

JOHN SUTCLIFFE,
ARCHITECT,
903 GAFF BUILDING,
234 LA SALLE STREET.

TELEPHONE MAIN 920.

Sutcliffe

CHICAGO, May 4 1897

(87)

John D. Rockefeller, Esq. New York.

Dear Sir

The manner of this letter may possibly call for apology, but the subject I desire to respectfully address you upon calls for none. I address you as a perfect stranger, but the deep interest that you must have in the University of Chicago, I trust is a sufficient introduction for you to think upon the little I would say to you.

I have seen a design for a Chapel for the University, which I so deplorably deficient in all religious and even architectural feeling as to constitute a deep offense against all canons of art.

The house of God is such an important undertaking that anything below the best that can be got is inadequate to that extent, and this design which it is expected to build will be a cause of everlasting regret to all who look upon it with any pretension to the knowledge requisite to intelligently criticize it.

The general University buildings I

Mr. Jones: Send Dr. Harper - 9-

University of Chicago
Architect

lay nothing upon, but this Temple for the worship
of God, I urge, should be as good as can be
possibly built; the money it will cost is enough
to build a monument that shall be a glory to
the University, but it will be wasted unless
some change is made in the design proposed.

It has been my lot to have made
a somewhat deep study of ecclesiastical
architecture, although I have not been permitted
to build any important church edifice; and
while I could present, myself, a design more
in accordance with the spirit and opportunity here
presented, yet I think that if this design were
submitted to the judgement of any educated
architect, even if he had not made a special
study of Collegiate or ecclesiastical work
I have not any doubt he would agree with me
in condemning it unreservedly.

If you will give me the opportunity,
I will submit you a sketch suggesting a more
appropriate and desirable treatment for the
building, without cost to you; as my motive is solely
in writing you, to endeavor to have a design more
worthy of its important ^{position} ~~position~~ as a college building
and especially of its purpose as a dwelling of the
almighty. Trusting that you will consider this
suggestion with this motive in view, I am, dear Sir,
yours respectfully



John Butchiffe

Sutcliffe

Chicago, May 24th, 1897.

In presenting a design to the President of the University of Chicago for a Chapel, I understand that I place the University under no financial obligations to me. If my design should receive favorable consideration and be regarded as the best design and should be accepted for use, I should then understand that the usual obligation existed. The design if not accepted by the University will be returned to ~~Mr. Sutcliffe~~ *me*

It is further understood that the President of the University in this matter is acting entirely unofficially; that there is no committee appointed as yet for the consideration of such a chapel, and that I accept this simply as an opportunity to secure consideration of a design which I shall present.

John Sutcliffe

Chicago, May 28th, 1907.

In presenting a design to the President of the University of
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under no financial obligations to me. If my design should receive
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be accepted for use, I should then understand that the usual
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John D. Butler

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ARCHITECT,
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234 LA SALLE ST.

Sutcliffe

Documts

CHICAGO,

Oct 5

189

In presenting the accompanying drawings embodying suggestions for an adequate design for the proposed chapel for the University of Chicago, it may be appropriate to offer for consideration in the criticism of such drawings some remarks as to the motives suggesting and influencing the design.

At the outset the axiom may be laid down that it is one thing to buy a five dollar book and copy a few "Gothic" features, windows, doors, gables and moldings; yet it is quite another thing and a rarer, to produce a building in the spirit of the old Gothic builders.

This may be seen illustrated in the majority of modern Gothic churches: painfully accurate in style and detail, so far as such may be learned from books, but failing most miserably to equal the old buildings either in composition, dignity or in general effect.

A result even approximately approaching that of thirteenth and fourteenth century work can only be got, it would appear, by those who have made a careful study not only of books, but of the old buildings themselves; by those who have endeavored as far as possible, to enter into the train of thought of the old designers,

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and a harder, to produce a building in the spirit of the old building

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old buildings themselves; by those who have endeavored as far as

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to learn why, when such and such a course was pursued, that particular way was finally selected to express the idea in design.

In this connection, it may be remarked that a greater number of successes are scored by modern architects in the Classic school than in the Gothic School, and the reason for this may be found in the fact that the Classic buildings have been more systematically studied than have Gothic buildings, and that architects generally, when working in the Classic style, appear to accept as a fundamental principle the fact that proportion is the great secret of design. At the same time architects working in the Gothic style appear not to recognize that, here also, the necessity for studying proportion is quite as important, if not indeed more so, on account of the greater difficulty of its observance, arising from the fact that on account of its more subtle and intricate character, it cannot so readily be codified and reduced to rule as in the Classic style.

