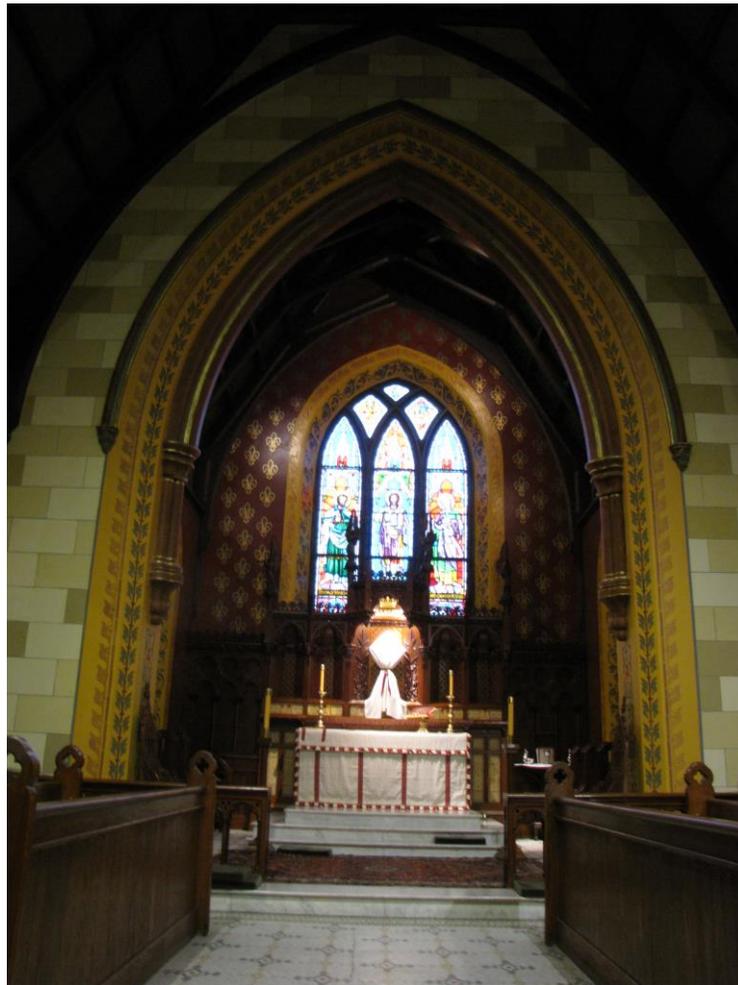


**The Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation**

Landmark Designation Report

May 13, 2014



Saint John's in the Village Public Interior Designation

3009 ½ Greenmount Ave
Baltimore, Maryland



Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation

Eric Holcomb and W. Edward Leon, *Acting Executive Directors*

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Summary

Located in the northern neighborhood of Waverly in Baltimore City, St. John's in the Village was founded as a country church in 1843, known as St. John's Church, Huntingdon, and later as St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, Huntingdon. The English Gothic Revival stone church was built in 1858 was designed by John W. Priest, founding member of the American Institute of Architects, and the transepts and chancel designed in 1875 by Priest's protégé, John M. Congdon. The interior of the church sanctuary retains integrity and serves as an excellent example of the Gothic Revival interior design and architecture touted by the Ecclesiological Movement of the 19th century. This architectural and religious movement is still being honored and followed at this church.

Property History

St. John's in the Village began as a country church, but over the years the city has grown up around it. When it was founded in 1843, St. John's Church, Huntingdon was located in the rural village of Huntingdon, a village marked by several large country estates in Baltimore County. The church was established on the York Road turnpike, and the first tollgate was located directly across from St. John's. The existing church was built in two stages in 1859 and 1875. The 1859 church consisted of the first four bays of the nave, the south porch and chimney, and a bell tower.¹

The church underwent extensive improvements in 1875, achieving its cruciform shape with the addition of the transepts and chancel.² The additions were designed by New York architect Henry Martyn Congdon, who was a protégé of John W. Priest. W.H. Allen of Baltimore was the builder.³

In the late 19th century and 20th centuries, the interior of the church was decorated to meet the design standards of the Cambridge Camden Society, which established principles regarding Episcopal liturgical and architectural practice. The architectural pattern books published by the Cambridge Camden Society were strictly followed in the interior decoration of St. Johns in the Village from the 19th century into the present. This architectural and religious movement is still being honored and followed at this church, which is exemplified in the interior decoration of the sanctuary. The interior of the church is significant as a fine example of a Gothic Revival church interior, and retains its integrity.

