A Perspective on Perspectives

Architectural periodicals flourished in England during the latter two-thirds of the 19th century. In fact, the idea of a periodical specifically devoted to architecture was born during this period. These publications became increasingly rich and complex as the decades passed. The illustrations that graced their pages became an art form in their own right, particularly the dramatic and highly artistic perspective drawings which emerged as the most popular form of architectural illustration at the time. This article will examine and illustrate the tradition of visual presentation in British Victorian architectural periodicals, and the continuance of that tradition in Canada with the *Canadian Architect and Builder.*

The high point achieved in late-Victorian English architectural perspective drawing was preceded by a lengthy evolution in the art of architectural presentation, including the concept of the Picturesque, the heritage of topographical drawing and painting, and numerous 18th- and 19th-century treatises on perspective.[1] The shift to using perspective drawings as a method of representing architecture appears to have occurred in the 1770s. One possible catalyst for the change was the founding of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768. Architects who were invited to display their work alongside painters and sculptors in the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions[2] soon realized that their conventional orthogonal drawings could not compete for audience attention with the visually exciting, seductive paintings of the landscape artists.[3] But perspective drawings, as architects quickly realized, could be striking in effect. For example, the perspective illustration of William Butterfield's All Saints Church, Margaret Street, London, as it appeared in *The Builder,* revealed the entire building in a dramatic and imposing sweep impossible to take in at a single glance when standing directly in front (**figure 1**). Similarly, a perspective of a "Church on the Banks of Lake Huron" prepared by English architect T.C. Sorby included an evocative landscape setting for the building (**figure 2** and **cover**). Although not particularly accurate, the landscape is a visually appealing image, evidently inspired by what Sorby imagined the wilds of Canada to look like (though the background more closely resembles the Apennines, with cypresses and umbrella pines for added Italian effect). Published in *The Builder* in December 1859, the image may represent the Church of St. John-in-the-Wilderness

by Jillian Harrold

1 The type of perspective drawing that appeared in Victorian architectural periodicals seems to have had its technical and stylistic roots in the Renaissance, as an alternative to the orthogonal architectural drawing. Wolfgang Lotz explains that the perspective drawing "was always concerned with picture-like visualization and not with the working drawing." Wolfgang Lotz, *Studies in Italian Renaissance Architecture* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1977), 32. The application of perspective to architectural rendering resulted in the development of a much more comprehensible method of representing three-dimensional buildings on paper. Gavin Stamp, *The Great Perspectivists* (London: Trefoil Books, 1982). The application of the idea of the Picturesque to architecture was important to the development of architectural perspective drawings in England. Picturesque aesthetics were inherited in part from Edmund Burke's 1756 essay, *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.* Particularly important was the Picturesque recognition of a specific relationship between pictorial composition and architecture, and between a building and its surroundings. See Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque* (London: Frank Cass, 1983).

2 Although alternate public exhibitions and competitions for architecture existed, the Royal Academy show remained the most prestigious through the 19th century. See Helene Lipstadt, "Architectural Publications, Competitions, and Exhibitions," in *Architecture and its Image* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1989): 109-37.

3 The connection to the founding of the Royal Academy is suggested by Gavin Stamp, who also points out that this more comprehensible and engaging method of communicating with a broader audience was likely further encouraged by the Academy's first professor of architecture in 1770, the noted perspective artist Thomas Sandby. Gavin Stamp, *The Great Perspectivists,* 11.

near Sarnia, Ontario.[4] As Sorby did not emigrate to Canada until 1883, he likely submitted this drawing without having seen the significantly less-craggy actual surroundings of the building he designed.

Two illustrations of another Canadian building reveal contrasting illustrative approaches chosen by two different British periodicals. Christ Church Cathedral, Montréal, designed by Frank Wills and Thomas Seaton Scott, was still under construction at the time it appeared in *The Builder* in January 1858 and in *The Illustrated London News* two years later. In *The Builder,* the cathedral soars above an artistic landscape, remote from its actual urban setting in Montréal (**figure 3**). Behind the church rises a mountain significantly more imposing and rugged than Mount Royal. The sky picturesquely conveys movement through imaginative, swirling cloud effects. The image of the cathedral in *The Illustrated London News,* however, eliminates much of the picturesque landscape and depicts a building that is more prosaic and less sublime in appearance (**figure 4**).

The growing use of perspective drawings for presentation purposes in the Victorian era, and the accompanying dramatic increase in publicity, led to the development of a new profession, the architectural perspectivist. One of the most brilliant perspectivists of the early 19th century was Joseph Michael Gandy (1771-1843). Sometimes called the "Turner of architecture," or the "English Piranesi," Gandy is often connected to architect Sir John Soane, for whom he produced many perspectives.[5] Axel Hermann Haig (1835-1921) was another prominent 19th-century perspectivist. He worked predominantly for architect William Burges (1827-80); quite a few of his perspectives appeared in the pages of *The Architect.*[6] Burges credited Haig's authorship of the perspectives, which at the time was relatively unusual. By the 1870s, however, most perspectivists' names were published along with their work.

Perspective drawings became increasingly more elaborate throughout the 19th century. John Drayton Wyatt, known as "Scott's Wyatt" due to the amount of work he did for architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, was renowned for his interior perspectives of churches, which were characteristically drawn from an artificially low viewpoint so as to increase the sensation of height. This technique, which recorded every detail of the interior from floor to vaulting, inspired other perspectivists, as can be seen in the illustrations of G.K. and E. Radford's St. Paul's Church, Yorkville, Toronto, and C. Hodgson Fowler's St. George's Church, Lennoxville, Québec, published in *The Builder* (1858) and *The Architect* (1869) respectively (**figures 5, 6**).[7]

Perspective drawings initially prepared for competitions were frequently published in periodicals. This allowed the public to see the premiated designs, and encouraged the dissemination of up-to-date architectural ideas. An example of this can be found in the competition held for the Ottawa Parliament Buildings in 1859. The winning architects, Fuller and Jones, had the opportunity to profit from images of Deane and Woodward's Oxford Natural History Museum published in *The Builder* in 1855 and 1859. The latter illustration (**figure 7**) emphasized the separate laboratory section of the museum, which is very similar in character to the Fuller and Jones design for the library of the Parliament Buildings. Fuller and Jones quite likely saw the 1855 illustrations, and could have seen the 1859 image before submitting their final design to the Ottawa competition. Different views of the Fuller and Jones winning design were published in *The Builder* in December 1859 and in *The Illustrated London News* in November that same year (**figures 8, 9**).[8] It is clear that publishing perspective illustrations in periodicals was an effective method of communicating architectural ideas, even across the Atlantic Ocean.