That to produce the effect of grecian or Roman architects, the understanding of the principles of proportion which they followed, and not the slavish copying of features would predicate success; witness many highly successful buildings in the late World's Fair. This course has not been followed by the majority

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of architects in their Gothic buildings, and hence the comparatively few good modern churches, particularly in the United States, where architects are close students of Gothic Architecture are few indeed.

Another reason for the unsatisfactory state of Gothic architecture is that many designers appear to labor under the idea that to produce good work they are to frantically strive after "Originality" as expressed in the production of something different from buildings already in existence; no matter in what manner this difference is got, so long as the result expresses a difference, they are satisfied.

Now it is suggested that this appears to have been by no means the way the old designers proceeded. It is difficult for us to fully grasp the fact that in the genesis of art, time is not much of a factor. We think fifty years a great elapse of time, and we forget or fail to realize that it took nearly five hundred years to fully develop Gothic Architecture. Certainly from the commencement of the Romanesque period to the culmination of the pointed architecture was nearly three hundred years.

We are also liable to forget that the greatest successes in the old buildings were attained not by doing something radical-

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We are also liable to forget that the greatest successes in the old buildings were attained not by doing something radical-

ly different from the work of their predecessors or contemporaries, but by taking some motive already worked and treating it in a somewhat different and perhaps more successful manner than had already been done. This would appear to be real, and the only true, originality, and this is the course that should be followed now, with any hope of a happy result.

A striking illustration of this doctrine may be seen in Trinity Church, Boston, one of the few modern works that deserves the ascription of originality. In this church, the talented architect, the late H. H. Richardson, did not attempt to produce a radically original building, and yet it stands alone and unique.

He adopted as a motive the tower of Salamanca, Spain, but did not slavishly reproduce it; he sought to produce an effect of the same character, which, by the happy modification he gave it, far exceeded his model in aesthetic effect. It is not even in precisely the same style, though both belong to the broad class of Romanesque.

Bearing in mind these principles, and having in view the instruction to make a chapel, having the effect of an English Cathedral, that it should accommodate in a liberal and monumental manner, the large number of three thousand worshippers; that the

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Bearing in mind these principles, and having in view the instruction to make a chapel, having the effect of an English cathedral, that it should accommodate in a liberal and monumental manner, the large number of three thousand worshippers; that the

building itself must necessarily be of a monumental character, an examination of the English Cathedrals suggested two important features, if adopted, appeared to promise success.

The more important one of these, as having regard to plan, is the Octagon of Ely Cathedral, the work of Alan of Walsingham in the 14th Century.

The fact that the capacity of the chapel was to be large, at once suggested the adoption of this feature as allowing unobstructed vision to a greater number than any other English Gothic Cathedral; a requirement that also at once excluded a square central tower, which gives a plan quite inadequate to accommodate a large congregation.

The external treatment of this central Octagon also would afford an extremely effective motive for a monumental design.

The other feature adopted is that of the magnificent and unique portal of Peterborough Cathedral, which affords, if treated with judgment, an opportunity for effect far surpassing that of the original, which like most unique things, has many defects.

It may be asked, why if the Octagon of Ely is so good, a similar plan has not been adopted in any other Gothic Cathedral? The answer to this is, that no important Gothic Cathedral has

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The answer to this is, that no important Gothic Cathedral has

been commenced in England or elsewhere, since the time of Alan of Walsingham or doubtless it would have been adopted; that it would, under conditions like the present, appears to be almost certain in view of its fine possibilities both practical and aesthetic.

While it is stated that no important Gothic Cathedral has been commenced since the Ely Octagon was built, yet many Renaissance churches of great size have been built, many of them with a dome at the crossing, in which case we have exactly the same idea as at Ely, but treated in a different style. That the Renaissance architects were alive to the value and importance of Alan of Walsingham's idea, the Duomo, Florence; St. Peters, Rome; St. Paul's, London; the Church of the Invalides, Paris; St. Maria, Venice, and many others sufficiently attest.

It is true that no other Gothic Cathedral than Ely has this octagon, but its successful treatment and monumental as well as practical effect in this, its initial use, afford every encouragement for its repetition.