The designated interior features span from 1859 to the 1990s, and their significance is derived from their adherence to the Ecclesiological Movement's design standards. The key architectural features are the volume of space, the exposed ceilings and roof beams, and the altar rail.

Some of the important features of the interior of the church sanctuary included the reredos, the altar, the stained glass, and the frescos. The reredos was designed by Henry Martyn Congdon according to the wishes of Rev. Wm. T. Johnston, the rector of St. John's, as a memorial to his

wife. Johnston himself died before the reredos was completed in 1879, but it was completed according to his will. The oak reredos was carved by the New York firm Ellin & Kitson. It was described in detail in *The Churchman* when it was installed, and was said to give “a completeness to the interior which is satisfying to the eye, and the beauty of the workmanship most credible to the artisans.”⁴ The reredos is located above the altar, which is attached to the sanctuary wall.

In 1895, the walls and ceilings were painted and frescoed. At that time, the walls were painted a salmon color. In the chancel, garlands of grapevines and wheat sheaves, representing the wine and bread of the sacrament, were painted around the stained glass windows. Gilded fleur-de-lis, a symbol of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity, are painted on the walls. The ceiling of the sanctuary (behind the communion rail) has an eagle motif, representing St. John the Evangelist.⁵ The exposed wooden frame roof is painted a light green, which offsets the dark wooden beveled beams. Throughout the church, on the upper portion of the wall is a decorative pattern that is repeated: a cross surrounded by intertwined greenery and variation of a quatrefoil – a Christian symbol that was particularly common in Gothic architecture.

In 1910, the interior underwent significant improvements, all of which were given by the parishioners as memorials. This practice of memorializing loved ones through the donation of items to the church was a very popular practice during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The church was closed for five weeks during the beautification.⁶ Some of the architectural features from this time include the decorative floor tiling in the chancel and sanctuary, the tiling in the aisles, and the marble steps in the chancel and at the altar rail.⁷ Other architectural features given *in memorium* include doors, altar rails, and the majority of the stained glass windows, which have been installed in the church throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Two windows on the south transept are said to date to the 1843 church, and were saved and reused in this church.

In the 1930s, the majority of the walls in the sanctuary were painted with a grey ashlar – a technique that makes the walls look like rusticated stone block.⁸ The current organ was installed in the north transept in the 1940s, closing the transept off from the sanctuary space.⁹ The organ is not included in the designation, nor is the north transept. The chancel was also expanded during this time period.¹⁰ During the course of the 20th century, other changes were made. The lights in the church were originally gas, but were converted at some point to electricity. The existing lighting was added post-1944. The walls were painted multiple times, obscuring the ornate decorative painting and ashlar.

Between 1983 and 1995, artist Janet Pope and artisan Michael V. Ashley, with the assistance of Matthew Mosca, paint conservator, C. Dudley Brown, preservation consultant, and Michael F. Trostel, architect, researched the historic paint schemes of the church and restored the church interior, following the guidelines provided by the Camden Cambridge Society’s architectural pattern books.¹¹ The painted eagles on the ceiling of the sanctuary were cleaned, but not restored. The window and door surrounds were restored to what they looked like in 1895. The frescos on

the walls of the sanctuary were repainted using the same colors and symbology as what was there in 1895, but are not exact replicas. The walls were painted with tan-toned ashlar.

In 1993, the Lady Chapel was created, located to the right of the choir. Originally a baptistry, the space became the Lady Chapel, which is a more commonly proscribed use of this space, according to the Ecclesiological Society. The Lady Chapel itself was designed according to the Ecclesiological Society's pattern books. The fixtures were all produced by Watts and Co., one of the original ecclesiological society firms still in existence, and by J. Wippell and Co., both from England. In keeping with the church tradition of donating in memorium to deceased members, the Lady Chapel was created as a memorial to churchmember Stephen Paul Summers, who died from complications of AIDS.¹²