The architectural perspective was well-suited to the increasingly competitive nature of periodicals through the 19th century. *The Builder* first appeared in 1843, but lost its virtual monopoly with the introduction of rival architectural periodicals such as *Building News,* which started in 1855, and *The Architect,* which began in 1868. With a number of architectural periodicals vying for readership in an era of mounting competition, it was useful to be able to present dramatic images that could be immediately understood and appreciated by the architectural community. *The Architect,* for example, resorted to elaborate fold-out plates, something *The Builder* had never used. *The Ecclesiologist* started out with relatively crude images, such as the views of the Fredericton cathedral published in 1848 (**figure 10**), but soon graduated to more accomplished perspectives such as the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, London, by Richard Carpenter (1849) (**figure 11**). By 1859, *The Ecclesiologist* had moved well beyond this matter-of-fact mode of representation to strikingly artistic perspectives such as St. James

4 The Church of St. John-in-the-Wilderness at Bright's Grove, Sarnia Township, was described in the correspondence of Benjamin Cronyn, Bishop of the Diocese of Huron at the time. The 1861 census of Sarnia Township, however, makes no mention of a stone church such as this one, and no photographic proof of its existence has been found; it is possible that it was destroyed or replaced by another building. Collingwood and Owen Sound have also been suggested as possible locations of this building by Robert G. Hill, editor of *The Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950* (in progress). I am indebted to the archivist of the V.P. Cronyn Memorial Archives at the Diocese of Huron, who found a similar structure in Goderich (St. George's).

5 Pierre du Prey described Gandy as having "excelled first and foremost in having a landscapist's eye for changing atmospheric conditions. He delighted in evoking on paper those moments of an English summer's evening just before or after a rainstorm, when long slanting sunbeams gild structures set against a backdrop of ominous clouds." Pierre du Prey, *Sir John Soane* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985), 15. Gandy also produced original works of architectural fantasy for the Royal Academy exhibitions between 1789 and 1838. His fantasies were eloquent and poetic, exceeding the bounds of probability in lavish watercolour perspectives, much like the Bibienas or Piranesi before him. See John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 111, 134.

6 Burges preferred his drawings to be along the schematic lines of those of Villard d'Honnecourt, as they matched his neo-Gothic style of architecture, though he used Haig for shows and exhibitions where colour perspectives were necessary for designs to be noticed or to be competitive. Lipstadt, "Architectural Publications, Competitions, and Exhibitions," 127.

7 The illustration of St. George's, as with a number of other drawings in the periodicals discussed in this article, portrays a building that was never built. The community of Lennoxville was too small at the time to support a church of this size, and the skilled labour necessary to build a church of this sophistication was not available in the Eastern Townships. My thanks to Robert Lemire, who provided me with this information. St. Paul's Church, Yorkville, on the other hand, had already been constructed when its illustration was published in *The Builder,*.

8 See David De Witt's article in this issue for more information on the competition.

the Less, London, by George Edmund Street (**figure 12**), where the agitated pen strokes almost dissolve into a swirling mass of lines.

There was much rivalry among architects for the chance to advertise through publication. Architects would ally themselves with a specific periodical and submit their designs to that periodical to be engraved, lithographed or otherwise reproduced. An example of this practice has already been noted in the collaboration between architect William Burges and *The Architect.* Early in his career, Burges published in a variety of periodicals, but by the 1870s his work appeared almost exclusively in *The Architect.*[9] Similarly, *The Ecclesiologist* over a number of years favoured images by Scott's Wyatt. The relationship between periodical and architect was a serious commitment, and many periodicals expected exclusive rights to architects' illustrations, a point demonstrated by an incident which occurred in 1870. In January and May of that year, *The Architect* and *The Builder* both published illustrations of the new state capitol in Albany, New York, by architects Fuller and Laver—the same Fuller who had recently collaborated on the Ottawa Parliament Buildings. Along with the illustration, *The Builder* published the following disclaimer:

> We must mention that these illustrations have been some time in preparation, and that meanwhile a view of the building has appeared elsewhere. We shall in time learn to know those architects who send special invitations to half a dozen journals at the same time to illustrate a work, and say nothing of their having done so.[10]

This demonstrates clearly the intensely competitive spirit among editors, who became irritated when architects did not remain loyal.

An excerpt from the opening salutatory which appeared in the first issue of the *Canadian Architect and Builder* (January 1888) describes the process involved in submitting a perspective for publication:

> The value of illustrations in a paper of this class is fully understood, and to this department careful attention will be paid.... Friends who may desire to thus assist us, please note that drawings should be made with pen and black ink on white paper or cardboard.[11]

Most periodicals had in-house engravers or lithographers who would transfer the designs submitted by architects. For example, I.S. Heaviside frequently worked in this capacity for *The Builder.* His signature can be found on several of *The Builder* illustrations referenced in this article (see figures 2, 5, 8).

During the period of intense competition between architectural journals, the conventional illustrative technique changed from wood engraving to photogravure, which allowed for a more detailed and sophisticated product. Wood engravings were quite common for architectural illustrations in the 1840s, even though lithography had been invented in 1798. The 1848 illustration of the Fredericton cathedral published in *The Ecclesiologist is* a good example of this wood-engraving method (figure 10). When compared to later illustrations, such as the lithographed Montréal cathedral from *The Builder* (figure 3), the wood engraving seems simple and sparse. *The Builder* also initially used wood engravings, but by the end of the 1850s had switched to lithography.

Photolithography, the next technological innovation, allowed for a more immediate transfer of the original idea of the architect, whose pen drawing could be reproduced without being engraved or redrawn. First used by *Building News* in 1868, photolithography was quickly adopted by other architectural periodicals. An image could actually be photographed onto the lithographic stone or plate and then printed, thus retaining the personal stylistic idiosyncrasies of the original pen drawing. The perspectives that resulted were evocative and complex.[12] Dominating this art form through the 1870s and the 1880s was Richard Norman Shaw, who made it a medium of personal stylistic expression. Shaw had been George Edmund Street's principle assistant for several years, and it is Street who can be partly credited for Shaw's drafting method.[13] Shaw's architecture seemed to translate well to paper by means of a lively and kinetic style of drawing. His perspectives were dynamic and dramatic. An image of Leyeswood, in Sussex, designed by Shaw in 1868 and published in *Building News* in 1871, illustrates these qualities (**figure 13**). The panoramic bird's-eye-view is executed in a painterly manner, particularly evident through the individual strokes of the pen.[14] In the words of Vincent Scully:

9 The alliance of architect and periodical can be seen by examining the list of Burges's publications found in J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray, 1981), 417-24.

10 *The Builder* 27 (May 1870): 425.

11 *Canadian Architect and Builder* 1, no. 1 (January 1888): 1.

12 The development of printing techniques used in architectural periodicals is outlined by Gavin Stamp, who also mentions the influence of Richard Norman Shaw. Stamp, *The Great Perspectivists,* 15.

13 Street encouraged his students to draft in their own style. An example of this painterly quality can be seen in the 1859 illustration of St. James the Less, designed by Street and published in *The Ecclesiologist* (fig. 12). The pen strokes seem nervous and agitated, and the landscape background dissolves into a swirling mass of scratchy lines.

14 Through the 1870s Shaw's office cultivated a very recognizable house style. The intense training required to achieve this uniformity brought the art of perspective drawing to a very high point. Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 16. A specific Canadian instance of the influence of Shaw's drawing style is discussed in Angela Carr, "From William Hay to Burke, Horwood and White: A Case History in Canadian Architectural Draughting Style," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 15, no. 2 (June 1990): 41-51.

