiologists and their ardent followers like Frank Wills and Richard Upjohn.

Pugin's influence on the theory and practice of Wills is undeniable, particularly with respect to the latter's book, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*. Within the text of his treatise, Wills clearly takes up the same efforts as his mentor – this time in America – in not only advocating Gothic as the only appropriate style for Christian architecture but in reinstating a sense of honesty to

¹¹⁵ It is interesting to note that as a child, Pugin's mother dragged him every Sunday to hear an Evangelical Anglican preacher; by 1835 Pugin had converted from the Church of England to Roman Catholicism. See Benjamin Ferrey, *Recollections of A. N. Welby Pugin, and his Father, Augustus Pugin, with Notes of their Works* (London: Stanford, 1861) for a thorough account of Pugin's life written by a childhood friend.

Christian church building: “Let us away with every thing like *sham* in our churches...If we cannot give what is *costly*, we can at least give what is *real*” [Italics are the author’s own].¹¹⁶ Wills was zealously attempting to bring the basic principles of English Gothic architecture to as many North American parishes as possible. In so doing, poor parishes were accommodated as best as could be with ecclesiologically correct, yet economical, church designs. These buildings were based on the simpler Early English or First-Pointed style and, where funds were particularly scarce, they were built entirely of wood instead of the preferred stone. Open timber roofs were always advocated for this class of structure. For Wills, these humble ecclesiastical buildings were admirable for their truthful construction of exposed materials employed for the uses in which they were intended. Pugin eulogized that “Pointed architecture does not conceal her construction, but beautifies it”.¹¹⁷ Wills similarly believed that sham construction only compounded the problem of budget and spoke of deceit for poor and wealthy parishes alike: “how much money is squandered in absurd contrivances to conceal some necessary feature, when for one tithe the amount the same feature could be made beautiful.”¹¹⁸ For Wills, beauty equals honesty.

Frank Wills was quick to accuse Richard Upjohn’s Trinity Church of being guilty of sham architecture. Trinity was the first church to be reviewed under the “New Churches” section of the *New York Ecclesiologist*, and the author was none other than Frank Wills. While acknowledging the pre-ecclesiological date of Upjohn’s design in American architectural production and the general positive effect of having built a structure that undoubtedly feels like a church, Wills cannot hide certain criticisms in his review, particularly as regards the interior finish:

¹¹⁶ Wills, *AEEA*, 87-88.

¹¹⁷ Pugin, *True Principles*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Wills, *AEEA*, 107.

“The roof of the Nave is apparently a groined stone one of great beauty—but proves only to be plaster. Why was not one of those exquisite open roofs, the chief glory of this style, employed instead? We have the same objection to make to the walls as to the roof; they are also of plaster and marked as stone. This is a practice we never can let pass without our protest. It knocks away the very basis of Christian architecture—truth and reality”.¹¹⁹

This quote makes clear the target of Wills’s comment on the difference between medieval and modern church architecture, and it is one that he repeats in his treatise: “The trickery which could turn good plaster into vile stone they knew not”.¹²⁰ Hinting further at the object of his scorn without actually naming any names, Wills continues: “The sum spent on the lath and plaster stone vaulted ceiling of many a Church in this city, would be sufficient to have paid for three open timber roofs of the same size blazing with gold and color.”¹²¹ In the appendix to his book, Wills finally reveals the identity of the ‘sham’ church for the reader as Trinity, New York. By extension, the identity of the architect responsible for this seemingly scandalous design is revealed to be Richard Upjohn. The description for Wills’s design for St. Peter’s Church, Philadelphia, (which appears as the frontispiece to his book – see Chapter One of the current study), explains that the project would be carried out in the preferred Second-Pointed style, incorporate essential open timber roofs, and, undoubtedly as a result of

¹¹⁹ “New Churches – Trinity Church, New York,” *NYE* 1 (October 1848), 36.

¹²⁰ Wills, *AEEA*, 85.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 107.

this latter consideration, be “nearly of the same dimensions as Trinity Church, but costing less than one-fourth the sum expended on that edifice.”¹²²

In Upjohn’s defense, Pugin and the Ecclesiologists *were* influential on his ideas about architectural theory. The design of Trinity Church is clearly a product of the Ecclesiological Gothic style that emerged in England during the 1830s in its employment and integration of more authentic medieval forms and details compared to the applied ornament that characterized earlier efforts. Indeed the Perpendicular style of Trinity was also the favored style of Pugin before the early 1840s. Stanton even calls out the inarguable similarity between the Trinity design and a sketch of an “Ideal Church”, also in the Perpendicular style, by Pugin.¹²³ What Wills’s criticism does not allow Upjohn is the need for such deceitful modifications, the architect being ever at the mercy of client wishes and/or financial circumstances. Indeed, Wills himself tries to explain these same issues to the English Ecclesiologists after their scathing review of one of his own projects: “the public must have a tower and spire, where there are scarcely funds for a porch, and if the architect does not give them a tolerable one, they will make a worse one ‘on their own hook,’ and give him the credit of it.”¹²⁴

The following year Trinity Church received a second review by Frank Wills in the *NYE*.¹²⁵ Shorter, but more biting than the first write-up, Wills seems unconvinced

¹²² Ibid, Appendix, 108.

