

THE GOTHIC REVIVAL BUILDINGS IN LONDON

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Summary. *The rebirth of Gothic architecture began in the United Kingdom in the late 1700s. The movement was fueled in part by a literary obsession with medieval times, knights, castles, and monasteries. Starting with Strawberry Hill, the fanciful home of a Gothic novelist, the nostalgic movement spread across the country. Gothic Revival architecture, unlike original Gothic architecture, was used in many types of buildings—not only religious ones. Medieval elements were even incorporated into the facades of ordinary buildings. By the end of the 19th century, London was the epicenter of monumental Gothic Revival architecture. The century gave a new elegance, and new life, to the style.*

Keywords: *pointed arches, irregular appearance, vertical emphasis, rich colours, decoration.*

Introduction

Inspired by medieval architecture, Gothic Revival architecture developed in Britain in the nineteenth century. Gothic was a style for churches, where it was meant to emphasize the divine and involved precise mathematical calculations and proportions. But Gothic Revival transformed it into a decorative, fanciful style with little connection to past.

Gothic architecture's defining features are pointed arches, rib vaults, buttresses, and extensive use of stained glass. Combined, these features allowed the creation of buildings of unprecedented height and grandeur, filled with light from large stained glass windows.

Strawberry Hill

Strawberry Hill House—is the Gothic Revival villa that was built in Twickenham, London in 1698 as a modest house by Horace Walpole (1717–1797) from 1749 onward. It is the type example of the "Strawberry Hill Gothic" style of architecture, and it prefigured the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. Walpole rebuilt the existing house in stages starting in 1749, 1760, 1772 and 1776. These added Gothic features such as towers and battlements outside and elaborate decoration inside to create "gloomth" to suit Walpole's collection of antiquarian objects, contrasting with the more cheerful or "riant" garden.

He incorporated many of the exterior details of cathedrals into the interior of the house. Externally there seemed to be two predominant 'mixed' styles: a style based on castles with turrets and battlements, and a style based on Gothic cathedrals with arched windows and stained glass.

The most commonly identifiable feature of the Gothic revival style is the pointed arch, used for windows, doors, and decorative elements throughout Strawberry Hill House, based on cathedrals from around the world. – Figure 1



Figure 1: Strawberry Hill House in 2012 after restoration

Palace of Westminster

The Palace of Westminster serves as the meeting place for both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The first royal palace constructed on the site dated from the 11th century, and Westminster became the primary residence of the Kings of England. In 1834 an even greater fire ravaged the heavily rebuilt Houses of Parliament, and the only significant medieval structures to survive were Westminster Hall. Sir Charles Barry's collaborative design for the Palace of Westminster uses the Perpendicular Gothic style, which was popular during the 15th century and returned during the Gothic revival of the 19th century. Barry was a classical architect, but he was aided by the Gothic architect Augustus Pugin. Westminster Hall, which was built in the 11th century and survived the fire of 1834, was incorporated in Barry's design. There are some other features of the Palace of Westminster which are also known as towers.

The Palace of Westminster was built with a sand-colored limestone from the Anston Quarry in Yorkshire. Anston stone was chosen because it was cheaper and could be supplied in blocks up to four feet thick and lent itself to elaborate carving.

However, the stone quickly began to decay as a result of atmospheric pollution from coal burning in London and the poor quality of the material used. Although these defects in the choice of stone were visible as early as 1849, very little was done to prevent its decline during the 19th century. Barry himself experimented with various compositions on the stone and believed that the decay had been halted. – Figure2



Figure 2: The Palace of Westminster

St. Pancras Railway Station

St Pancras railway station is a central London railway terminus on Euston Road in the London Borough of Camden. The station was constructed by the Midland Railway, which had an extensive network across the Midlands and the North of England. After rail traffic problems following the 1862 International Exhibition, the Midland Railway decided to build a connection from Bedford to London with their own terminus and was built in 1868. The station was designed by William Henry Barlow and constructed with a single-span iron roof. The station was designed and constructed in two parts; the train shed and the hotel frontage. William Henry Barlow, the Midland Railway's consultant engineer, designed the route and station layout, including a single-span arched train shed constructed of iron and glass.