> The new photolithographic process ... reproduced Shaw's marvellously textural rendering technique with a richness of light and shade that line engraving could never have captured, so in the early 70s the pictorial lushness of photolithographic reproduction was intimately related to the architectural movement toward textured, flowing, and painterly surfaces.[15]

Scully also notes that the visual characteristics of Shaw's illustrations were as influential on the development of architectural styles in North America as on the buildings themselves.[16] Shaw's 1871 illustration of Leyeswood conveys the textures and qualities of such architectural materials as half-timbering, "pargeting," hung tile, shingling, and bottle glass (figure 13). The influence of the style coming out of Shaw's office can be seen in an 1887 image in *The Architect* of a residence at Sandy Hill, Ottawa, designed for W.H. Davis by the Montréal firm of Taylor, Gordon, and Bousfield (**figure 14**). In the description of this house, the special attention given to the materials and elements reflects the influence of Shaw in both architecture and drafting style.[17]

Evidence of the influence of Shaw's textural rendering technique can be found across the Atlantic in the pages of the *Canadian Architect and Builder*, particularly in its perspective drawings of domestic architecture. The *Canadian Architect and Builder*, which ran from 1888 to 1908, was modelled after existing British and American periodicals to provide the rapidly growing Canadian architectural community with information on their profession. Starting as a rather thin journal, it gradually became more substantial, though it was never as extensive as *The Architect* or *The Builder*. A lot of attention was paid to domestic architecture in the pages of the *Canadian Architect and Builder*. A typical early example, from 1888, illustrated a house on Pembroke Street, Toronto, designed for W.J. Davis by the architectural firm of Langley and Burke (**figure 15**). This drawing was executed by John Charles Barstone Horwood, who worked for Langley and Burke from 1882 to 1889.[18] The illustration brings to mind the style of Shaw, as it is executed using free and painterly pen strokes with a certain amount of dappled shading to evoke the texture of the materials used in construction. The expressive lines used by Horwood in texturing the foliage are looser still than the British standard.

Another example of this style of draftsmanship can be seen in a drawing of the interior a home from 1895, designed by Edmund Burke (**figure 16**). Burke formed a partnership with Horwood in 1894, and it is safe to assume some influence from Horwood in this illustration, which takes the rendered representation of texture to an extreme: the dappled patterning on the walls exists almost independently of the architecture, and threatens to dominate the image. This use of a loose, painterly line is related primarily to the nature of the materials represented, rather than to the effect of light on form, in contrast to the naturalistic exterior views such as T.C. Sorby's church on the banks of Lake Huron discussed earlier (figure 2).

THE HEIGHTENED ARCHITECTURAL ACTIVITY of the Victorian period in England provided an environment in which the architectural perspective drawing developed as an art form. As the 19th century progressed, periodicals proliferated and competition between them increased accordingly, creating an atmosphere in which new illustrative techniques were developed, from wood engraving to photolithography. The periodical acted as an important vehicle for the communication of architectural ideas. In terms of transatlantic communication, the illustrations and illustrative techniques could be nearly as influential as the buildings themselves on the development of new architectural styles. Towards the end of the 19th century, the perspective flourished and reached a pinnacle. Through these expressive and evocative drawings, an architect could emphasize any aspect of the design he desired, creating impressions that ranged from picturesque wilderness settings to dramatic, imposing interiors. Similarly, the technique employed could also emphasize varying characteristics, such as clarity of form or texture of materials. After the turn of the century, the presence of photogravure in the pages of the British periodicals as well as the *Canadian Architect and Builder* became more pronounced. Eventually, this technique was superseded by photography, which began to dominate the field of architectural representation, eclipsing the era of the Victorian architectural perspective drawing.

14 Through the 1870s Shaw's office cultivated a very recognizable house style. The intense training required to achieve this uniformity brought the art of perspective drawing to a very high point. Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 16. A specific Canadian instance of the influence of Shaw's drawing style is discussed in Angela Carr, "From William Hay to Burke, Horwood and White: A Case History in Canadian Architectural Draughting Style," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 15, no. 2 (June 1990): 41-51.

15 Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 10.

16 The dramatic, kinetic, painterly style of architectural drawing coming out of Shaw's office could also be seen in the work of American architects such as H.H. Richardson and, through him, firms such as McKim, Mead and White. Vincent Scully, in *The Shingle Style*, illustrates many perspectives published in the *American Architect* that clearly represent the continuance of the "sketchy" form of architectural drawing: see, for example, the Dwight S. Herrick House in Peekskill-on-Hudson, New York, by William Mead, published in 1877, or the design for the Thomas Dunn House, Newport, Rhode Island, by Charles Follen McKim, published that same year. The painterly illustrations of these two homes recall qualities seen in Shaw's Leyeswood drawing (fig. 13).

17 The description is as follows: "The materials employed were red brick with limestone dressings, with a little terra-cotta and brick diaper work. Half-timber work, and tiles from Ruabon and ornamental plasterwork, have been introduced. Verandahs and balconies are much more of a necessity in Canada than in England, and are much used in the summer, which will explain the special prominence given to these features." *The Architect* 37 (4 February 1887): 65.