¹²³ Stanton, 61. Pugin’s sketch was published in *True Principles* two years after Trinity’s cornerstone was laid, however. If Upjohn was looking to this “Ideal Church” for inspiration, subsequent revision to the original Trinity design would have been necessary to accord with Pugin’s model. Pugin also employed the Perpendicular style for his secular commission with Charles Barry at the Houses of Parliament in London (1836-68).

¹²⁴ “Notices and Answers to Correspondents, Letter from Mr. Wills” *NYE* 2 (March 1850), 95. The church design that was (somewhat favorably) reviewed in the *Ecclesiologist* and sparked this protest from Wills was for Trinity Church, San Francisco (1849).

¹²⁵ “Church Notes – Recent Trinity Alterations” *NYE* 2 (October 1849), 29.

of the success of recent chancel alterations made to enhance the building's interior lighting effect. Thus Wills exclaims that, "independently of the poverty of the original design, which even the addition of smoke-colored glass cannot totally change—it [the alteration] has rendered the shadows thick and dirty".¹²⁶ Wills had mentioned the defect of the chancel lighting in his first review, referring to the "darkness of the Chancel as one of the great defects of the church".¹²⁷ Evidently his earlier suggestion to use paint and gilding to increase the quality of interior light went unheeded.

Frank Wills's early interest in interior polychromy found an arena for criticism in a slightly later Upjohn project – Grace Church, Newark, New Jersey. An anonymous *NYE* review of the painting in this parish church is among the journal's most scathing:

"We imagine there can be but one opinion; it is paltry and insipid in the extreme, conceived in a feeble spirit, and executed with a faltering hand.... The glorious examples, still extant in all parts of England, sparkle with vivid red, and rich azure, and glittering gold: no large masses of washy blue, cut up with stripes of dirty brown, exhibits the caprice of meager taste or barbarous fancy".¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *NYE* 1 (October 1848), 35.

¹²⁸ "New Churches – Grace Church, Newark, NJ," *NYE* 1 (April 1849), 126-127. The article is unsigned, but the melodramatic tone and language is unmistakable in its similarity to a passage from Wills's treatise: "Our wisest plan is first to do all we can with wood before we attempt paint; but when we do use the latter material let us dip our pencils in the hues of heaven, borrow the tints of a cloudless sky or a setting sun, transfer the bright star from its amethystine vault to our churches' ceilings, and call angels from heaven to keep watch over the faithful"(82).

Having appeared in the last two reviews of different Upjohn churches by Wills, the word “dirty” seems to be a favored adjective of the author in describing Upjohn’s interior finishes and effects: an adjective of negative connotation in its opposition to the perceived purity and cleansing effect of ecclesiological doctrine on nineteenth-century Anglican church architecture. Furthermore, for Pugin and the Ecclesiologists the correct use of Gothic design principles will always produce a lucid effect.

Thus Frank Wills undoubtedly strove to damage the reputation of his rival, Richard Upjohn, through these publications with the reciprocal aim of simultaneously promoting his own career.¹²⁹ Though the objects of criticism would likely have been of little interest to anyone other than ecclesiological architects, the *NYE* reviews and Wills’s treatise cast Upjohn’s work in an unfavorable light amongst a much larger audience, including clergy and parishioners. Wills repeatedly uses this medium to portray Upjohn’s work as deviating from established doctrine and thus causing ill effects and often unnecessarily high expense. However, Upjohn was not without the support of others, including individuals within the NYES itself. Among several members of the Episcopal clergy, the renowned Bishop George Washington Doane of New Jersey was arguably Upjohn’s most important patron and supporter. In response to criticism of an acerbic review (again likely by Wills) of All Angels Church, Yorkville, Long Island, some members even bowed apologetically to Upjohn by identifying him in print as he “whom we regard as the pioneer of our own labors”.¹³⁰ This comment was sure not to please Wills, the society’s official architect from its

¹²⁹ It should be noted here that the *NYE* reviews of Richard Upjohn’s work invoked here were only a few of many examples appearing in that publication, and Frank Wills did, on occasion, show glimpses of approval for particular aspects of his rival’s work; however, such appraisals were often embedded within a larger, generally disapproving review, and thus those anonymous articles that were entirely sympathetic to Upjohn’s designs are likely not by Wills. For example, see “New Churches,” *St. James*, New London, Connecticut *NYE* 3 (July 1851), 100-101.

