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THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AND THE FRANK WILLS CONNECTION

LENNART PEARSON*

A MEMORIAL TABLET IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE Nativity, Union, South Carolina, honors two of its earliest benefactors. Their generosity, however, may be of greater architectural interest and importance than first appears.

Mary Poulton Dawkins, wife of Judge Thomas N. Dawkins. Born in London, England, November 11, 1820. Died, November 15, 1906. Devotedly attached to the Church of her fathers, the welfare of which was always dear to her; **through her influence and the liberality of her noble husband, this sacred edifice was erected.** A loving daughter of the Church, whose work lives after her.

Mary Poulton was the second child of George and Mary Allen Poulton. Born in England, she was brought to this country in 1833 by her parents along with four sisters and a brother. Her father, a clergyman of the Church of England, was heading for Canada but became ill in Lockport, New York, where he died and was buried. Her mother went on to Canada where she remarried, while Mary came south to teach school in Union. There she met Judge Thomas Nuckolls Dawkins, a well-to-do widower, whom she married and who was largely instrumental in making the Church of the Nativity become a reality.¹

The story that has been passed down is that the Church of the Nativity "was an exact copy of the Isleworth Chapel about ten miles from London on the family estate of the Poultons called 'The Shrubs' [and that] Mrs. Dawkins secured the plans from London . . ."² While this interesting and

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¹Mary Poulton was educated (1835-1838) at Mrs. Emma Willard's Female Seminary in Troy, N. Y. She came south to teach music and mathematics in Laurens, S.C. (1839-1840), returned to Troy to teach for a year (1841), and then came back to S.C. to teach in Brattonsville for a year before taking a teaching position in Laurens. Letter from Sarah Carroll to the author, November 8, 1997, citing records of the Emma Willard Association of Troy Female Seminary, which includes a biographical questionnaire filled out by Mary Poulton Dawkins in 1895.

²Albert Sidney Thomas, *A Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina, 1820-1957, Being a Continuation of Dalcho's Account, 1670-1820*

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affecting report of Mary Poulton's desire to replicate the church of her childhood has been told many times, it is not without some problems.

The claim that Mary Poulton wrote to England for plans to build the Church of the Nativity remains undocumented. Several hundred of her letters (and letters of her family) written between 1840 and 1906 have been transcribed and published.³ These include very few references to the Church of the Nativity, and nothing related to its construction or design. Mary Poulton's otherwise detailed observations and comments on various aspects of her life in Union give no indication that she had any interest at all in architectural matters, and the editors of her letters confirm that they have never found any written evidence to support the claim that she wrote to England to secure plans from London.⁴

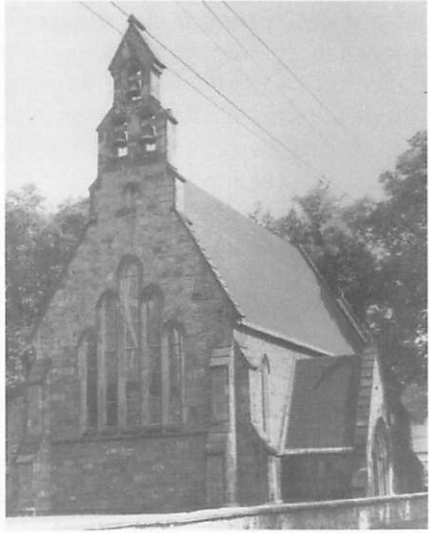
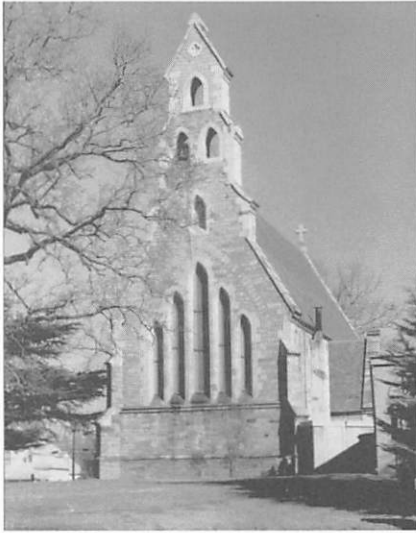
With the help of the staff of the public library in Hounslow, England, it has been possible to locate drawings of several churches and chapels in the Isleworth/Hounslow area showing what they looked like during Mary Poulton's childhood. None bears any resemblance to the Church of the Nativity.⁵ A recent history of the parish church of Isleworth (All Saints),