18 Carr, "From William Hay to Burke, Horwood and White," 46.

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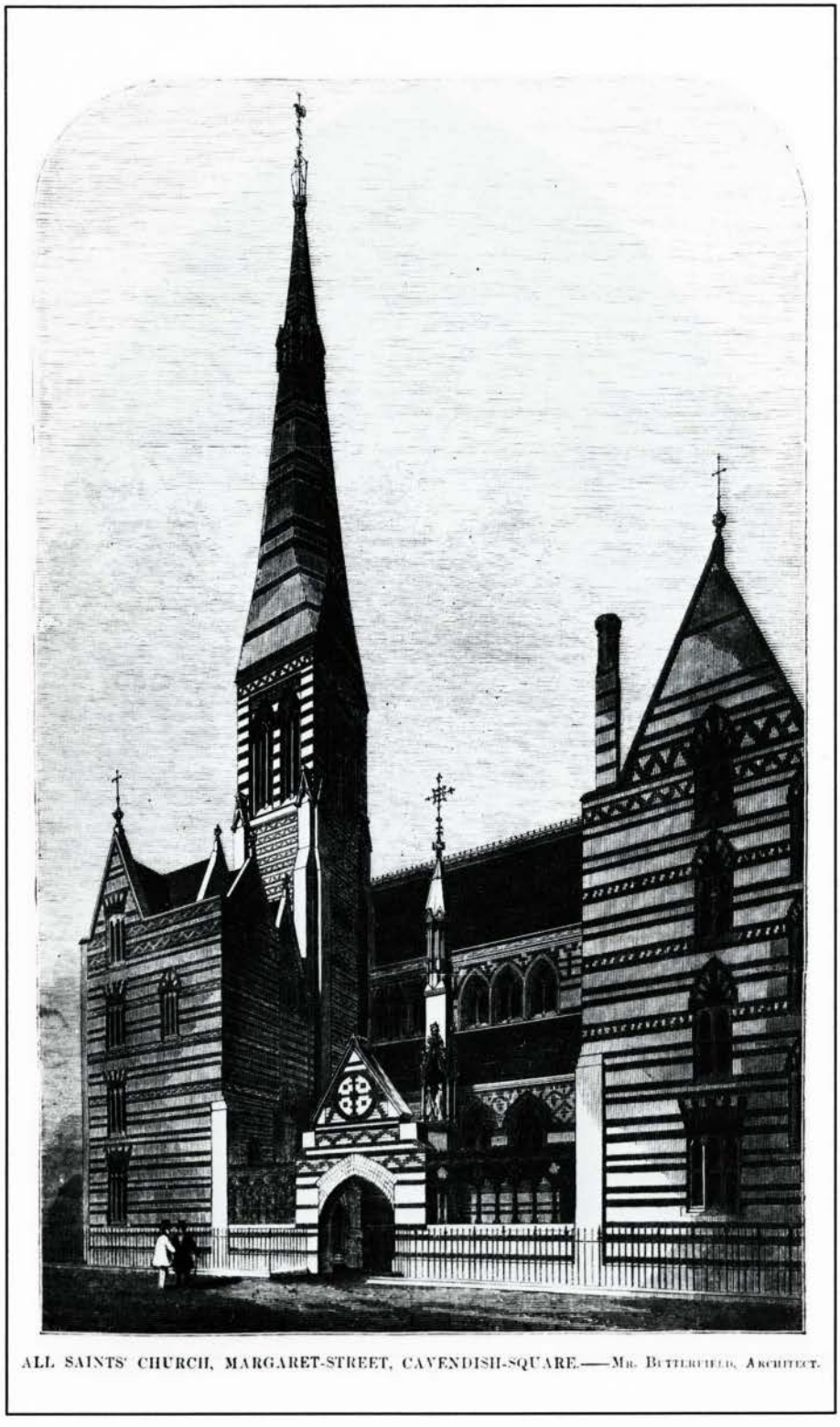
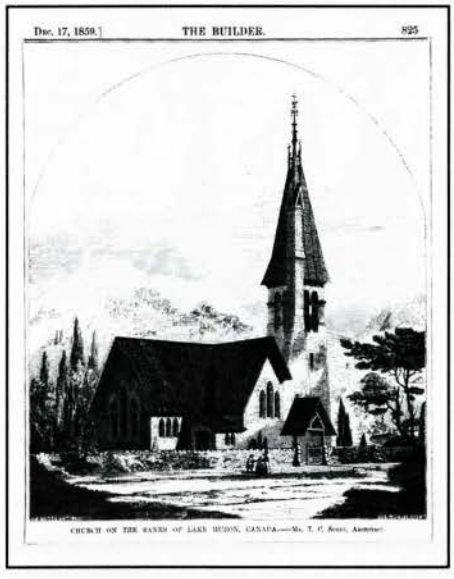


ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, MARGARET-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE.—Mr. Butterfield, Architect.



Dec. 17, 1859.] THE BUILDER. 825

CHURCH ON THE BANKS OF LAKE HURON, CANADA.—Mr. T. C. Sorby, Architect.

Figure 1 (left). All Saints Church, Margaret Street, London; William Butterfield, architect. (*The Builder* 11, no. 520 [January 1853]: 57)

Figure 2 (above). "Church on the Banks of Lake Huron"; T.C. Sorby, architect. (*The Builder* 17, no. 880 [17 December 1859]: 825)

Figure 3 (right). Christ Church Cathedral, Montréal; Frank Wills and Thomas Seaton Scott, architects. (*The Builder* 16, no. 779 [9 January 1858]: 27)

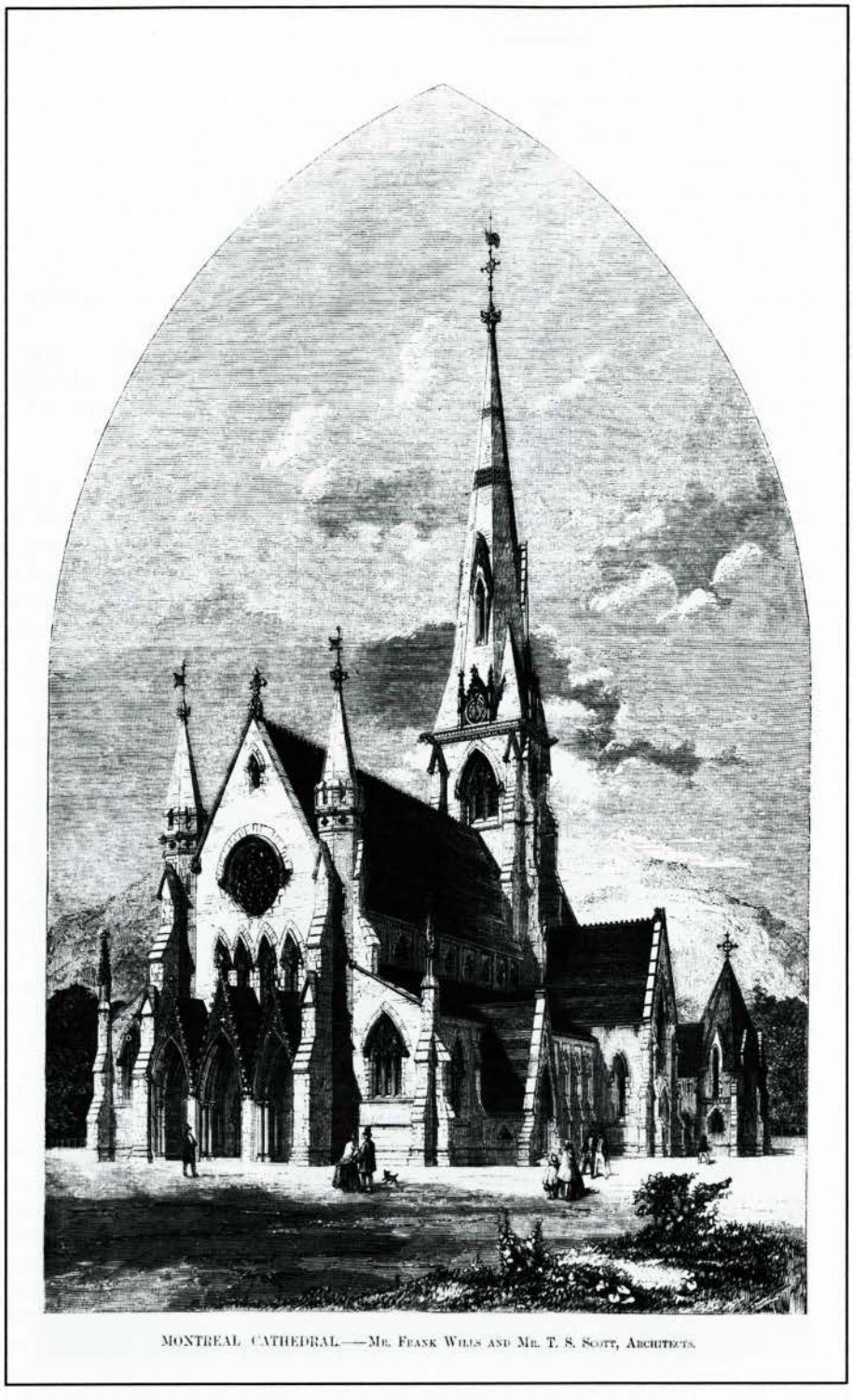
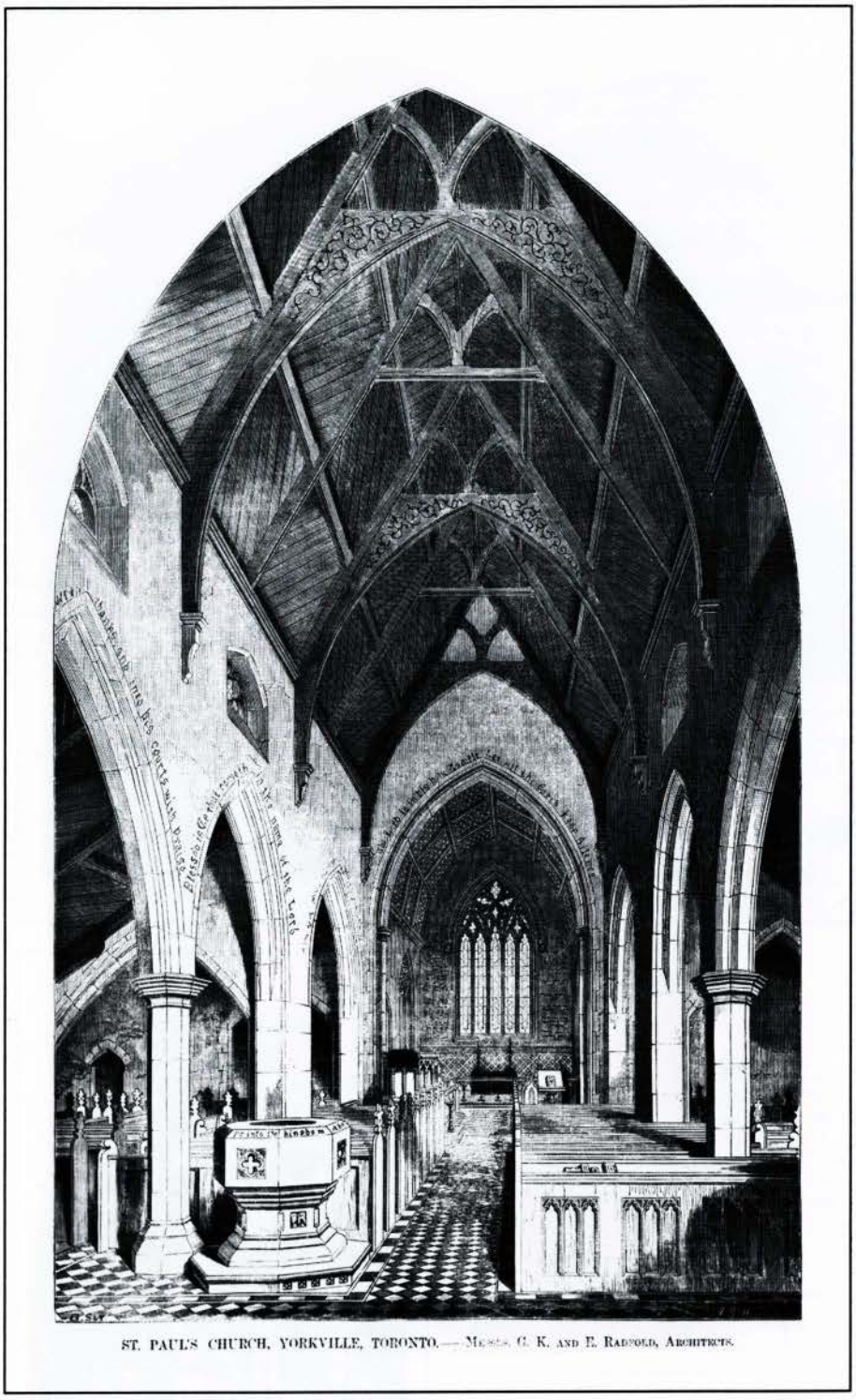