A Cathedral is more than a mere utilitarian preaching room. It must be impressive; this character is obtained by the sum of many elements. It must be big. Size has a dignity of its own which cannot be obtained by any other means. Therefore the church must be big as a whole. It must also be big in its feat-

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ures and details. Then it must have richness of material, richness of workmanship, of ornament, and over all, richness of architectural design.

One use for a church of what may be called the Cathedral type is to afford a monument; this necessitates that a considerable space about and around the actual space devoted to auditorium use, shall be provided; the chief use of this is for impressive effect.

To quote the words of a writer on this subject: "Beyond the size of the auditorium for utility, the cathedral must be grand for grandeur's sake, expressing more forcibly than words can, the greatness of God and the littleness of man. This is sentiment; it is none the less fact".

A consideration of the old cathedrals will show that the necessity of this element of size, above and beyond that required for auditorium purposes, was fully understood by their designers. The English Cathedrals have a total area of from three to seven times that of the auditorium. To quote two prominent examples, Westminster Abbey has a proportion of auditorium space to total floor area of one to six; Canterbury, of one to four.

The Cathedral again, is something more than an ordinary church; it is a diocesan church, and although in this case we have no diocese, yet, as a University Chapel, it will be the scene

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of functions in many respects corresponding to the diocesan. For these, it is desirable that there be space beyond and surrounding the auditorium proper to accommodate the thousands who will throng into the chapel with little expectation of obtaining a position where they will have the advantage of seeing and hearing, but who will nevertheless, partake in spirit with those who can see and hear, and whose presence will add to the dignity and importance of the occasion.

In architectural design there must be due consideration to proportion of parts. While the general sum must be big, so the several subordinate divisions must be big, the minor features of windows, doors, buttresses, pinnacles, and other adjuncts, must be so co-ordinated as to produce unity in the design. In other words, there must be proportion.

The same quality that in painting leads the artist to arrange the parts of his picture in such a manner with regard to size, color, value and composition as to produce a harmonious whole, and which quality is given the name of "breadth", is just as great a necessity in Architecture.

By such methods and in such manner we may hope to build cathedrals which will prove us fit successors of the great men who have gone before, but whose glorious works still remain with us. We must seek for success in the accumulated experience of ages.

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By such methods and in such manner we may hope to build cathedrals which will prove us fit successors of the great men who have gone before, but whose glorious works still remain with us. We must seek for wisdom in the accumulated experience of ages.

Each of these superb old cathedrals which we may hope to equal but can scarcely expect to excel as concrete works of Art, was the product of all ages that had gone before; so should ours be, and so they will be if we reverently strive to do our best as our fathers did. We may expect and ought to attempt to excel them in some respects, but our striving for originality must be conservative, not radical. We must perceive with a clear eye the limitations beyond which it is unwise to pass; we must use every pains to avoid the defects and weaknesses that are present in the old work as in all human effort, and in proportion as we do so, our work will approach the ideal.

Reference has been made to defects in the portico of Peterborough, which is taken as the model for the portico of this design. These defects are briefly: that the portico has no organic connection with the body of the church, and consequently the arches of the portico and of the nave do not react upon each other; that the axes of the arches of the portico are not coincident with those of the nave and aisles, and so raise difficulties in the design, which are not overcome or attempted to be overcome; that the central arch of Peterborough is smaller than the side arches and so suggests static weakness; that the three

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overcome; that the central arch of Peterborough is smaller than
the side arches and so suggests static weakness; that the three

gables over the three arches have an effect of monotony, besides suggesting that there are three roofs of equal height behind the portico, which is not the case; that the three windows over the three portals also misrepresent the form of the building behind, which is, like ours, a nave with a lower aisle on each side; that the towers placed at the ends of the portico, with the purpose of affording adequate abutment, are so slender as to give the effect not of added strength but further weakness: These are among the reasons advanced against the repetition of this portico.

It is submitted, however, that these objections are not vital; that the defects are not inherent to the design, but that the objections can be met by a different treatment of the design. An attempt has been made to overcome all of these objections in this design, and it is believed there is no reason for not adopting so imposing and magnificent an idea for the main front of the Chapel.

An engraving of the West front of Peterborough is attached hereto and a comparison of it with the design suggested, will show to what extent success has followed the attempt to render this feature free from objection.