¹³⁰ “Notices and Answers to Correspondents,” *NYE* 2 (June 1849), 128.

inception. The implications of these sentiments on his professional relationship with those members of the NYES, and perhaps the society as a whole, are unrecorded but easily surmised. It must also be pointed out that Wills's own work was subject to reviews in the *NYE*. Considering his position as official architect, however, the criticism is not surprisingly always mild in tone if not overtly laudatory, as in one particular instance: "Nowhere on American soil could a simple little English Church appear more completely 'at home'".¹³¹ Such advertising was undoubtedly good for business in the increasingly competitive and cut-throat practice of architecture in North America at mid-century.

The Books and the Societies

Frank Wills's treatise, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*, and the religious architectural societies to which he belonged, served as tools for advancing his own career and reputation. The book combines a summary of English medieval architectural history and theory with "a few practical hints suited to this time and country". Wills felt that the content on England provided necessary background for the "American student" in gaining a better understanding of ecclesiastical doctrine in order to build better churches at the present day.¹³² Wills's great advantage was having worked as a young ecclesiastical architect in England before arriving in North America. Such first-hand knowledge lent the book an air of importance and credibility. Plates showing details of English architecture dating from each of the successive medieval periods were added throughout the text, some of which Wills assured the reader, "have fallen under my own observation".¹³³ To aid in the

¹³¹ "New Churches," St. Peter's Church—St. George's Parish, Milford, New Haven County, Connecticut, *NYE* 3 (September 1851), 161. Phoebe Stanton also makes this observation in *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture*, 185.

¹³² Wills, *AEEA*, 5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

conceptualization of these ideals, Wills includes an appendix of designs from his own architectural oeuvre. The *NYE* further points out that the book's illustrations have the "merit of being original sketches by Mr. W[ills], who is, we also learn, his own Lithographer."¹³⁴ Pugin was likewise an accomplished lithographer of his own architectural plates; Richard Upjohn, by contrast, enlisted the rendering services of Fanny Palmer (and her husband) in the 1840s for many of the architect's drawings and lithographs, including a published view of Trinity Church, New York.¹³⁵ In addition, a copy of Wills's treatise exists today in Richard Upjohn's personal library.¹³⁶

Richard Upjohn published his own book, *Rural Architecture*,¹³⁷ two years after Frank Wills's treatise appeared. Everard Upjohn, Richard's great-grandson and biographer, mentions that the idea of writing a book was suggested to Upjohn several times previously but he never did.¹³⁸ It is tempting to think that the appearance of a book on Gothic architecture by rival Frank Wills might have finally spurred Upjohn's interest. Perhaps picking up on the limited practicality that Wills's perspective drawings alone offered the "American Student" in erecting their own churches, Upjohn produced a veritable pattern book of simple ecclesiastical designs that "any

¹³⁴ "Review – Ancient Ecclesiastical Architecture" *NYE* 2 (June 1850), 109.

¹³⁵ Hull, 293. Fanny Palmer's position as a (largely uncredited?) female freelance architectural renderer and lithographer, as well as the extent and nature of her artistic oeuvre demand further academic study in their own right.

¹³⁶ Hull, 297 and Appendix 3: Upjohn's library, 306; Hull is likely correct in her assumption that Wills's book was obtained through the two men's association at the New York Ecclesiastical Society. Conversely, Wills left to posterity no library of books, as such, but it is possible to construct an idea of what his library might have contained by using the books and/or authors he mentions in his writings: Pugin, *True Principles* (1841) and *Contrasts* (1836; 1841); John Henry Parker, *A Glossary of Terms used in Grecian, Roman, Italian, and Gothic Architecture* (1845); Raphael Brandon, *Parish Churches: Being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastical Structures* (London: G. Bell, 1848); John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Poignantly, there is no mention of *Upjohn's Rural Architecture* (1852) in Wills's writings.

¹³⁷ Richard Upjohn, *Upjohn's Rural Architecture: Designs, Working Drawings and Specifications for a wooden Church, and Other Rural Structures* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852); the *NYE* gave the book a favorable review, *NYE* 4 (November 1852), 182-183.