(Columbia: R.L. Bryan, 1957), 617-618. Bishop Thomas gives no source for this assertion that may well have originated in material solicited from the congregation. Mary McLure Butt included this replication story in her own *While The Cotton Blooms*: "It is a replica of an Episcopal Church in England which the three Misses Poulton [Mary and her sisters] attended in their childhood before coming to America." Mary McLure Butt and Sarah Porter Carroll, *While The Cotton Blooms* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1990), 16. She adds that when 50th year Jubilee services were held in August 1909, a certain Archdeacon Webber from Boston "remarked that Nativity Church seemed very familiar, and discovered, when it was related to him, that the church was a replica of one in England, that he had preached in the very church it was copied from." *Ibid.*, 17. The replication story also appears in Allan Charles' *Narrative History of Union County* (Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Company, 1987), 164-65; and in Fanny Lee Sparks, "Historical Notes on the Church of the Nativity," *Union County Historical Newsletter*, May 1978, October 1994.

³Sarah Porter Carroll, ed., *South Carolina's English Lady* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1989); Mary McLure Butt and Sarah Porter Carroll, *While The Cotton Blooms* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1990); Sarah Porter Carroll, ed., *Lifeline to Home* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, 1990); Mary McLure Butt and Sarah Porter Carroll, *Shadows on the Southland* (Greenville, S.C.: A Press, n.d.). The original letters are part of the McLure Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

⁴Telephone conversations with Mary McLure Butt and Sarah Porter Carroll, September 1997.

⁵Two letters from Andrea Cameron, Senior Officer for Heritage Services, Hounslow Public Library, are illuminating. (1) July 11, 1997: "The photograph and drawings of the Church of the Nativity do not resemble any known Isleworth Chapel. In 1833 there was only one known church in Isleworth, the parish church



The Church of the Nativity in Union, S.C. (left) is virtually identical to St. Anne's Chapel in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada (right). Left photograph courtesy of the author; right photograph courtesy of Phoebe B. Stanton.

makes no mention of any church or churches in the New World for which it served as an architectural model.

While Mary Dawkins could well have influenced her husband to provide land and labor for the building of a church that in some general way reminded her of a church or churches she had seen in her childhood, the claim that she actually wrote to England for plans to build an "exact copy of the Isleworth Chapel" has never been substantiated.

It is precisely here, however, that this story takes a curious turn. The Church of the Nativity is virtually *identical* in appearance to St. Anne's Chapel at Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. The resemblance includes

dedicated to All Saints. This had been rebuilt in 1705 and does not look at all like your church." (2) July 24, 1997: "The Shrubs' . . . owned by the Poulton family... was a detached house on the main road out of the town of Hounslow . . . Hounslow is the adjacent town to Isleworth and the southern half of Hounslow came within the Parish of Isleworth prior to 1856. The town of Hounslow had a chapel which was all that remained of the Medieval Hounslow Priory. This building was demolished in the 1820s and replaced by a church in 1828, which became Holy Trinity Parish Church of Hounslow. I enclose photocopies of an engraving of Hounslow Chapel and one of Holy Trinity Church . . . Hounslow Chapel was in the Gothic style and Holy Trinity was in the style of the Gothic revival. The Poulton family who travelled from England to America in 1833 would have known both Hounslow Chapel and the new Holy Trinity Church."

its physical proportions, stonework, bellcote for three bells, ironwork doors, lancet windows, and, on the inside of the building, separation of the nave from the chancel by a pointed arch etched with lettering. The dimensions match almost to the inch. What accounts for this extraordinary similarity of two churches that are geographically so far apart and have no other apparent connection?