Figure 4 (above). Christ Church Cathedral, Montréal; Frank Wills and Thomas Seaton Scott, architects. (*The Illustrated London News* 36, no. 1020 [3 March 1860]: 205)



ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, YORKVILLE, TORONTO.— Messrs. G. K. and E. Radford, Architects.

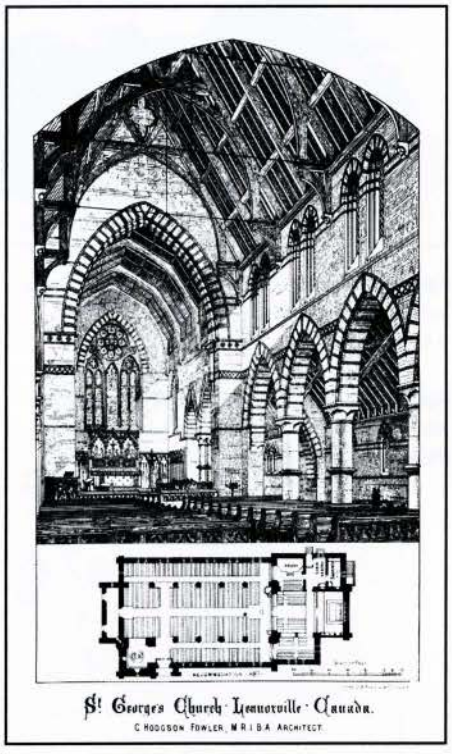
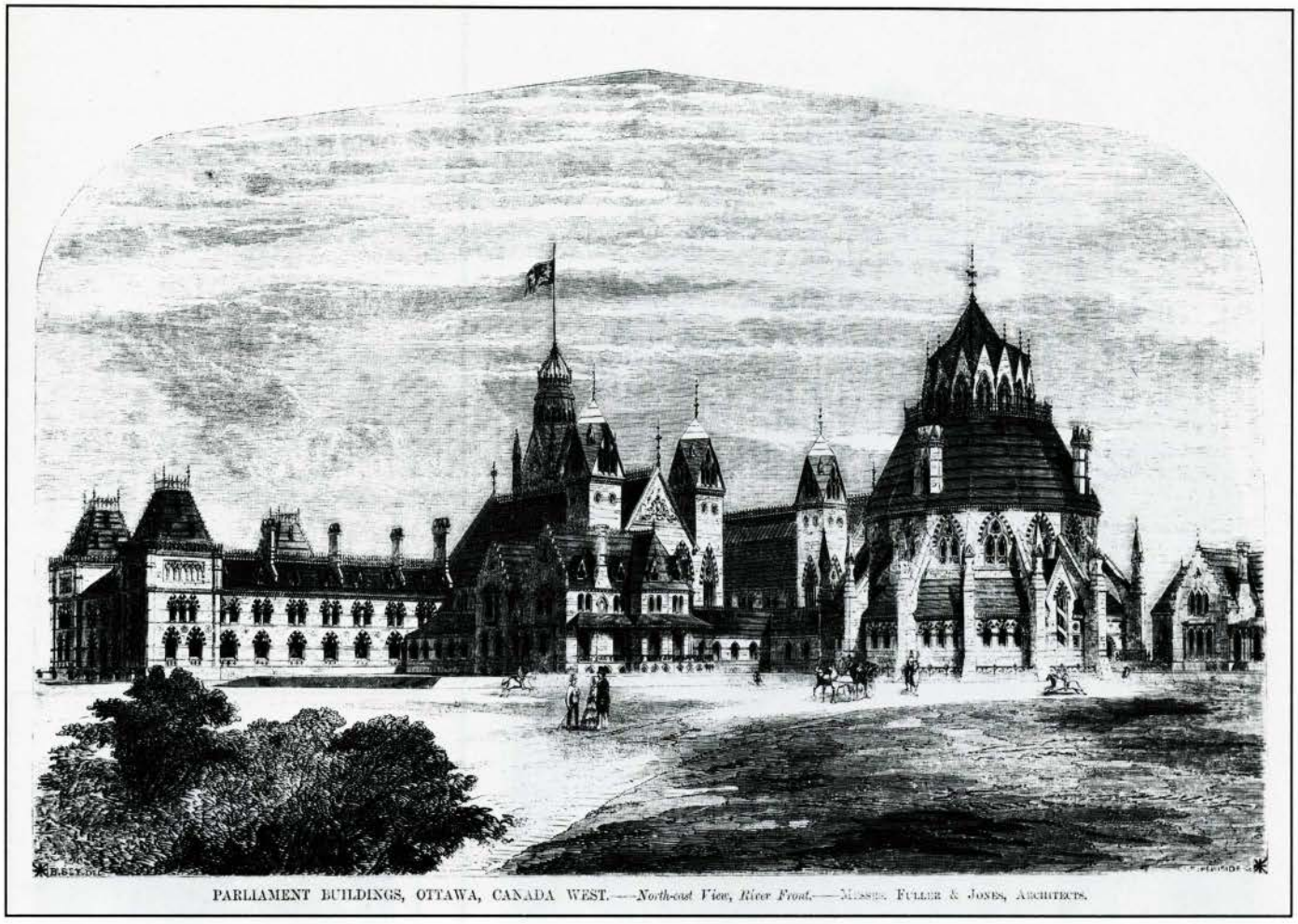