¹³⁸ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 136.

intelligent mechanic will be able to carry out”.¹³⁹ Indeed Wills’s designs functioned essentially as a portfolio for his own practice rather than a guidebook for the average builder. Undoubtedly, Upjohn also found the publicity procured by book publishing beneficial to his career, but the inclusion of not only perspectives, but also plans, working drawings and specifications in *Upjohn’s Rural Architecture* set it apart from Wills’s treatise by increasing its author’s audience to include untrained individuals. More people could build more churches and ancillary ecclesiastical buildings based on Upjohn’s own step-by-step examples provided in his book. In this way, Upjohn’s efforts are closer to the aforementioned sketch and ground plan by Wills for ‘A ‘First-Pointed Church’, which was drawn up and published to relieve the architect of providing numerous bro-bono drawings for poor parishes. The drawings in Upjohn’s pattern book, which include one example each of a simple church, chapel, schoolhouse and parsonage, show that this architect was also thinking about the church not as an isolated and privileged sacred building but as one part of a whole community of ecclesiastical buildings necessary to the proper administration of the Christian faith in even the poorest parishes and “newly settled parts of our country”.¹⁴⁰

Architectural societies comprised a further venue for knowledge-sharing and recognition among architects in the nineteenth century, as well as the dissemination of that knowledge from those members to a larger, public audience. Frank Wills belonged to the New York Ecclesiological Society, an organization that he also co-founded and served as official architect from its inception.¹⁴¹ Wills was a frequent writer for the publication as well. Indeed much of the content found in the pages of

¹³⁹ R. Upjohn, *Rural Architecture*, Preface.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Stanton, Chapter 5, “The New York Ecclesiological Society and Its Journal,” provides a good background on this topic.

the New York Ecclesiological Society's journal, which ran from 1848-1853, became Wills's book. The aim of the NYES, being to promote the knowledge of church architecture and matters of ritual,¹⁴² was similar to that of its English counterpart. Indeed Wills himself was also a member of the English Ecclesiological Society since 1848.¹⁴³ It is curious that Richard Upjohn, however, was never a member of the English organization. The NYES sought to spread the word, adoption and, where necessary, adaptation of ecclesiology across America through articles, reviews and illustrations. The publication was "a major document on American architectural ideas...and the first American journal devoted solely to architecture".¹⁴⁴ Wills was well positioned as a leader in the North American Gothic Revival.

Richard Upjohn was not a founding figure in the NYES and could have seen Wills's position within this novel and highly successful society as a threat to his own position as a leading architect within the Episcopal community. Non-membership could only run the danger of further torment for Upjohn and ostracism by the *NYE*. He accepted the society's only honorary membership before the end of the first year.¹⁴⁵ The procedure is not clear for such a designation under the society's constitution, and one wonders what role Frank Wills had, if any, in that election. Wills's taunting reviews had likewise compelled Upjohn to make a stab about the younger man being the only society architect, and the NYES wished to dispel such rumors "that its interests are too much bound up with those of an *individual* Architect,

¹⁴² The phrase "matters of ritual" was added to the NYES Constitution at the Third Annual Address of the NYES, *NYE* 3 (January 1852), 36-37, in response to accusations from England that their sister society in America had become little more than a church building society and was unconcerned with ecclesiological doctrine despite its even mix of architects and ecclesiastics who comprised the organization's original members.

¹⁴³ "Ecclesiological, Late Cambridge Camden Society," *Ecclesiologist* 5 (April 1848), 291.

¹⁴⁴ Stanton, 161.

¹⁴⁵ *NYE* 2 (October 1849), 20.

to be impartial either towards him or others”.¹⁴⁶ By May 1851 Richard Upjohn (as well as J. W. Priest) had been added to the NYES’ list of approved architects.¹⁴⁷

This is not to suggest that Upjohn was maliciously attacking Wills. It is impossible to tell without evidence of any correspondence between them. Upjohn may have been merely trying to keep pace with the younger Wills: book publishing and society membership or involvement seemed necessary measures in securing commissions, for that was Wills’s goal. Everard Upjohn points out in his biography that Frank Wills was handed the commission for a New Hampshire church for which Upjohn was originally asked to supply drawings.¹⁴⁸ Undoubtedly a common occurrence within the profession at the time, similar “matters of professional principle, such as fees and proper conduct”¹⁴⁹ provided a major impetus for Upjohn’s next move.

Richard Upjohn officially organized the American Institute of Architects in 1857.¹⁵⁰ The organization was designed to function as a means of communication to exchange views and opinions rather than each architect attempting to influence public opinion alone. Accordingly, Upjohn’s efforts were proactive in their aim to level the playing field amongst all practicing architects. Placing himself in the leading position as the society’s president, the aging architect hoped to finally steer the profession into a more diplomatic (and profitable) realm. The topic of Upjohn’s address at the

¹⁴⁶ “Review,” *NYE* 2 (June 1850), 107.

¹⁴⁷ “NYES. The Third Annual Report of the Committee, May 12, 1851,” *NYE* 3 (January 1852), 32.