At the same time, if it be considered that this attempt has failed, an alternative design is submitted embodying the more

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At the same time, it is to be considered that this attempt
 has failed, an alternative design is submitted embodying the more

orthodox treatment of this front with three portals having a large window over the main portal and a tower at each side. In the opinion of the author, however, this can in no way compare in dignity and majesty with the main suggestion.

The Octagon of Ely is also objected to on the ground that it interferes with the repose of the interior effect by a too abrupt break of the continuity of the ceiling vault; this in churches with a square central tower is so little interrupted as to be practically continuous from the nave to the choir and thus from one end of the church to the other, and so giving that effect which is so characteristic of English churches. In the present design, however, the long choir of the English Cathedrals is absent, there being no object in its retention since it can serve no useful purpose, and so the effect of length can in no case be fully preserved; in addition to this, the great advantage of the octagon in the accommodation of the congregation with as little interruption to sight and hearing as possible, is such an important factor as to fully justify the use of the octagon even at the expense of some loss of aesthetic effect; it is, however, submitted that in this case, there is no such loss of effect, and that from all points of view the octagon is the best form to adopt.

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The Octagon of St. Mark is also objected to on the ground that

it interferes with the repose of the interior effect by a too

abrupt break of the continuity of the ceiling vault; this in

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the expense of some loss of aesthetic effect; it is, however,

admitted that in this case, there is no such loss of effect, and

that from all points of view the octagon is the best form to adopt.

The unit of size, that is, half the width of nave in this plan, is that of York Minster twenty-five feet; the darker portion of the floor space represents the part devoted to auditorium purposes. The smaller and darker space in the upper limb of the cross is the organ. In the crypt or basement, will be the minor accommodations, which will be reached by staircases at convenient points, which cannot now be definitely determined.

A detailed description of the plan, elevations, materials of construction and ornament is not thought to serve any useful purpose at the present stage, and the design is so fully illustrated that it is self explanatory. In addition to which this attempt at an argument supporting the principles represented in the design, is so lengthy as to compel it to be brought to a close.

Any further details of any point upon which more information may be desired may be supplied at a later period.

John Hutchiffe
Arch^t

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H. H. H.

JOHN SUTCLIFFE,
CHURCH ARCHITECT,
903 GAFF BUILDING,
234 LA SALLE ST.

Sutcliffe

CHICAGO,

Oct 31

1897

J. W. R. Harper

U. of C.

Wells

Dear Sir

I am obliged by your letter of 26th enclosing criticism of Chapel for University, which I return herewith.

I don't know that I have much to say in reply. The objections Mr Johnson urges against the Ely Octagon were set forth in my argument. I may say in reference to this, however, that Mrs Van Rensselaer in "A Handbook of English Cathedrals, 1893, p 247, (commencing) has nothing but unqualified praise for this feature.

With reference to the criticism of the front, there is much weight in Mr Johnson's suggestion of ^{the desirability of} increased width, and more study for this feature is necessary. I think you will remember that when I handed you the design, I made this statement of the necessity for more study in detail

points of the design, this among the rest,
although we spent quite a long while
upon this design, yet it is just impossible
to express even a close approximation
to finality in such a large subject in
three or four months.

It is very gratifying, however,
to hear a criticism such as this, and
very unusual to find one that criticises
principles, and not mere subordinate
detail, and this shows that Mr Johnson
stands upon a higher plane in Architectural
Knowledge than he modestly claims,

yours sincerely

John Sutcliffe

A Suggestion.

Rev. S.
M. H. T.

The architect was asked to make a plan after the general pattern of the English Gothic cathedral.

The English Gothic cathedral is distinguished from the Gothic cathedral of the continent, among other things, by the central tower rising above the intersection of the nave and the transept. To support this tower, it was necessary to block up the space beneath with unsightly piers, which obstructed the view in every direction.

In order to avoid this difficulty and yet not wholly disappoint the English preference for a strongly accented central feature rising above the intersection of the nave and the transept, Alan of Walsingham, in building his part of the cathedral at Ely, employed the device of an octagon supported by a dome. The dome, giving an oblique thrust, could be supported by the walls of the octagon, and thus the objectionable piers could be dispensed with, and the space at the intersection of the nave and the transept not only be left unobstructed, but also be much enlarged.