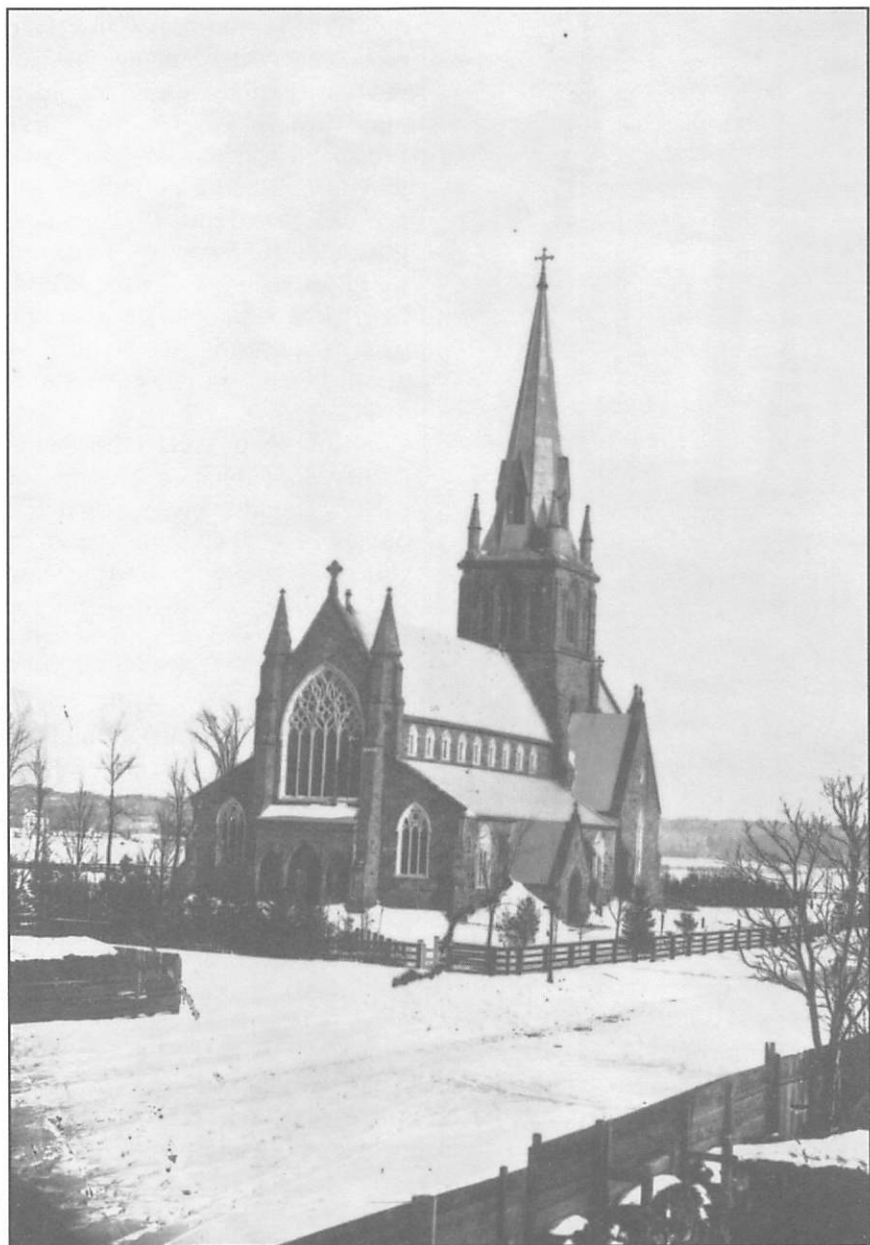
Here it is necessary to make a brief detour into nineteenth century architectural history. When John Medley, the first bishop of New Brunswick, arrived from England in 1845, he brought with him a promising twenty-three year-old architect from Exeter named Frank Wills to help him design a cathedral for Fredericton.⁶ Wills drew up the plans, but since cathedrals were expensive to build and funds would have to be raised, he also designed a building that would serve for the time being and could be used for small gatherings even after the cathedral was completed. This smaller church, St. Anne's Chapel, was consecrated on March 18, 1847, only ten months after the laying of its cornerstone. Nowhere, however, in the historical records of the Cathedral at Fredericton is there mention of any connection whatever between St. Anne's Chapel and Isleworth.⁷

