

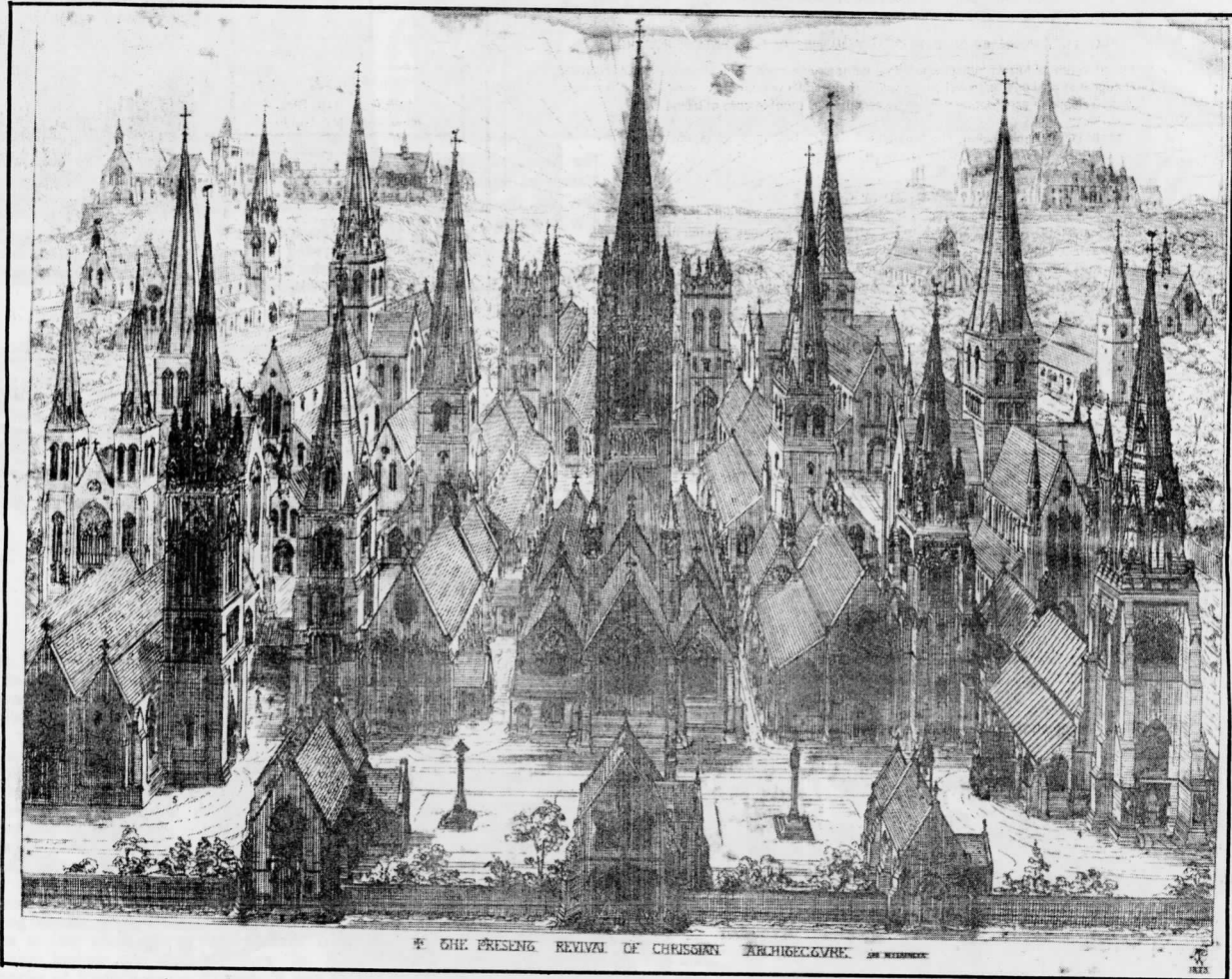


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INDEXES ON  
PAGES 66 & 67

## A.W.N. Pugin



### Master of Gothic Revival

**NEW YORK CITY** — The career of A.W.N. Pugin (1812-1852) is celebrated at the Bard Graduate Center with an exhibition featuring 144 examples of his ceramics, furniture, metalwork, textiles, woodwork, wallpaper, and works on paper.