The single-span overall roof was the largest such structure in the world at the time of its completion. The materials used were wrought iron framework of lattice design, with glass covering the middle half and timber (inside)/slate (outside) covering the outer quarters. The two end screens were glazed in a vertical rectangular grid pattern with decorative timber cladding around the edge and wrought iron finials around the outer edge. It was 689 feet (210.01 m) long, 240 feet (73.15 m) wide, and 100 feet (30.48 m) high at the apex above the tracks.

The building is primarily brick, but polychromatic, in a style derived from the Italian gothic, and with numerous other architectural influences. - Figure 4.



Figure 4: St. Pancras Railway Station

33-35 East cheap

The current building of No. 33-35 was constructed in 1868 to a design by English architect Robert Lewis Roumieu (1814-1877). Down East cheap there are a lot of the Victorian buildings survive and they are homes to offices, coffee shops and the like. One particular building that stands out from the rest is No. 33-35 East cheap, a dramatic Neo-Gothic, double-fronted structure. The materials are red-brown brick with blue brick diapering, Tisbury stone dressings and Devonshire marble. It was built in 1868 as the London depot of Hill & Evans, vinegar makers of Worcester.

No. 33-35 is a Neo-Gothic, five-storey building with a further attic storey in a slated roof. On the ground floor is a huge arched doorway which would have been used for delivery access and Devonshire marble columns. However, the current iron gates only date back to 1987. The top three-storey feature Gothic arched bays with projected canopies over the windows. Above the second floor, central window is a sculpture of a wild boar peering through long grass – a nod to the site's former Boar's Head Tavern. Meanwhile, the second-floor canopies to the left and right feature carved heads of Henry IV and Henry V. The building features a lot of decorative elements, including tiling, cast iron cresting, and plaster badges. - Figure 5.



Figure 5: 33-35 Eastcheap

Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge is a combined bascule and suspension bridge in London, built between 1886 and 1894. The bridge crosses the River Thames close to the Tower of London and has become a world-famous symbol of London. Some 50 designs were submitted, but because of much controversy, it took eight years for one design to be approved. It was a design submitted by Sir Horace Jones, the City Architect that he designed in collaboration with John Wolfe Barry. The bridge consists of two bridge towers tied together at the upper level by two horizontal walkways, designed to withstand the horizontal tension forces imposed by the suspended sections of the bridge on the landward sides of the towers. The vertical components of the forces in the suspended sections and the vertical reactions of the two walkways are carried by the two robust towers. The bascule pivots and operating machinery are housed in the base of each tower.

In building the bridge there were used about 235,000 cubic feet of Cornish granite and Portland stone, 20,000 tons of cement, 70,000 cubic yards of concrete, 31,000,000 bricks and 14,000 tons of iron and steel. The bridge is a combination of the suspension and bascule type.

Now, over 125 years later, Tower Bridge is still as strong as ever, testimony to the quality of its construction. However, there were some challenges to combining the architectural style with the then modern Victorian technology behind it. – Figure 6.



Figure 6: View from Shad Thames

Conclusion

English Gothic Revival made a large impact on architecture during the 19th century. Pointed arches and vaults are some of the main defining characteristics of English Gothic design. Through incorporation of these characteristics, cathedrals were able to increase the building height and assume a slimmer appearance, as well as incorporate window art on the walls, since the walls were no longer being used to carry the building load.

Many of the largest and finest works of English architecture, notably the medieval cathedrals of England, are largely built in the Gothic style: castles, palaces, universities, and many smaller unpretentious secular buildings, including almshouses and trade halls. Another important group of Gothic buildings in England are the parish churches, which, like the medieval cathedrals, are often of earlier, Norman foundation.

Because of innovations in gothic design, buildings such as cathedrals were able to increase the amount of light in the building through window art and increase the height of the building through pointed arches and the use of vaults for support.

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