Before leaving England, Wills had been very much caught up in the Oxford movement, a renewal movement within the Church of England that flourished between 1830 and 1860 (and whose most famous leader was John Henry Newman). The Oxford movement, in many ways, represented a remedievalizing of the Church of England. Appalled by the ugliness and the excesses of the Industrial Revolution and disillusioned by many of the effects of the Reformation on the religious life of the nation, adherents of the Oxford movement affirmed the continuity of the Church of England with the pre-Reformation period. They sought a recovery of catholicity in respect to the governance of the church, its sacramental life, and its liturgical practices. Worship was primary and the praise of God was the first and most important business of the church.

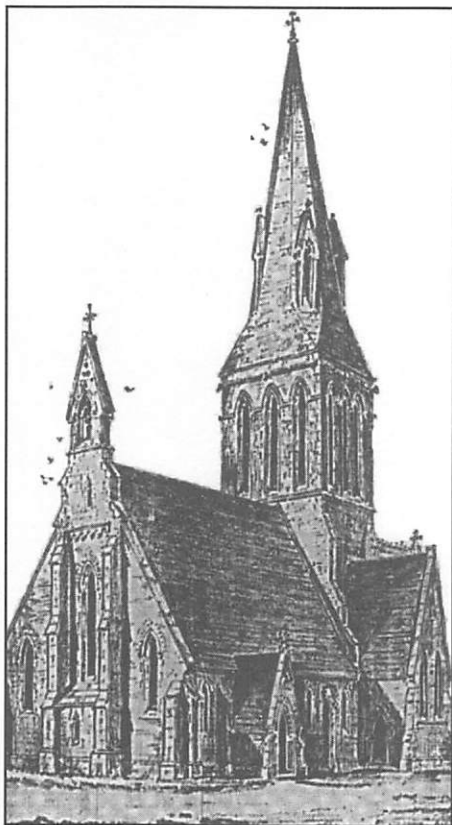
Giving architectural expression to these ideals was the particular concern of a group of architecturally sophisticated lay people and clergy

⁶John Medley was the Founder of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society and its first secretary. *New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 [1848], 24 .

⁷"The Church of the Nativity does have a striking resemblance to our own St. Anne's Chapel However, none of us who work with the history of St. Anne's has yet come across any reference to Isleworth Chapel at the 'Shrubs' in suburban London." Letter from Canon John Sharp, Rector, August 19, 1996. Christ Church Cathedral at Fredericton, is modeled on St. Mary's Parish Church, Snettisham, Norfolk (England).



The earliest photograph of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Frank Wills designed St. Anne's Chapel as a place of worship for Christ Church Parish until the cathedral could be completed. Photograph courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.



This sketch of a non-existent church exemplifying "ecclesiological" ideas appeared in the *New York Ecclesiologist* in 1849. Illustration courtesy of the author.

now remembered as the Cambridge movement.⁸ Embracing the late medieval period as a kind of golden age (much as did the pre-Raphaelites in the world of art), they established a periodical, *The Ecclesiologist*. From 1841 to 1868, this publication served as a forum for the exchange of ideas as to how liturgical spaces should be organized and how churches should be built, furnished, appointed, and preserved. Contributors produced thousands of pages of detailed analysis of existing churches as well as material on every conceivable aspect of church construction, all with a view to encouraging a high degree of liturgical and architectural integrity.