¹⁴⁸ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 144. The church in question was Claremont Church; however, the author gives no reason for the change of architects.

¹⁴⁹ Hull, 292.

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed account of the AIA’s founding, see E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, Chapter 8, 157-173. It is well to note here that a similar society of architects practicing in major U.S. cities unsuccessfully attempted to organize itself two decades earlier under the name of American Institution of Architects.

Institute's first official meeting was none other than competition, which informs every sentence. Thus the speech is, by extension, telling of the general professional climate:

“Our efforts in the formation of the AIA have been successful. A few weeks past we were what we have always been, single handed – each doing his own work, unaided by, and, to a great extent, unknown to each other; possessing no means of interchange of thought upon the weighty subjects connected with our profession, pursuing our individual interests alone, and separately endeavoring to advance, as we were able, each one his own respective position. That history is now past. A quarter of a century is sufficient time, nay, too long, for an experiment in working to such disadvantage. We were ripe for the change which has resulted in our union, and we may well congratulate each other that we are able to meet on common ground”.¹⁵¹

This address implicitly shows that Upjohn represented himself as the leader in the profession at a time when more and more young architects were being professionally trained. Indeed Hull points out that Upjohn was training many of these young men himself: “the School of Upjohn offered a training far more systematic than the kind of *ad hoc* architectural experience that either Upjohn himself, as a cabinetmaker's apprentice, or his peers had.”¹⁵²

The nature of Wills's association with the AIA, if any, remains uncertain. Upjohn sent out invitations to “a number of his brother architects in New York to meet

¹⁵¹ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 162-163.

¹⁵² Hull, 301.

in his office for the purpose of forming a society”,¹⁵³ but how many letters in total, and to whom they were addressed, is likewise unknown. We are only aware of those thirteen individuals who appeared at Upjohn’s office for the first meeting. At that moment Wills was detained in Montreal overseeing the design of the new Christ Church Cathedral in that Canadian city; his name and office disappears from New York City directories in 1856 but whether or not he actually kept an (unlisted) office or at least planned to eventually return to the New York office as his home base can only be speculated. Of the known original members of the AIA there was Henry Dudley (1813-1894), Wills’s only professional partner, with whom he was in partnership from 1851-1853.¹⁵⁴ Another was John W. Priest, a fellow NYES-approved architect and former pupil of Upjohn. Despite the possible tension suggested by the source of his architectural training, Priest was instrumental in shaping the ideals of the NYES with Frank Wills in relative opposition to those of the older English society. Interestingly, Hull observes that Priest was among those original Institute members “who disappear early from the AIA records”.¹⁵⁵

Ironically, Wills died suddenly on 23 April, 1857, just twelve days before Upjohn’s AIA address rejoicing in his fellow architects’ apparently new-found desire to quit the rivalry and competition amongst themselves.

¹⁵³ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 158.

¹⁵⁴ “New Churches,” *NYE* 3 (September 1851), 41 records the first work to be reviewed issuing from the office of Wills by Henry Dudley. Wills had previously worked with Dudley in the office of architect John Hayward (1808-1891) in Exeter (Stanton, 128). Stanton also suggests that Wills and Dudley had dissolved their partnership in 1856 but no proof for this claim is provided beyond her (incorrect) statement that Wills died in that same year. Frank Wills’s date of death is April 23, 1857 (Richardson, “Frank Wills”, *DCB*, 944).

¹⁵⁵ Hull, 301.

Other Rivalries(?)

Though highly speculative, it is interesting to think about possible rivalries between Frank Wills and other key figures during his twelve year North American career. The case of Henry Dudley is of particular interest. The two Exeter men were in partnership in New York for at least two years but no concrete evidence exists for the exact date and nature of their separation. In early 1857 Dudley was invited by Upjohn (and accepted) to become a founding member of the AIA; he was also elected to its first board of trustees and even designed the Institute's seal.¹⁵⁶ This was a surprising move, considering Dudley's exposure to Wills's opinions of Richard Upjohn in the *NYE* and *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*. It is possible that Wills and Dudley's parting was less than amicable.

Wills's work at Fredericton suggests further competition from the architect's English brethren. English ecclesiastical architect William Butterfield's alterations to Wills's original designs for Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, are exemplary. Richardson suggests, however, that "Butterfield's intervention was limited," and that ultimately "a compromise was struck, presumably by the architecturally astute [Bishop] Medley, between the basic forms suggested by Butterfield and the exterior detailing from Wills's projects."¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Frank Wills must have taken some offense at these events. Christ Church Cathedral is not presented at all in Wills's book and Butterfield's later involvement in the project has already been cited in the previous section of this study as a viable possibility for its exclusion. Wills does, however, openly credit Bishop Medley's contributions to the design of the cathedral's chapel-of-ease, St. Anne's by stating: "It is but right to add that the whole of this part

¹⁵⁶ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 161 and 164.