Contextual History

Cambridge Camden Society and the Ecclesiological Movement

Born from a group of students at Trinity College, Cambridge, England in 1836, the Cambridge Camden Society was created to reform Anglican church liturgical practice and architectural form.¹³ The group believed that the Reformation had done away with important liturgical aspects of worship that needed to be restored. The architecture of then-modern churches did not lend itself to the earlier liturgical practices, and so the group also embraced a particular architectural style that was evocative of 14th century English parish churches: Gothic Revival. The replication of these churches was intended to evoke the virtues of an earlier time and Christian practice, and the group thought that the "Gothic church, in its perfection, is an exposition of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, clothed upon with a material form."¹⁴ The Cambridge Camden Society spread its doctrines to American and Canadian Protestant Episcopal churches through the Ecclesiological Movement. The Cambridge Camden Society published the journal *Ecclesiologist*, and published books which spread the group's ideologies and architectural ideals, such as *A Handbook of English Ecclesiology*.¹⁵ In the US, the ecclesiological tenets focused more on the architectural aspects of Ecclesiology instead of the liturgical practice. A New York Ecclesiological Society was founded in 1848.¹⁶

The Gothic Revival architecture in Protestant Episcopal churches in Baltimore and Maryland at large is due mainly to Bishop William Rollinson Wittingham, who served as the Bishop for the Maryland Diocese from 1840 until his death in 1879.¹⁷ He had a great interest in ecclesiastical architecture and was quite an expert in it. As Bishop, he consecrated all of the new churches in his Diocese, and in his annual reports to the Diocese, he mentioned the design and even the architect of the new churches, lavishing praise upon those that met his ideals of a parish church.¹⁸

The architectural pattern books published by the Cambridge Camden Society were used in the interior decoration of St. John's in the Village from the 19th century into the present. This

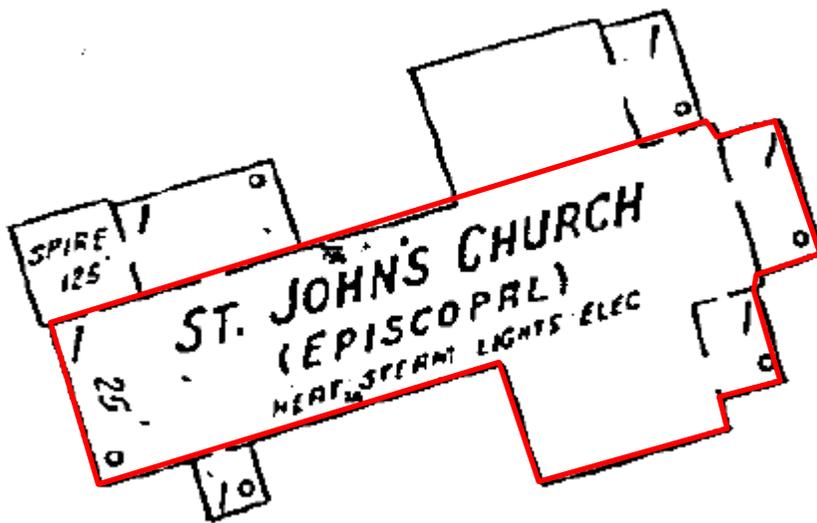
architectural and religious movement is still being honored and followed at this church, which is exemplified in the interior decoration of the sanctuary.

Architects

Henry Martyn Congdon (1834-1922) designed the transepts and chancel of the church. He was the protégé of John Priest, and specialized in ecclesiastic architecture. He was a preferred architect of Protestant Episcopal churches, and was very well-versed in the Ecclesiological tenets, as his father was a founder of the New York Ecclesiological Society.¹⁹ Congdon was also a secretary and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.²⁰ He also designed the interior features of churches as well, including the reredos at St. John's.²¹ Based in New York, the majority of his churches were located in New England, but his practice "stretched from Maine to Idaho and as far south as Baltimore."²²

Architectural Description

The boundaries of this designation are the interior of the main sanctuary at St. John's in the Village.



The public interior designation only covers the sanctuary of the church, outlined in red.