No one fails to admire the beauty of the octagon and dome at Ely, when viewed as a structure complete in itself, and without reference to its relation to the general design of the building. I think, however, that no one can fail to

(2)

find in it a discord, a false note, when it is considered as a part of the general design. It breaks the continuity of both nave and transept, and the eye, led to expect long and sustained flights of Gothic vaulting, is turned aside and disappointed. The device is faulty, though not so bad as that of a central tower supported by the necessary piers.

The octagon and dome harmonize with Romanesque architecture, with which they are often employed. They have been employed only in this one instance with ~~with~~ the Gothic of the best builders. Scores of large Gothic churches have been erected since the octagon at Ely, but it has seldom been imitated, and, when it has been imitated, the result has been unsightly.

The effect is worse in a building of limited size than it is at Ely, where the nave has already ~~also~~ achieved a considerable length when the onward movement of the vaulting is checked by the octagon. An instance of the use of this device in Gothic architecture of limited scale is presented in the Episcopal church of St. Thomas, corner of Fifth Ave. and 54th st., New York. This interior makes a painful impression.

The device, though not ornamental, gives a large seating capacity, and it may be confidently recommended on this ground. But why could not the triforium be finished as a series of galleries, so as to accomodate several hundreds, and thus supply the demand for seating capacity, without the octagon?

Then the continental Gothic could be followed, instead of the English, and no marked feature would be placed above the intersection of the nave and the transept.

The plan for the front might need to be modified, and a tower or towers be placed there. The magnificent plan for the portals could be retained in all its essential features.

The front, as now sketched, seems to me too narrow when taken in connection with the projection of the transept, between which and the expansion of the front there should be a harmonious relation. The fault to which I refer may be seen in the Roman Catholic cathedral, Fifth Ave., New York. The front seems to be pinched in, and petty, when viewed in connection with the transept. A ~~tower~~ tower, or towers, might be made to supply to the front the necessary expansion.

The device, though not ornamental, gives a large working capacity, and it may be confidently recommended on this account. But why could not the triforium be finished as a series of galleries, so as to accommodate several hundred, and thus supply the demand for seating capacity, without the necessity of a triforium?

Then the conventional Gothic could be followed, instead of the English, and no mark of feature would be placed above the intersection of the nave and the transept.

The front, as now sketched, seems to be the better when taken in connection with the projection of the transept, between which and the expansion of the front there should be a continuous relation. The fault is with a detail, not the front, which seems to be pitched in, and built, upon a level in connection with the transept. A square tower, or tower, might be added to supply to the front the necessary expansion.

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If the octagon and dome should be adopted, I hope the external finishing will be just that of a dome, with no attempt to cover it over with a slight imitation of a tower.

I write this note with great diffidence, conscious that I am only an amateur in architecture, an admirer, rather than a critic.

Franklin Johnson.

The University of Chicago, Oct 23, 1897.

It is necessary and done should be stated, I hope to a

external finished will be that of a good, with no

change to cover it over with a slight indication of a lower.