The exhibition continues through February 25 at 18 West 86th Street.

The show is divided into five sections revealing Pugin's incomparable role as a designer in the formation of the Gothic Revival idiom.

The first section examines the pre-Pugin Gothic Revival

One of the most talented architects and designers of the Nineteenth Century, Pugin is remembered today primarily as the designer of the interiors of the Houses of Parliament. As this exhibition demonstrates, he was the single most influential artist in defining the Nineteenth Century Gothic Revival in England.

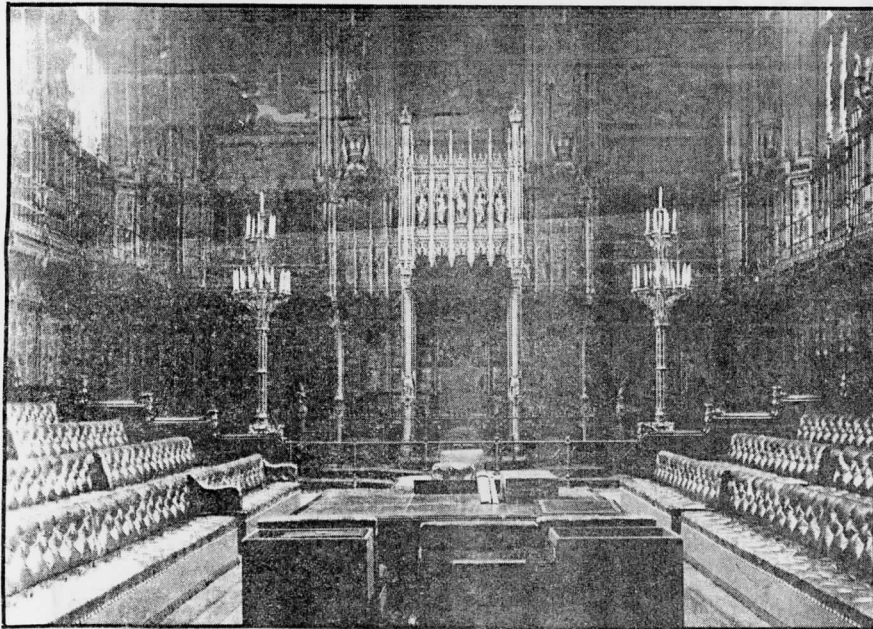
"The Present Revival of Christian Architecture," frontispiece to the *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture*, 1843. Drawn and written by A.W.N. Pugin.

in England, highlighting such notable monuments as Strawberry Hill, the famous home of Horace Walpole. The house is shown in a group of drawings, and its furnishings are represented by the renowned Strawberry Hill chair, on loan to the Bard Graduate Center from the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Its distinct Gothic sensibility is revealed in the striking design of the chair back, inspired by Medieval tracery decoration.

For Pugin, the new Gothic

(continued on page 68)



The House of Lords, Palace of Westminster, 1897. Designed by A.W.N. Pugin.

# A. W. N. Pugin

(Continued from page one)

was dependent upon the correct use of sources and materials and based on detailed studies, particularly of Gothic architecture in France, of where he traveled often throughout his life. On sketching trips with his father as a young boy, he demonstrated a remarkable drafting skill and compiled sketchbooks and drawings that are well repre-

sented in the exhibition and serve to document the ideas he eventually assimilated into a distinct aesthetic idiom. Pugin was also an avid collector of Medieval artifacts. Objects he acquired are in the exhibition.