The features protected in this designation are described in greater detail above, and are listed here:

The volume of space
Exposed ceiling

Altar rails
Roof beams
Painted walls and ceilings, including frescos and ashlaring
Altar
Reredos
Decorative wood paneling in sanctuary
Pulpit
Chancel Screen
Floor tilings
Marble steps
Decorative ironwork
Furnishings in the Lady Chapel
Stained glass windows (already covered in the Baltimore City Landmark designation)

The features that are not designated include:

The pews
The organ
The lighting fixtures
Furniture

Staff Recommendation

The property meets CHAP Landmark Designation Standards:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Historic Images

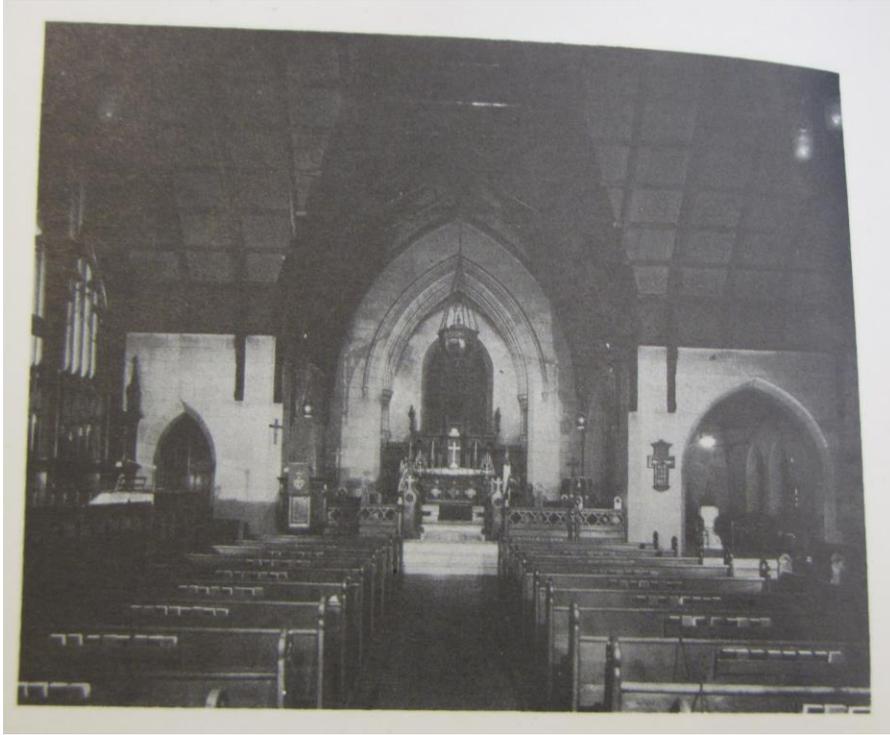
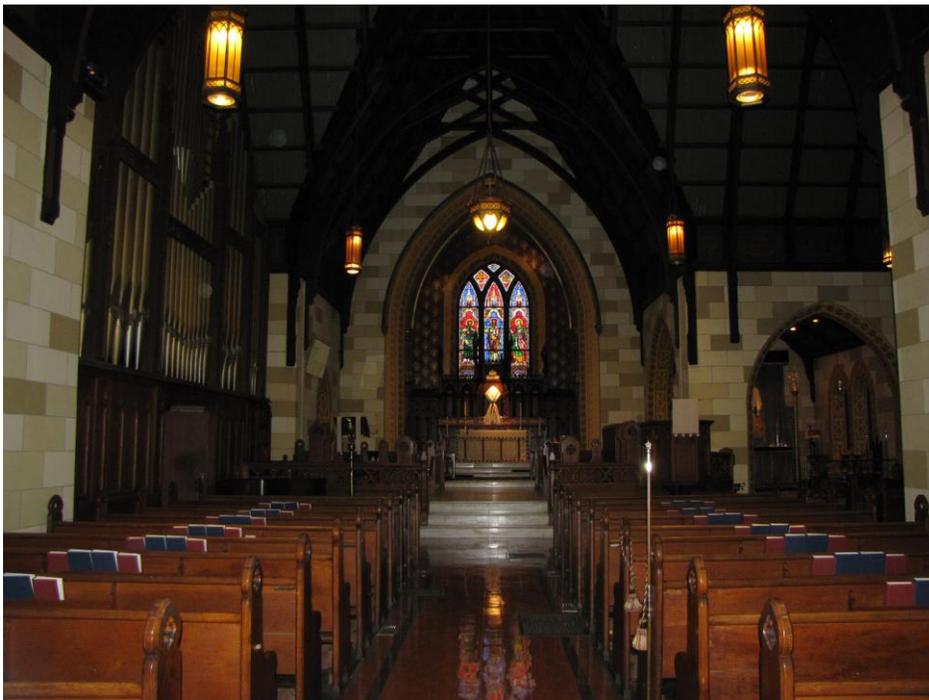