¹⁵⁷ Richardson, "Frank Wills", 943.

of the interior decoration has been executed entirely under the direction of the Bishop of Fredericton, the founder of the Chapel".¹⁵⁸ The good Bishop of Fredericton evidently did not pose the same threat to Wills's career as Butterfield. Indeed these ecclesiastics were the patrons of much church architecture of the time, thus providing an essential link to commissions and reason for Wills to extend this courtesy in his book.

Architectural historiography has propelled the rivalry between Frank Wills and Richard Upjohn into the twentieth century. Everard's biography of his great-grandfather Richard Upjohn had already been published before mid-century; interest in Frank Wills's contribution to the Gothic Revival in North America only garnered serious attention in the 1960s with the appearance of Douglas Richardson's unpublished MA thesis, "Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick," (1966), and Phoebe Stanton's book, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture* (1968), in which one chapter is rather disappointingly devoted to these same Fredericton efforts. The author also sketches Wills's involvement in the NYES, gives brief mention of his treatise, and cites some other known Wills designs. The effort is admirable but far from complete. In his review of Stanton's book, Richard Upjohn's aforementioned great-grandson, Everard Upjohn, finds fault with her inclusion of material on Frank Wills. Firstly, Everard Upjohn feels that the Canadian material is out of place in a publication on American architecture. He also suggests that Stanton's coverage of Richard Upjohn suffered in other areas of the book at the mercy of Wills and several other little known contributors, even though he does acknowledge the existence his own monograph on Richard Upjohn.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Wills, *AEEA*, 111.

¹⁵⁹ E. Upjohn, "Review: *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture, An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* by Phoebe B. Stanton," *JSAH* 28:4 (December 1969), 307-308.

Everard Upjohn's comments suggest the power of legacy in perpetuating memory: he belonged to an unbroken, multi-generational chain of Upjohn architects beginning with Richard. This familial heroization undoubtedly led Everard to make the following claim: "In the United States, Richard Upjohn's position with regard to that [Gothic Revival] movement is unquestionable. To a peculiar degree the mature stage of the Revival is his own work. He it was who brought knowledge and liturgy to bear upon the problem."¹⁶⁰ Frank Wills unfortunately had no such legacy.

The architectural societies organized by Upjohn and Wills have also contributed to these two architects' relative positions in architectural history. Thus Richard Upjohn's legacy has been further heightened and perpetuated over time by the continued success of the AIA, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. Conversely, the NYES that Wills had helped to found nearly a decade before the AIA appeared, quit publishing the *NYE* already in 1853. The group itself likely disbanded soon thereafter. The NYES and its journal were inarguably seminal to the transmission, adaptation and development of English Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture ideals to the American Protestant Episcopal Church; however, the society members' increasing neglect in addressing the once equally important issues pertaining to liturgical reform led to its cessation. The *NYE* had become merely a church building journal for the Protestant Episcopal community rather than a mouthpiece for High Church views on liturgical reform reflected in an appropriate architectural form. Furthermore, Frank Wills remained strictly devoted to Anglican ecclesiastical architectural production up until his untimely death. Conversely, the non-religious, inclusive nature of the AIA lent longevity and popular appeal to that

¹⁶⁰ E. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn*, 191.

organization. Thus member architects were not restricted to the construction of a single building type executed in an approved style for a particular group of people. The popular nature of Upjohn's efforts at the AIA is also reflected in his book: a straightforward pattern book that spoke to the practical needs of North American builders. Wills had similarly hoped to treat popularly on the subject for a non-professional American audience, but his haughty prose and meticulously detailed perspective views are more reminiscent of the decorative polemical tracts of his primary influence, Pugin. Thus despite his continual attempts at adaptation of an English Gothic model to the North American context, to some of Frank Wills's contemporaries and future historians alike he remained in his writing, and (to a lesser degree) in his architecture, too exclusionary, too elitist – too 'English'.

CONCLUSION

Ambition, Opportunity, and Acceptance

The development of Canadian and American Gothic Revival church architecture is indebted to the short but prolific career and reputation of Frank Wills. His ambitious first project upon arriving in North America, Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, represented an epochal moment in Canadian and British imperial architecture as the earliest Anglican cathedral to be designed in its entirety according to English ecclesiological principles. By extension, this novel design distinguished the young architect among his peers, set the stage for his reputation amongst future ecclesiastical patrons as a trailblazer in ecclesiological correct Gothic design, and established him as a capable cathedral architect. Due to the absence of Episcopal cathedrals in the United States before the date of Wills's death, however, his ongoing experience in this building type was restricted to Canadian commissions. Wills continually strove for a sense of originality in his ecclesiastical designs, and this he accomplished through adaptation, while simultaneously retaining the principles of his native English style. Plenty of opportunity existed for such alterations of the English model due to financial and climatic incompatibilities of English Gothic parish church architecture applied to the North American context. Wills's success in these adaptive efforts is reflected in the number and geographical scope of his known architectural works.