I write this note with great attention, considering that

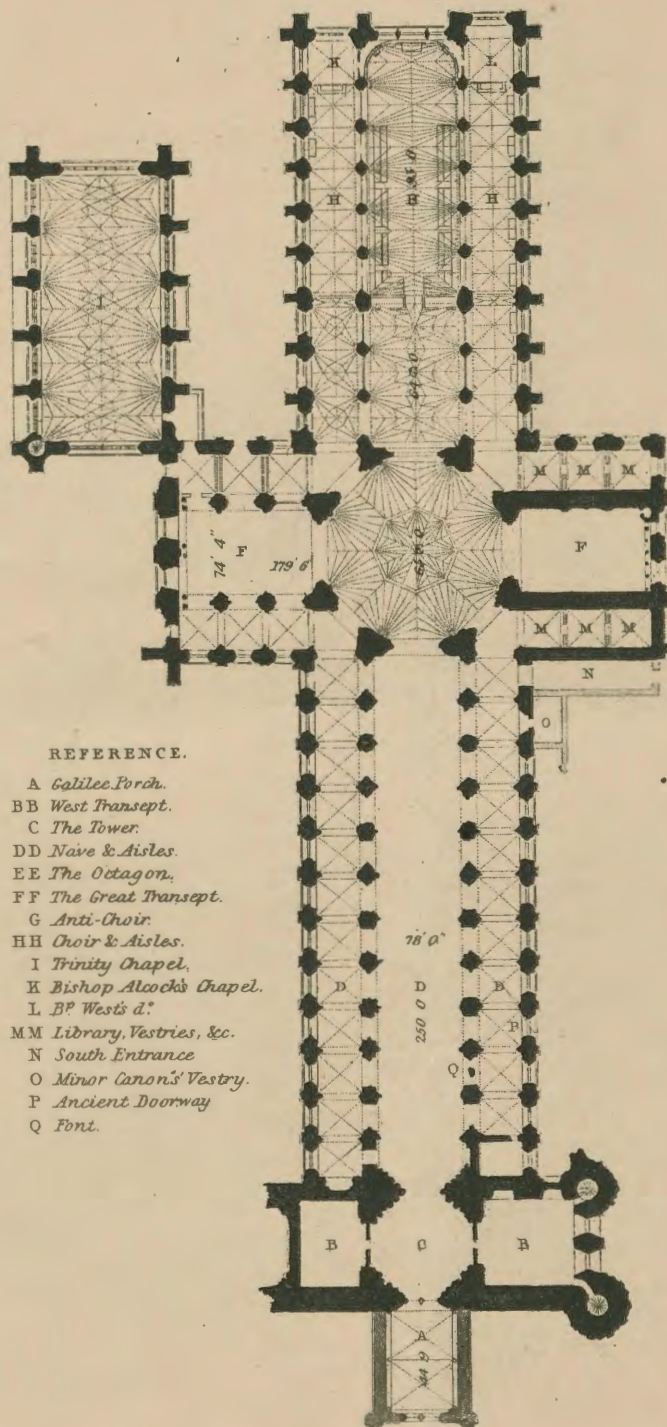
I am only an amateur in architecture, an amateur, rather

than a artist.

Franklin Johnson

The University of Chicago, Oct. 23, 1891.

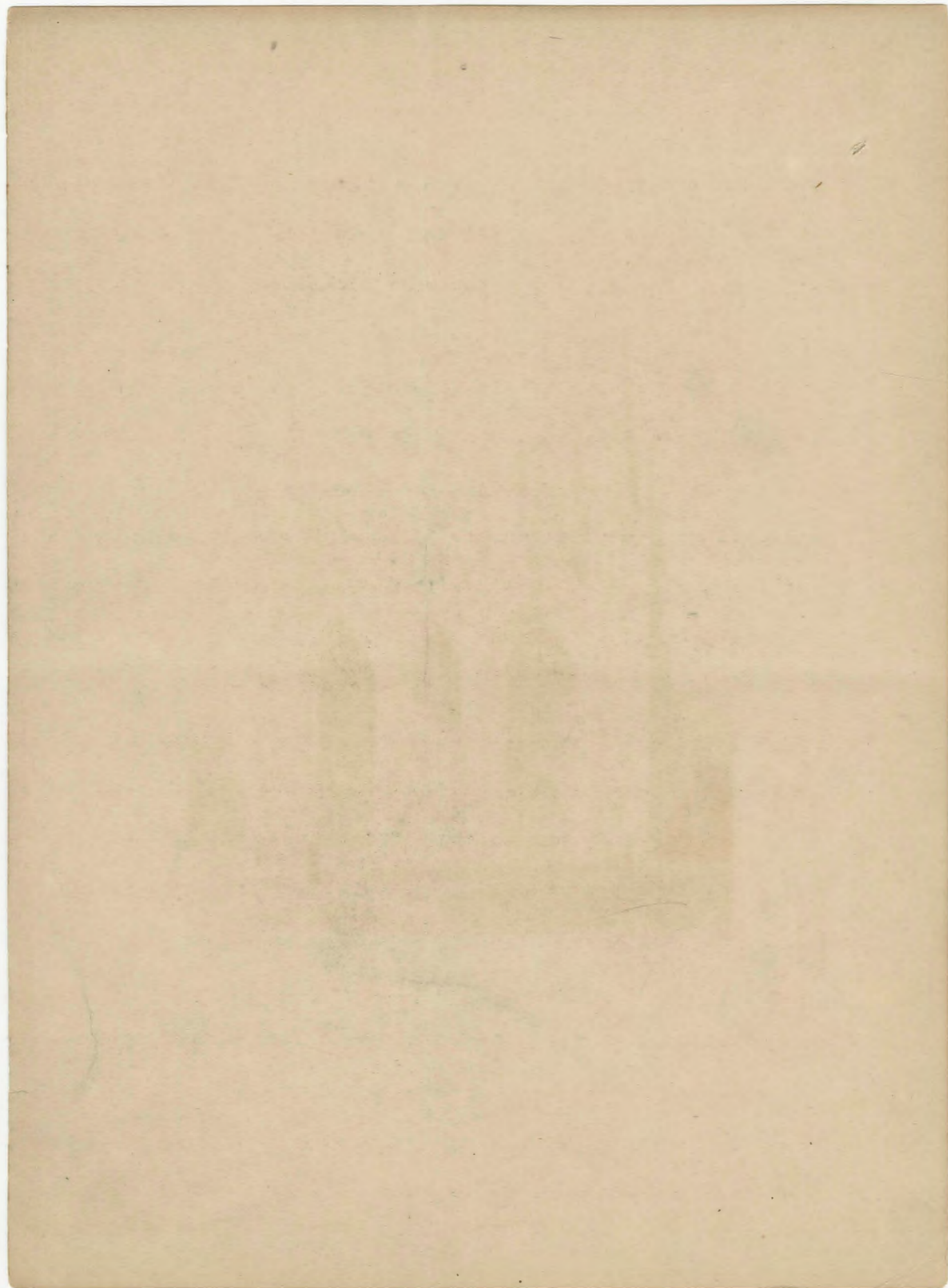
ELY CATHEDRAL.