Even before St. Anne's was finished, Frank Wills decided to move from Fredericton to New York where he could establish a firm of his own. When he arrived, he involved himself with other "ecclesiologists" who in 1848 established the New York Ecclesiological Society.⁹ They too published a quarterly, *The New York*

Ecclesiologist, which ran for five years (1848-1853). Its content was quite similar to that of its English counterpart though it focused on the American scene. Wills was a frequent contributor, having now entered a circle that was laying a theoretical foundation for Episcopal church architecture at the very time when Episcopal churches were being built all up and down the

⁸James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

⁹The Society included four bishops who served as Patrons: Silliman Ives (North Carolina), William Whittingham (Maryland), and, significantly, Christopher Gadsden (South Carolina), and John Medley (Fredericton). *New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1848-49), 32-35, Supplement ("List of Members").

Atlantic seaboard. Wills even published an influential book of his own, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day* (1850).¹⁰ The fact that so many Episcopal churches built between 1845 and 1870 have a similar appearance attests to the influence of the ecclesiological movement in which Wills was a central figure.¹¹

An examination of the *New York Ecclesiologist* during its five-year run shows that the Society established a library which included not only books and journals but also pictures and architectural drawings, and that people frequently wrote to the Society for help in respect to church construction.¹² For example, in 1850 a plaintive letter was received from an unidentified Southern correspondent who on the instruction of his vestry wrote for a set of architectural plans to help with the building of a new church for which a dozen families had managed to raise \$1,200.¹³ Correspondents seeking such assistance were routinely referred by the Society to practicing architects such as Frank Wills: "[We] have received several applications for Working Drawings of Churches, which the parties making the applications seem to have expected [us] to furnish gratuitously. [We] cannot . . . do so without interfering with the province of the Architect, to whom such applications must be referred." Five years later, it is again noted that "[the Committee] has received several applications for Church-plans . . . All such applications have been referred to one or another of the Society's Architects."¹⁴

¹⁰Frank Wills, *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles, Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1850).

¹¹The American movement is very fully described in Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture; An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968; reprinted 1997). A partial listing of Wills' churches, not including the Church of the Nativity, can be found on page 293.

¹²*New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1848-49), 38-42 (Supplement).

¹³*New York Ecclesiologist*, 3 (1851), 31-33.

¹⁴*New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1848-49), 137, and 5 (1853), 156. Wills was not the only ecclesiological approved architect willing to meet a genuine need for building plans. In 1847, Richard Upjohn invited subscriptions for "a book of *Designs for Country Churches, and Rural Houses, consisting of Plans, Sections, Elevations, Details and Perspective views of each Church and House; with Designs for Church Furniture and Decorations, and Hints upon Stained Glass, &c, &c.*" He explains that "the expediency of the proposed publication is suggested by the increasing demand for Country Churches of moderate cost . . . a mode of erection that should come within the means of the feeblest congregation, yet be in all its essential features, a Church—plain indeed, but becoming in its plainness." *Charleston [S.C.] Gospel Messenger*, 24 (1847), 49-50. The book was duly published in 1852 as *Upjohn's Rural Architecture; designs, working drawings, and specifications for a wooden church, and other rural structures* (New

In 1851 Wills was joined by Henry C. Dudley, another Exeter-trained architect, to form a new firm called Wills & Dudley, with offices in Lower Manhattan.¹⁵ Their scale of charges was described as follows:

5 per cent. on cost of building, when a full set of plans and superintendence are included.

3 per cent. on the cost for a full set of plans, including details of every portion of the full size, and minute specification.

10 per cent. on the cost of Church Furniture, Fonts, Monuments, Painted Glass—if no specific agreement is made.