Having said that, the 'invisible text' in Frank Wills's architectural treatise reveals how his career encountered various obstacles and limitations that frustrated his ambitious goal of single-handedly shaping ecclesiological architecture in North America. His efforts at adapting the medieval English cathedral to the wants of a

cathedral *church* in the modest colonial context of Fredericton, Canada, were almost foiled by physical alterations made to the design from abroad by the English Ecclesiologists. Wills must have felt that his sole authorship in this colonial-specific design was lost with these interventions; a blow to his ego that provides, in turn, a viable explanation for the omission of Fredericton cathedral from his architectural treatise. Another possible reason for this omission concerns the absence of Episcopal cathedrals in the United States at mid-century on account of this Church's tardy establishment of bishoprics and uncertainty as to the necessity of this medieval English building type in America. Furthermore, the appropriation of Wills's disdained original plans for the Fredericton cathedral served to cast him as an outsider among his English brethren until the society's eventual acceptance of the need for such a hybrid design in colonial cathedrals.

With this intervention upon Wills's first commission in North America came several successive instances in which the architect was forced to accept the position of ambitious outsider rather than as a hero of North American ecclesiological design. Besides having been ostracized by English opinion at Fredericton, in 1849 Wills experienced the opposite reaction to his design for the new St. James' Anglican Cathedral in Toronto. In the wake of this project, Wills's competition design was deemed to be too English parochial in styling for a metropolitan cathedral in Canada.¹⁶¹ Evidently this particular Canadian Bishop, John Strachan, viewed Wills as an (English) outsider within the context of this design. Wills's proposal for rebuilding St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, reflects the even greater desire in the United States for national identity in architectural production. In Philadelphia, these nationalist sentiments are constricted further into a general regionalist attitude against the current

¹⁶¹ *The Church* (October 11, 1849), 42.

English trend for the Gothic Revival style, and this particular city remained instead a stronghold of colonial architecture. Furthermore, Wills's ecclesiological Gothic design suggested to some Low Church congregants of St. Peter's the tendency toward papist sympathies within the Episcopal Church. Given the insular character of Philadelphia's architecture and architects presented earlier in this study, it is even possible that the proposed rebuilding of St. Peter's Church was rejected on account of Frank Wills not hailing from Philadelphia.

As the most ambitious project appearing in Wills's book, the ultimately unrealized design for rebuilding St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, suggests the notion of the ideal space of the book. The treatise functions as an arena for the architect to make a lucid statement of an ideal ecclesiological design as opposed to the "dirty" built attempts by Upjohn that Wills calls out in his writings. Thus within the pages of *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture* in general, and the St. Peter's church frontispiece in particular, Frank Wills is able to create exemplars of his ecclesiastical vision without the constraints inherent to client concerns and the building process that threaten to ultimately alter the original design from an unbuilt ideal to a less satisfying built compromise.

In his proposals for St. Peter's, Philadelphia, and St. James's Cathedral, Toronto, Frank Wills was once again cast as an outsider by his prospective clients: a position echoed in the career of Wills's influence, A. W. N. Pugin, whose conversion to Roman Catholicism found the gifted architect and designer accepted fully by neither the Anglican nor Roman Catholic communion. Pugin also died at an early age (he was only 40 years old) but, unlike Wills, an incredible amount of scholarship has since been amassed on this architect's design production. Two obvious reasons for

this are Pugin's seminal role in the revival of medieval architectural design principles, and the abundance of extant sources on his life, both professional and personal. As an ardent disciple of Pugin and his Gothic vision for ecclesiastical building, however, Wills deserves to be better recognized for his missionary efforts in establishing Pugin's ecclesiologically correct architectural ideals and their consequent reform on Anglican liturgy in North America. Instead, it is Richard Upjohn who enjoys that position in American Gothic Revival historiography. Upjohn's successive generations of kin who also entered the architectural profession (as did Pugin's) undoubtedly perpetuated his professional legacy. The continued existence of the AIA and its impact on the architectural profession in the second half of the nineteenth century has further amplified the architectural legacy of its founder and first president. However, this study has shown that the position held by Frank Wills as co-founder and official architect of the highly influential NYES necessarily placed his career and reputation on at least equal ground as the elder Upjohn's from 1848 to 1853.