The show's second section focuses on Pugin's ecclesiastical designs. Pugin worked avidly to take the Catholic liturgy back to its Medieval roots, and he produced a range of designs, including spectacular metalwork and

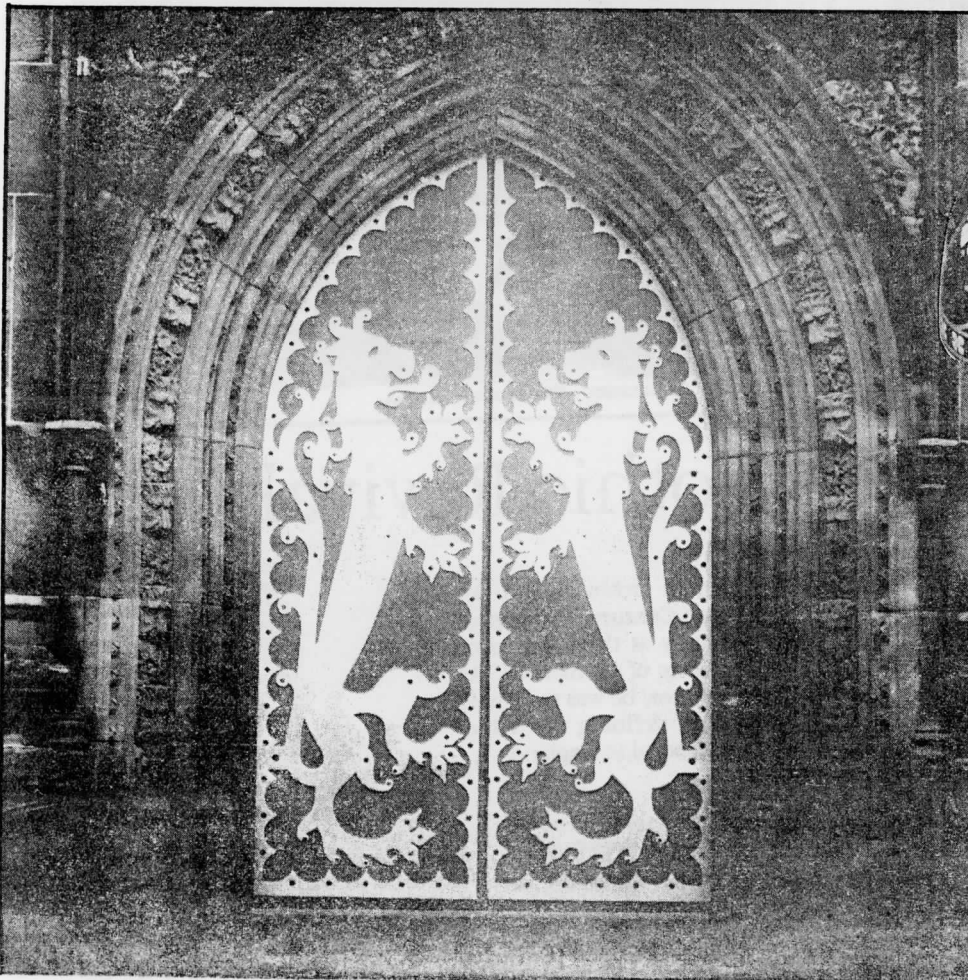
sacred vestments. They are among the most striking works in the show, reflecting as they do, Pugin's masterful use of pattern, color and orna-

Garden seat by A.W.N. Pugin, 1848-1850. Minton & Company, Stoke-on-Trent. Earthenware, majolica glazes. Detroit Institute of Art.

Ceremonial west doors of St. Giles Church, Staffordshire, with heraldic decoration designed by Pugin in 1846.



Chalice by A.W.N. Pugin. Parcel-gilt, decorated with enamel and jewels. Made by John Hardman & Co., Roman Archdiocese of Birmingham.



ment.

The Houses of Parliament, rebuilt after the 1834 fire by architect Charles Barry and Pugin, are examined in the third section of the exhibition. From floor coverings to ceramic tiles, decorative carving, woodwork, furnishings, metalwork and stained glass, he codified the Puginian Gothic Revival idiom in this landmark public building. Among the works on view from the Houses of Parliament are: the House of Commons chair, the House of Lords X-frame chair and the Chair of State made for Prince Albert. Encaustic tiles, designed by Pugin and manufactured by Minton & Company, carpet and wallpaper are also displayed to illustrate the total design scheme Pugin so successfully conceived.