A full set of plans and specifications for small Churches \$100.¹⁶

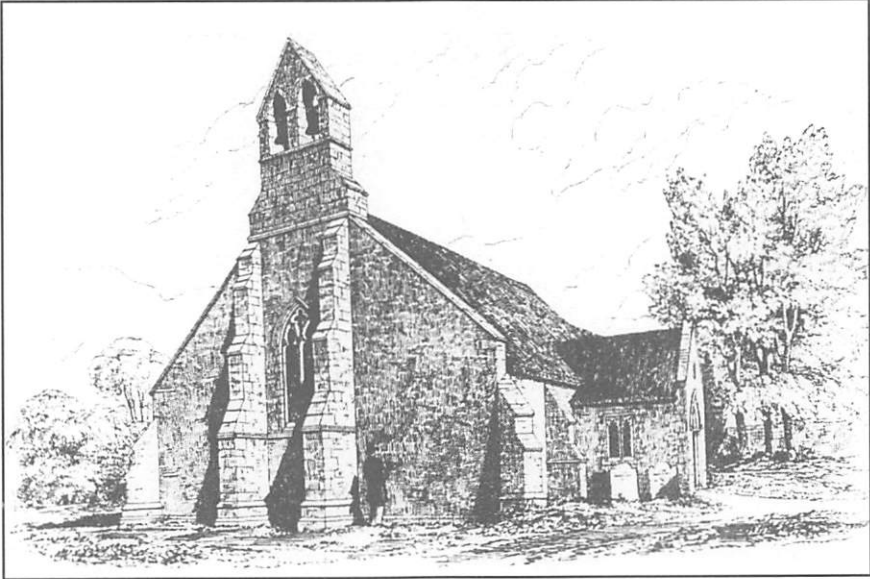
Between 1851 and 1853 Wills and his firm were involved directly in the building of a dozen Episcopal churches, many of which exhibit characteristics described in his own book. As Wills drew upon his extensive knowledge of English churches for his American church designs, one in particular seems to be conspicuously reflected in his various plans: St. Michael's, a thirteenth century parish church at Long Stanton, near Cambridge.¹⁷ St. Michael's still exists, though it is now used only for occasional services. The resemblance of St. Anne's Chapel and the Church of the Nativity to St. Michael's, their common ancestor, is apparent. In 1856 Wills returned to Canada to work on drawings for Christ Church cathedral in Montreal. He died prematurely the

York: Putnam, 1852). In 1853, a grateful missionary to Tennessee writes: "I am building two Churches,—good and substantial Church-like edifices, though plain and cheap,—and after designs by Mr. Upjohn," *Charleston [S.C.] Gospel Messenger*, 29 (1853), 49-50. The churches were Loudoun and St. Andrew's (at Four Mile Point, near Loudoun, "at the mouth of Tellico"). Ecclesiological ideals had come to East Tennessee!

¹⁵"[We] take pleasure in giving our hearty welcome to Mr Dudley . . . We will venture upon one word of advice. . . We want not here the exact reproduction of the English Parish Church. There is a difference, both in the character of our country, and of our people; and our architecture should show that difference. Let Mr. Dudley, therefore, identify himself with our church and country, if he wishes to be a great American architect." *New York Ecclesiologist*, 3 (1851), 162.

¹⁶*New York Ecclesiologist*, 4 (1852), 6.