Figure 5 (left). Saint Paul's Church, Yorkville, Toronto; G.K. and E. Radford, architects. (*The Builder* 16, no. 794 [24 April 1858]: 279)

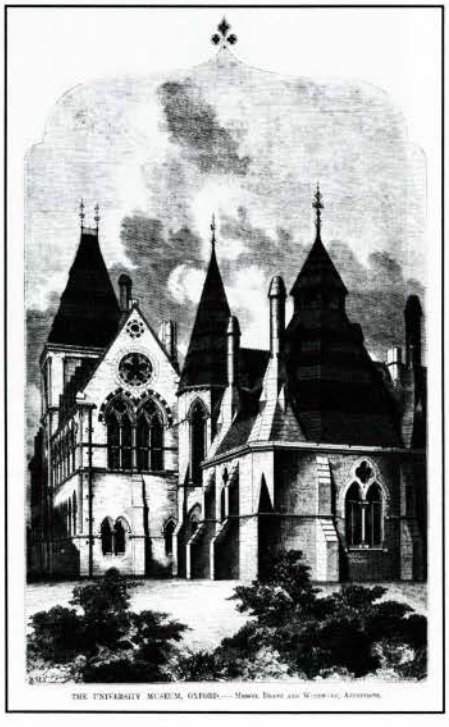
Figure 6 (above). Saint George's Church, Lennoxville; C. Hodgson Fowler, architect. (*The Architect* 1, no. 8 [20 February 1869]: following p. 104)

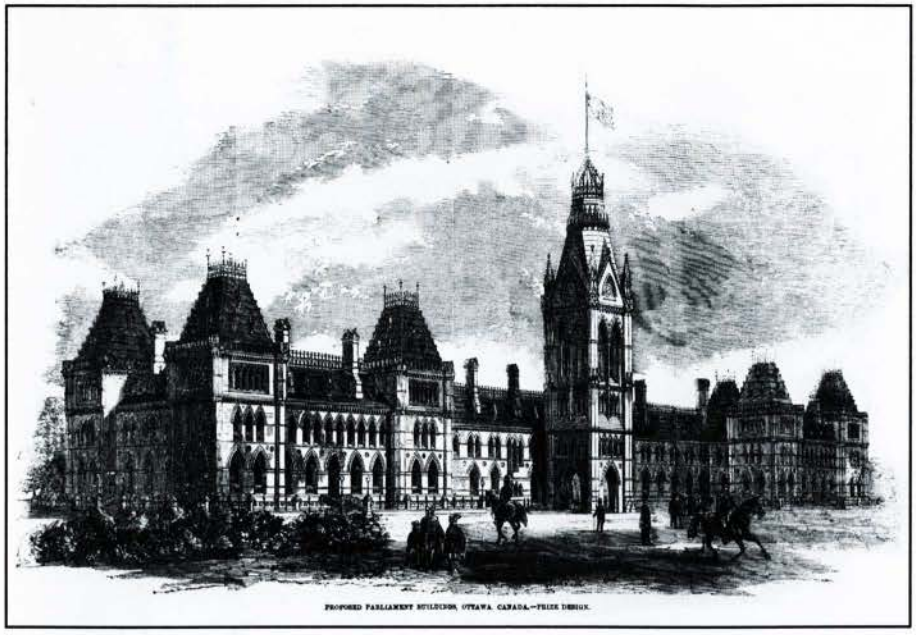


PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, OTTAWA, CANADA WEST.—*North-east View, River Front.*—Messrs. Fuller & Jones, Architects.

Figure 7 (right). Natural History Museum, Oxford; Deane and Woodward, architects. (*The Builder* 17, no. 844 [9 April 1859]: 253)

Figure 8 (above). Parliament Buildings, Ottawa; Fuller and Jones, architects. (*The Builder* 17, no. 879 [10 December 1859]: 809)