Despite this fact, and combined with his aforementioned pioneering architectural and literary contributions to the period, subsequent scholarship on Wills's integral role in the Gothic Revival movement across North America has been consistently ignored or downplayed. Wills's architectural imprint on North America remains intact and demands much further study; however, the geographical vastness of his known built work – ecclesiastical and funerary – combines with a paucity of archival sources to eliminate the prospect of a straightforward, coherent collection of research material.¹⁶² While this reality is likely another possible reason for Wills's

¹⁶² The scant nature of material on Wills's short but prolific life and work in both England and across North America is reflected in the following list: in England, two architectural drawings exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1845 are currently in that institution's collection. In Canada, archival letters and drawings of Wills's Fredericton projects are located in the Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton Archives; other than a few scattered sources in the Canadian Archives, little else remains. In the United

obscurity in historiographies on the Gothic Revival in North America, it is with great hope that the architectural, religious and professional issues affecting Wills's career and explored in this study through a 'reading between the lines' of Frank Wills's *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture*, have both shed greater light on possible reasons for these issues and kindled in others a similar interest in revealing yet more about Frank Wills as it has in myself.

An End...and a Beginning?

One scholar correctly observed in the mid-1970s that "by virtue of this [NYES] position Wills became an extremely influential church designer," but somewhat hastily added that Frank Wills had recently received "the credit he deserves for improving the quality of mid-nineteenth-century ecclesiastical design".¹⁶³ No doubt the author is speaking of Phoebe Stanton's then recently published, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture* (1968). Besides the pioneering work of Richardson and Stanton in the 1960s and, of course, the current study, so much remains to be done on the topic of Frank Wills. Malcolm Thurlby's recent discovery of two Wills churches (one attributed) in Ontario suggests that more examples of Wills work exist than has generally been thought. The serendipitous nature of stumbling upon a Wills church through visual recognition of his particular style and mannerisms, in the face of scant source material on Wills (correspondence, drawings, etc.), provides an alternative approach to retracing known aspects of Wills's career, as the current study has done, in order to excavate untold stories or fill in apparent blind spots in Frank Wills's career.

States, the Avery Architectural Library maintains an original drawing by Frank Wills for only one church (Scarsdale, NY), despite the vast amount of works he designed. Where did it all go?

¹⁶³ Calder Loth, *The Only Proper Style: Gothic Architecture in America*, (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 12.

The issues explored in the course of the present study have raised further issues for future consideration and possible research. Firstly, the topic of iconography presents an area for much elaboration. It would be interesting to examine how the iconographies of the aforementioned society seals might be brought from the two-dimensional space of a drawing into the realm of the built: the importance of the saints pictured within the insignia might be correlated with those saints' names repeatedly employed for church dedications in the Anglican and Episcopal communions. Moreover, those iconographies inscribed at the larger scale of the building itself, both interior and exterior, provide a further avenue for investigation within this topic. Secondly, neither time nor scope has allowed here an in-depth analysis and comparison of the history and nature of the Canadian Anglican and American Episcopal liturgies. The way in which these liturgical differences were reflected in architectural form would lend amplification to the discussion in Chapter Two of the present study, and how Frank Wills might have dealt with these differences architecturally as he worked between the two Churches. Finally, the primary position of the Anglican and Episcopal bishops as patrons of ecclesiastical architecture demands further study – the extent of their authority on the final design relative to the architect, their level of artistic involvement, and even illumination of the cross-border relationships and knowledge-sharing on ecclesiological doctrine between American and Canadian bishops that was brought to my attention while reading various issues of the *NYE*. Bishop Medley's role in transmitting Camdenian ideals across Canada and the United States is particularly prevalent and needs to be brought out, as does the scope of Bishop Medley's own architectural patronage in England and Canada.

Bishop Medley was also an avid writer on ecclesiology: a critical analysis of his writings and their influence on ecclesiologists in England and North America is a further area in need of scholarship. The importance of a particular Medley publication entitled, *Elementary Remarks on Church Architecture*,¹⁶⁴ needs to be brought out both in relation to the following: the bishop's own pioneering ecclesiological efforts at St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Exwick, England; and, the publication's impact on the intellectual and architectural career of Frank Wills, still a teenager presumably working in the office of Medley's friend and fellow Exeter architect, John Hayward, when *Elementary Remarks* was published. Discovery into the impact of Medley's book on both the formation of Wills's architectural style – at once Puginian, ecclesiological, and Devonian – and future architectural treatise, provides scope for abundant future research for broadening awareness on the topic of Frank Wills and his role in North American Gothic Revival church architecture.

¹⁶⁴ John Medley, *Elementary Remarks on Church Architecture* (Exeter, 1841).

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