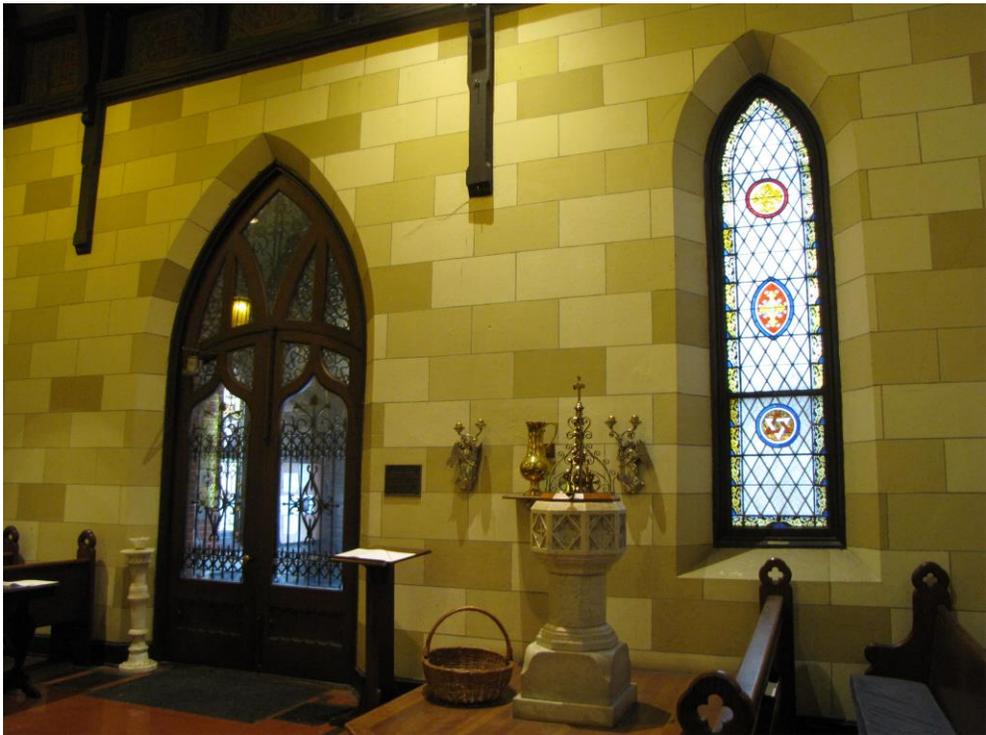
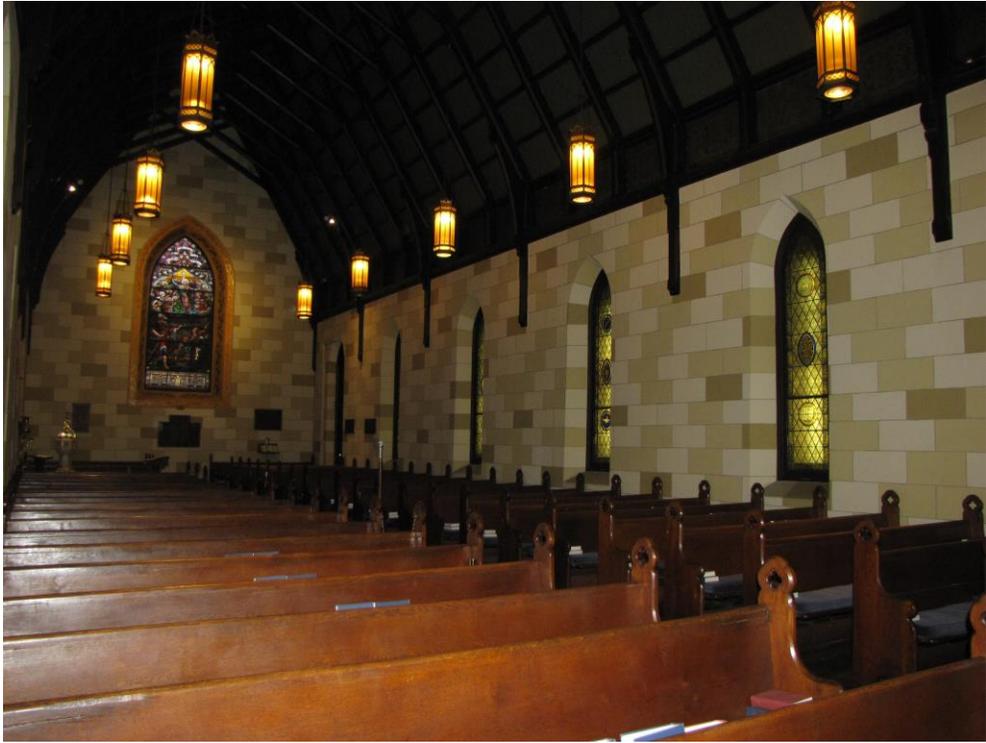
Photo of the interior in 1944. *One Hundred Years at St. John's Church, Huntington, 1844-1944*, pg. 36.