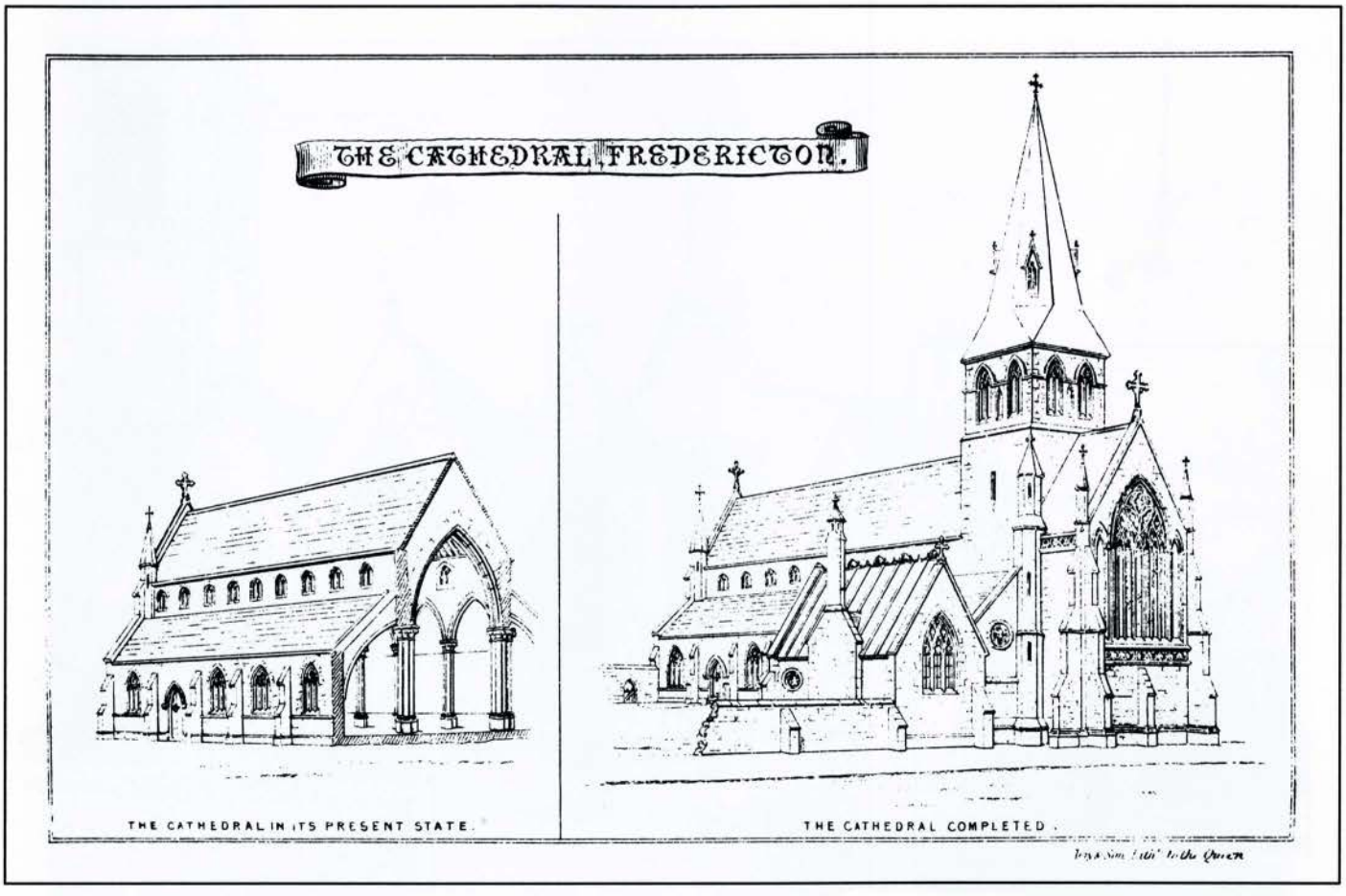


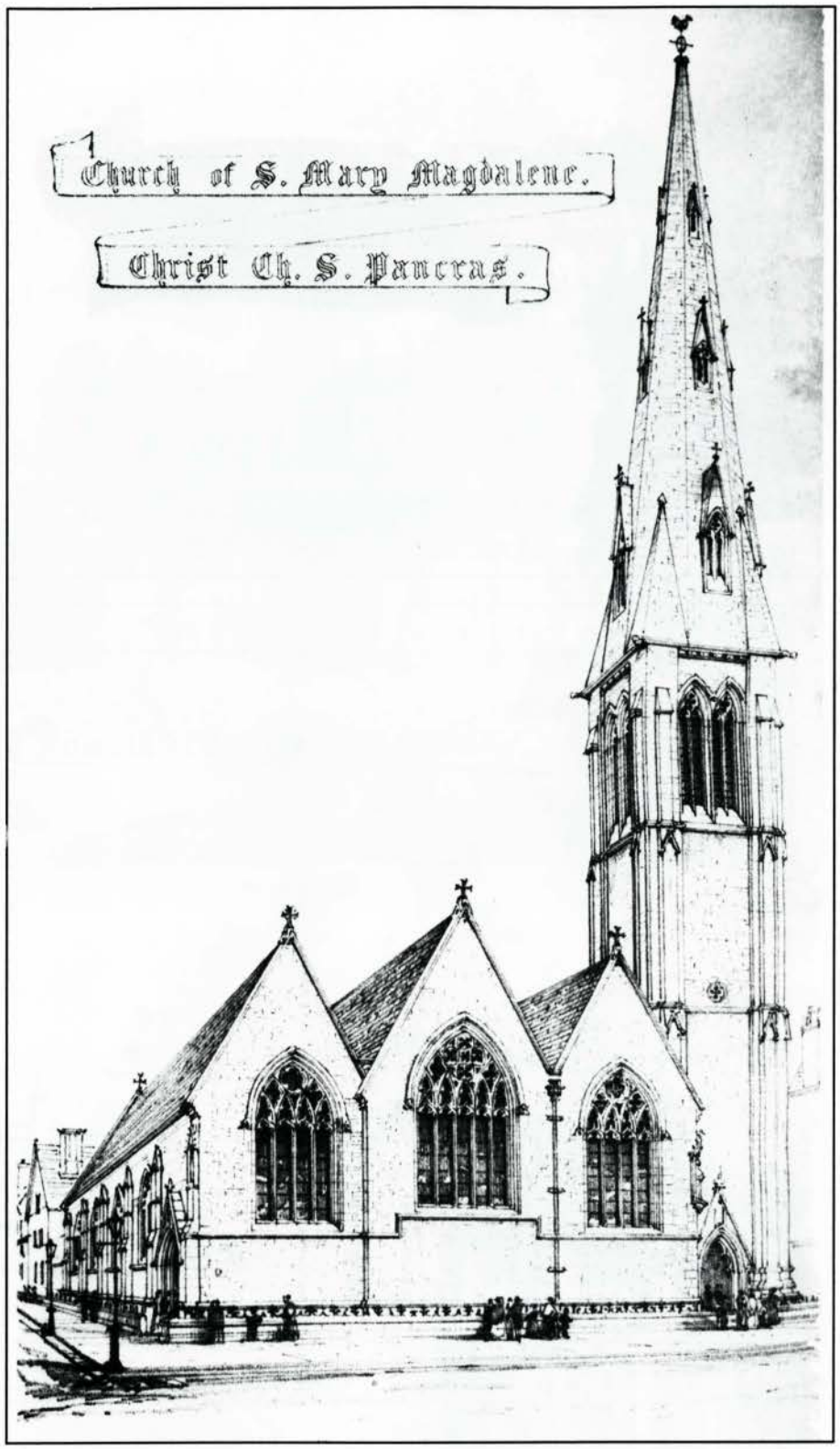


PROPOSED PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, OTTAWA, CANADA.—FULLER DESIGN.