Domestic commissions make up the fourth section of the exhibition. Pugin's most famous design in this area was his own



Wallpaper, the Palace of Westminster, designed by A.W.N. Pugin, circa 1851. Pencil with colored washes. Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum.



"Portrait of A.W.N. Pugin," J.R. Herbert, 1845. Giltwood frame designed by Pugin. Palace of Westminster, London.

## Ceramics, Furniture, Metalwork, Textiles, Woodwork, Wallpaper and Works on Paper Displayed

residence — The Grange, Ramsgate, Kent — which embodies his faith in Catholicism. It was conceived, beginning in 1843, as a tripartite structure composed of residence, church and monastery. The exhibition offers a watercolor of The Grange as well as objects from the house. A magnificent series of drawings show Pugin's inventive design skills for a variety of domestic, secular and industrial projects and his work as a pioneering interior designer.

Ceramics in this section of the exhibition include one of the hallmarks of Pugin's career, the Motto Bread Plate of 1850, produced by Minton & Company, with "Waste Not, Want Not." It has become an icon of the Victorian Gothic Revival.

The final section of the exhibition is devoted to Pugin's last great work, the Medieval Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851. It was the consummation of the Gothic Revival idiom he had struggled so long and hard to create and disseminate. A selection of ceramics and metalwork from the original installation are on display. The most important example is the cabinet designed by Pugin and manufactured by George Myers in 1846. Originally designed for The Grange, Ramsgate, the cabinet epitomizes the finest

quality carving and cleverly adapts the form of its Medieval prototype to a modern use.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin was born in London in 1812. He was the only son of Auguste Charles Pugin, a French-born designer, scholar, illustrator and collector who came to England during the French Revolution, and an Englishwoman, Catherine Welby. During Pugin's childhood, his father used his son's talents as a draftsman to draw details from Medieval buildings in England and France; it was then that Pugin's interest was awakened.

He was extremely precocious; by the age of 15, he was designing furniture and metalwork for Windsor Castle. By the time he was 20, he had been married and widowed, set up a furniture and decorating business that had gone bankrupt, and established a new career as a theater designer at Covent Garden Opera House.

During the years 1833 and 1834, Pugin traveled extensively around England, examining churches and cathedrals, and it was then that he began to seriously consider converting to Catholicism, an act he undertook in 1835. That year he also published his first book, *Gothic Furniture*, and entered drawings into the

competition for the new Houses of Parliament on behalf of two of the architects, including Charles Barry who was selected. The following year he published his most famous and most controversial book, *Contrasts*, an outspoken and anti-classical polemic that attempted to establish Gothic as the only true style for a modern Britain.

In 1837 he began his career as an independent architect. Before his death, a scant 15 years later, he designed, in England and Ireland, six cathedrals, over 40 churches and dozens of seminaries, convents and other religious establishments as well as major secular buildings, including Scarisbrick Hall in Lancashire and major additions at Alton Towers and Alton Castle. These designs set styles for architecture and interiors that were to remain influential throughout the Nineteenth Century, both in Britain and overseas.

The Pugin exhibition is accompanied by a 420-page catalogue illustrated with 195 color plates and 230 black-and-white photographs. *A.W.N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival* was published by The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts in association with Yale University Press. It is available in soft cover and is \$45.

Edited by Paul Atterbury, it includes essays by ten American and English scholars who examine Pugin's multi-faceted career, the forces that helped shape his interpretation of the Gothic Revival, and his influence on the Continent and in North America. The 144 words in the exhibition are fully documented.

"A.W.N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival" was curated by Paul Atterbury, an art his-

torian, lecturer and writer in the fields of architecture and design history, ceramics and other aspects of the decorative arts. He has been an editor of Sotheby's publications, historical advisor to Royal Doulton and editor of *The Connoisseur Magazine*. He is the author of several books and many articles. Paul Atterbury also was the curator of the 1994 Pugin exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Chair of State by A.W.N. Pugin, 1847. Made by John Webb, New Bond Street, London. Carved and gilt mahogany, velvet upholstery. Palace of Westminster, London.