REFERENCE.

- A Galilee Porch.
- BB West Transept.
- C The Tower.
- DD Nave & Aisles.
- EE The Octagon.
- FF The Great Transept.
- G Anti-Choir.
- HH Choir & Aisles.
- I Trinity Chapel.
- K Bishop Alcock's Chapel.
- L B^p West's d.
- MM Library, Vestries, &c.
- N South Entrance
- O Minor Canon's Vestry.
- P Ancient Doorway
- Q Font.

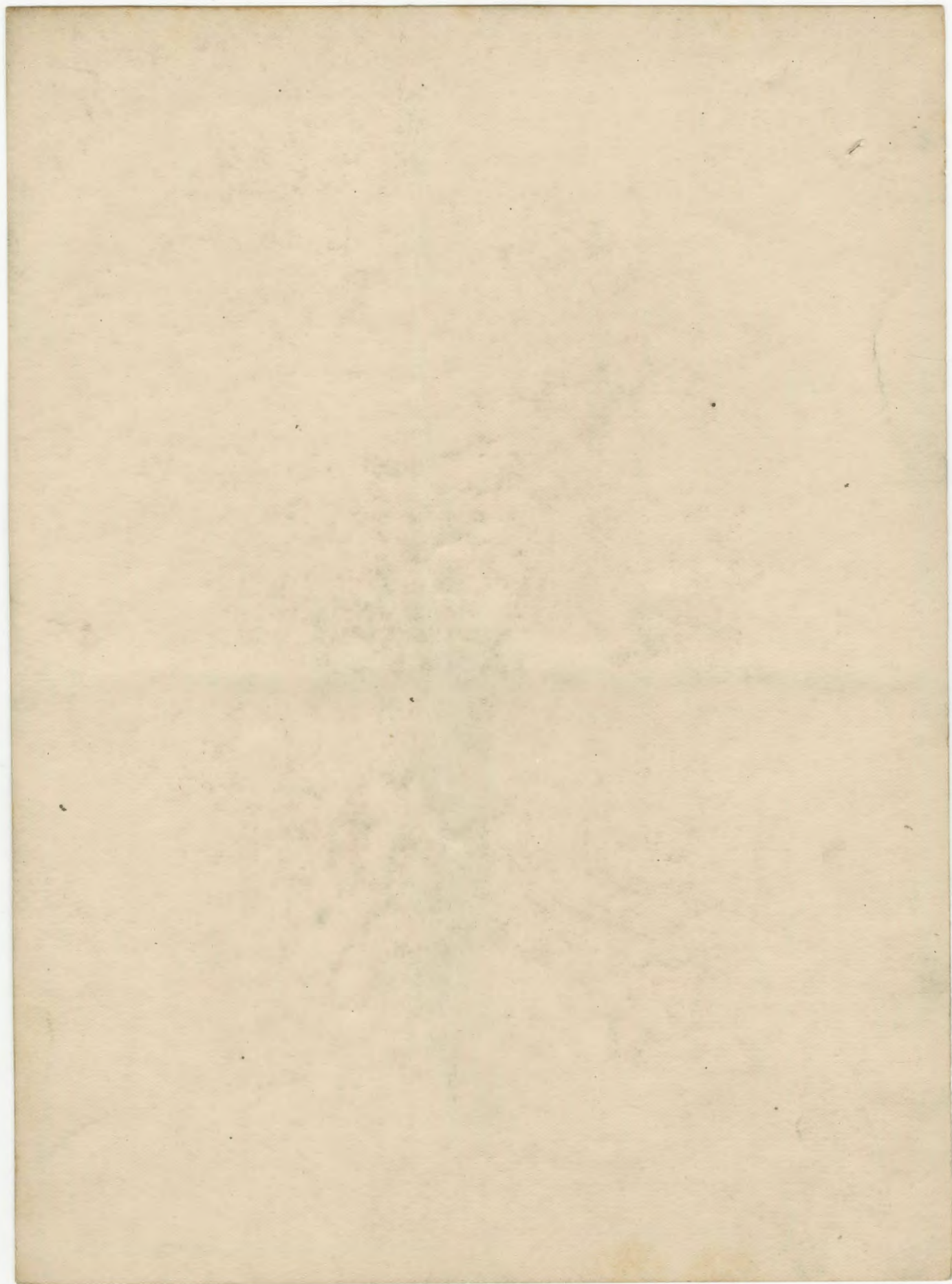
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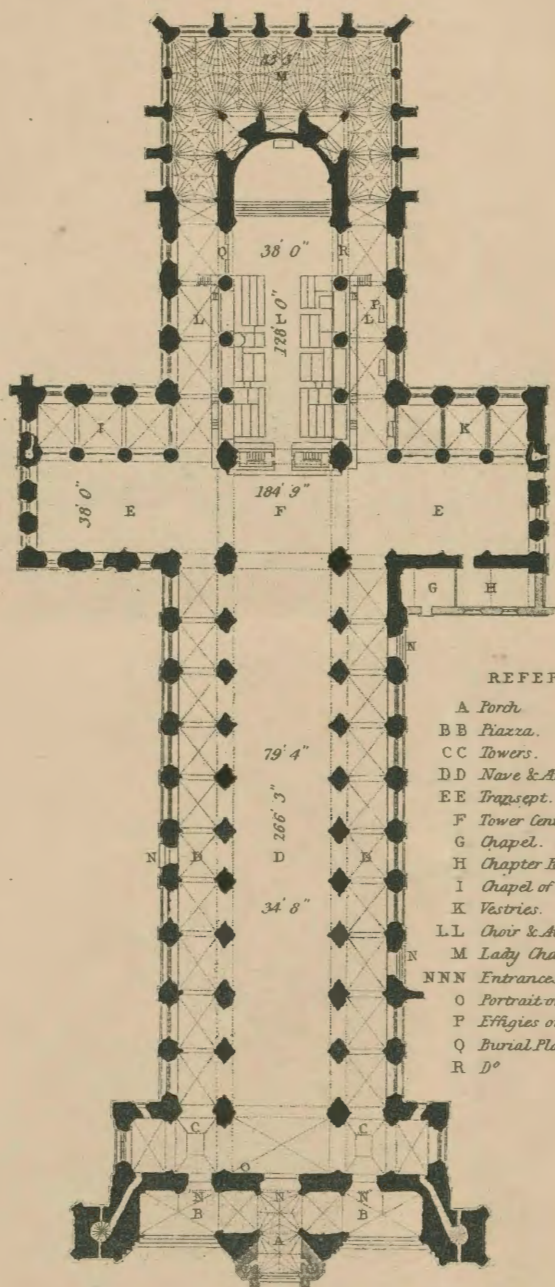


PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL.

WEST FRONT.



PÉTERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL.



REFERENCE

- A Porch.
- BB Piazza.
- CC Towers.
- DD Nave & Aisles.
- EE Transsept.
- F Tower Central.
- G Chapel.
- H Chapter Room.
- I Chapel of St. James & St. John.
- K Vestries.
- LL Choir & Aisles.
- M Lady Chapel.
- NNN Entrances.
- O Portrait of Old Scarlett.
- P Effigies of Abbots.
- Q Burial Place of Queen Catherine Mary Q.ⁿ of Scots.
- R D^o

Scale
10 0 50 100 ft