Current Images









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- ¹ Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste 1840-1856* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), pg. 274; *One Hundred Years at St. John's Church, Huntingdon, 1844-1944*, pg. 19
- ² *The Churchman*, Vol. 40, (July – December 1879), pg. 234.
- ³ “Launch of Coast Survey Schooners--"Composite" Vessels: Brief Locals”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Nov 8, 1875; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 4
- ⁴ *The Churchman*, Vol. 40, (July – December 1879), pg. 233-234.
- ⁵ Williams, Lynn.
- ⁶ “OLD ST. JOHN'S IS REOPENED: Waverly Church Greatly Beautified By Memorials”, *The Sun (1837-1988)*; Sep 26, 1910; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 14
- ⁷ *One Hundred Years at St. John's Church, Huntingdon, 1844-1944*, pg. 23; “OLD ST. JOHN'S BEAUTIFIED: Picturesque Edifice Will Be Reopened Tomorrow”, *The Sun (1837-1988)*; Sep 24, 1910; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 9
- ⁸ *One Hundred Years at St. John's Church, Huntingdon, 1844-1944*, pg. 23; Williams, Lynn, “10-year project restores St. John's, Huntingdon, to its neo-Gothic beauty”: [FINAL Edition] *The Sun*, 20 Oct 1991: 1M; Father Parker, personal communication, March 29, 2014.
- ⁹ Placard on the organ, St. John's in the Village.
- ¹⁰ John Roach and Father Jesse Parker, personal communication, March 29, 2014.
- ¹¹ Somerville, Frank P L, “St. John's-Huntingdon restored: Dedication today for 1847 Waverly church” *The Sun (1837-1988)*; Nov 6, 1983; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. C20; Williams, Lynn.
- ¹² John Roach and Father Jesse Parker, personal communication, March 29, 2014.
- ¹³ Stanton, pgs. 12-13.
- ¹⁴ Stanton, pgs. 8-9, quoting George Ayliffe Poole, *The Appropriate Character of Church Architecture* (Leeds and London: T.W. Green and Rivington's, 1842), pg. 40-41.
- ¹⁵ Stanton, pg. 16; Ecclesiological late Cambridge Camden Society *A Handbook of English Ecclesiology* (London: Joseph Masters, 1847).
- ¹⁶ Stanton, pg. 29.
- ¹⁷ Stanton, pg. 216-217.
- ¹⁸ Stanton, pg. 218.
- ¹⁹ Joan M. Marter, ed. Congdon, Henry Martyn” in *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art: Five-Volume set* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pg. 534.
- ²⁰ *The American Architect – The Architectural Review Volume CXXI, January to June 1922*, April 12, 1922, pg. 16. Google ebook; “TELEGRAPHIC SUMMARY, ETC.”, *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Oct 26, 1882; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 1
- ²¹ *The Churchman*, Vol. 40, pg. 233-234. Available as a Google book; “City Railway Complications” *The Sun (1837-1987)*; Aug 12, 1879; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1987), pg. 1
- ²² Joan M. Marter, pg. 534; Stanton, pg. 301.