Figure 9 (left). Parliament Buildings, Ottawa; Fuller and Jones, architects. (*The Illustrated London News* 35, no. 1001 [5 November 1859]: 435)

Figure 10 (below). Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick. (*The Ecclesiologist* 8 [June 1848]: opposite p. 329)





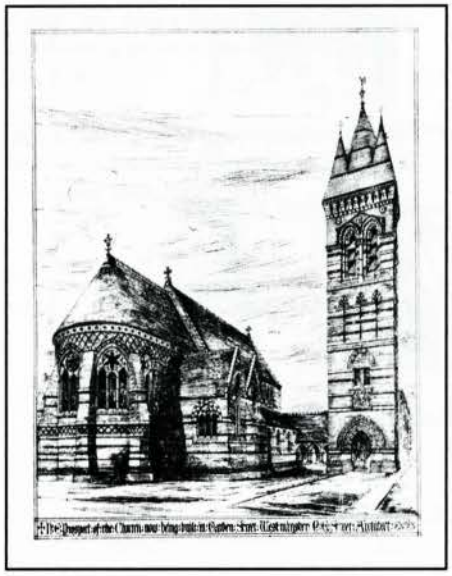


Figure 11 (right). Church of St. Mary Magdalene, London; Richard Carpenter, architect. (*The Ecclesiologist* 10 [February 1850]: opposite p. 353)

Figure 12 (above). St. James the Less, London; George Edmund Street, architect. (*The Ecclesiologist* 20 [December 1859]: opposite p. 426)

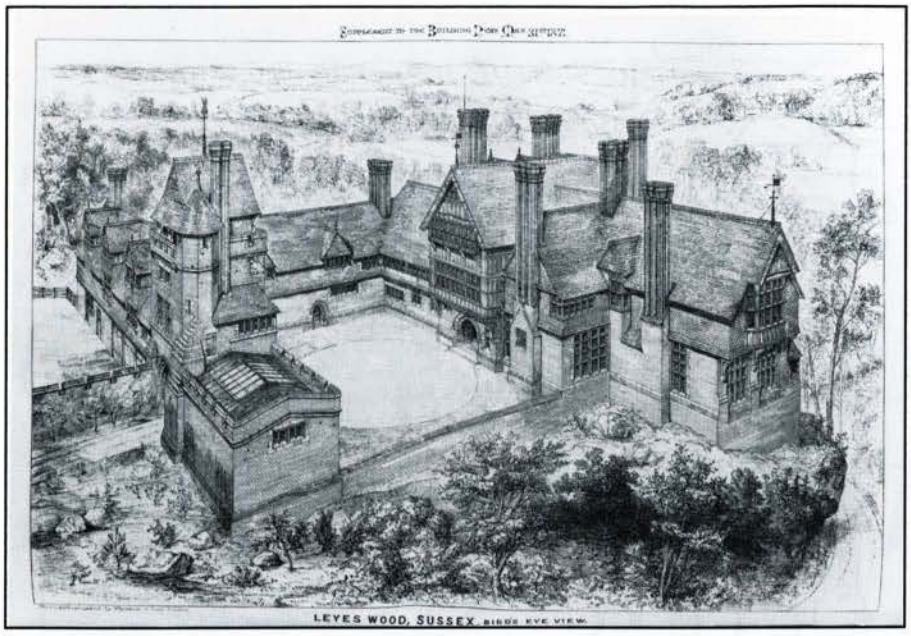


Figure 13 (left). Leyeswood, Sussex; Richard Norman Shaw, architect. (*Building News* 12 [31 March 1871]: opposite p. 249)

Figure 14 (below). "Residence, Sandy Hill, Ottawa, for Mr. W.H. Davis"; Taylor, Gordon, and Bousfield, architects. (*The Architect* 37 [4 February 1887]: opposite p. 65)

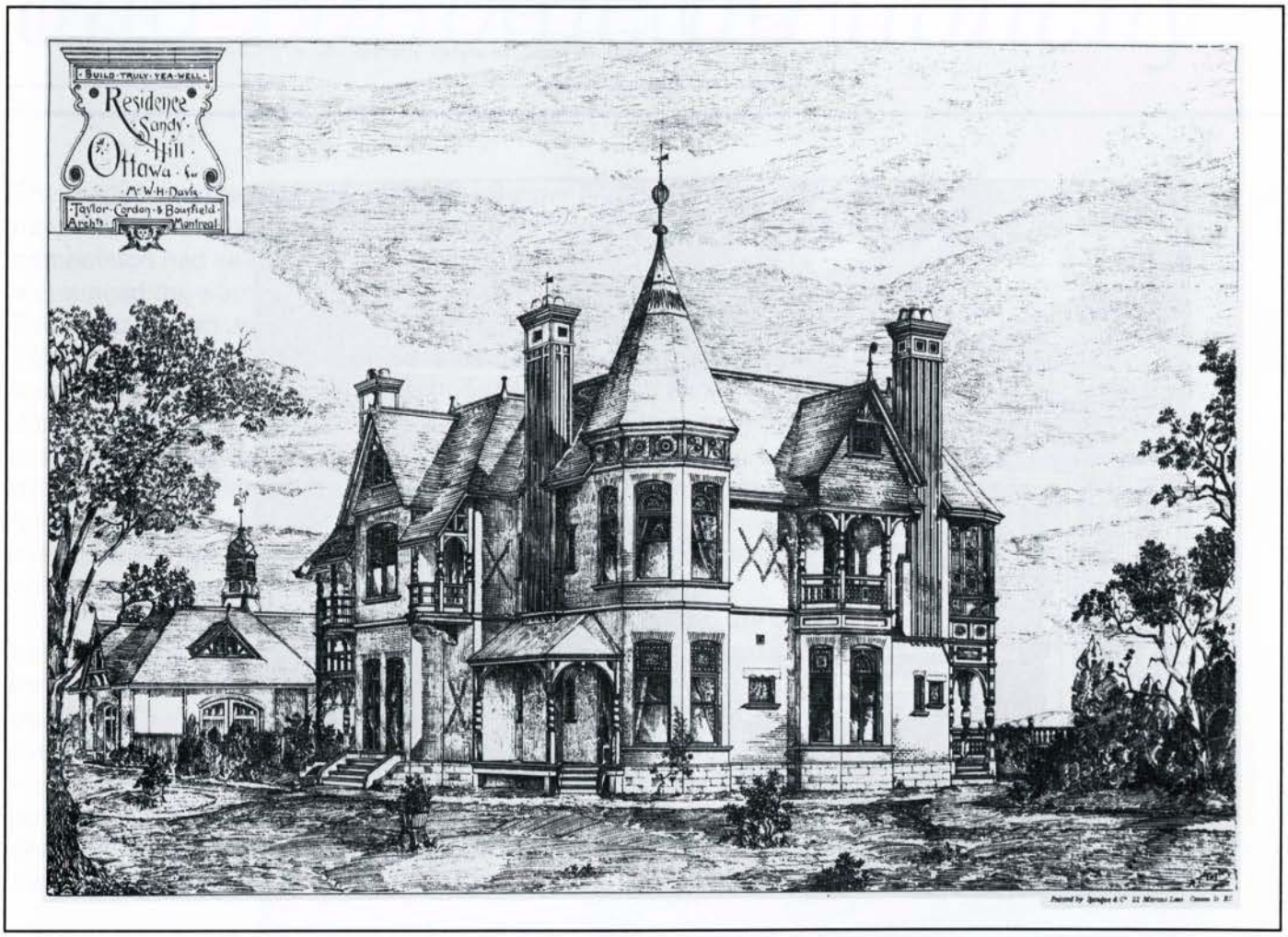


Figure 15 (right). "House on Pembroke Street, Toronto, for W.J. Davis"; Langley and Burke, architects. (*Canadian Architect and Builder* 1, no. 3 [March 1888]: ill. 3)

Figure 16 (below). "Staircase Hall in A.E. Kemp's House, Wellesley Crescent," Toronto; Edmund Burke, architect. (*Canadian Architect and Builder* 8, no. 9 [September 1895]: ill. 9)