¹⁷"[St. Anne's] Chapel is of the style of architecture identified as Early English which prevailed in England in the reign of Henry III in the thirteenth century. The actual model is St. Michael's Church, Long Stanton, Cambridgeshire" (Letter from Canon John Sharp, Rector, August 19, 1996). Mills Lane says that "drawings of this particular building [St. Michael's]—one of three recommended models for small



This illustration of St. Michael's, a thirteenth century parish church at Long Stanton, near Cambridge, England, appeared in Raphael Brandon and J. Arthur Brandon's *Parish Churches* in 1848. St. Michael's closely resembles the Church of the Nativity and St. Anne's Chapel. Illustration courtesy of the author.

same year at the age of thirty-four. Along with Richard Upjohn, architect of Wall Street's Trinity Church and founder of the American Institute of Architects, Wills is regarded as one of the truly great church architects of his time.¹⁸

During the period 1847 to 1853 there were identifiable points of connection between the New York Ecclesiological Society and the Diocese of South Carolina. The sermon of John Medley, Bishop of Fredericton, at the dedication of St. Anne's Chapel (March 1847), was published in the *Charleston (S.C.) Messenger* in November 1848. In addition to Bishop Christopher Gadsden, several members of the Society were South Carolinians—Jacob K. Sass of Charleston, Plowden C.J. Weston of Georgetown, and Charleston

churches—had been sent across the Atlantic by the religious reformers in England" (*Architecture of the Old South*, 150). The Episcopal church of "St. James the Less" in Philadelphia (1848) is very closely modeled on St. Michael's.

¹⁸Phoebe B. Stanton notes that "many churches are attributable to Wills and to the firm of Wills and Dudley, but many that are not were, in fact, directly taken from the model church Wills suggested in his publications." *Encyclopedia of American Architects*, s.v. "Wills, Frank." Douglas Richardson, who also provides valuable

architect Edward B. White.¹⁹ That the ideals of the ecclesiological movement had extended to South Carolina is evidenced by the publication of a series of three detailed articles "On Church Architecture" that appeared in the *Southern Episcopalian* for February, March, and April 1850, strongly recommending a Gothic style. The author of these articles, commended by *The New York Ecclesiologist*, is identified as "our South Carolina correspondent, Plowden C. Weston, of Hagley, S. C."²⁰ The third of Weston's articles (April 1850) includes a list of important architectural books from England published during the 1840s with a note that they are "now in the Episcopal Library in Charleston." Letters from South Carolina appeared in the *New York Ecclesiologist*.²¹ In October 1853 John Medley, Bishop of Fredericton, preached at the consecration of Thomas Davis, Gadsden's successor as Bishop of South Carolina.²²

In South Carolina during the 1840s and 1850s there was a spurt in the organization and construction of churches in the diocese, especially in the upcountry. Foremost among those promoting the establishment of new churches was the Reverend John DeWitt McCollough, a gifted leader with architectural interests, who is credited with the design of many Episcopal churches in the Piedmont.²³ Of McCollough, his biographer, Judith Bainbridge, says that even though "he was not a trained architect, he was a builder, a craftsman in wood, who had access in the antebellum years to regional, perhaps national, architectural publications, who knew—perhaps at second or third hand—about international design ideas. His genius

biographical information about Frank Wills, reports that "upwards of fifty churches" were designed by Wills. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Wills, Frank." No picture or photograph of Wills is known to exist.

¹⁹*New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 (1848-49), 32-35 (Supplement).

²⁰*New York Ecclesiologist*, 2 (1850), 159.

²¹One such letter describes St. Michael's, Charleston while another compares particular features of St. Michael's and St. Phillip's, Charleston. *New York Ecclesiologist*, 1 [1848-49], 146; and *New York Ecclesiologist*, 3 [1851], 149-151.

²²William Q. Ketchum, *The Life and Work of the Most Reverend John Medley* (St. John, N. B.: J. & A. Macmillan, 1893), 192, 316. That Medley was highly regarded in the United States is evident from letters of tribute written at his death in 1892. *Ibid.*, 316.

²³According to Thomas, *Historical Account*, the following churches (or parts of churches) were "designed" by McCollough: Christ Church, Mars Bluff, in Florence County (309), Atonement, Blacksburg (502), Holy Trinity, Clemson (515), Calvary, Glenn Springs (554), Christ Church, Greenville (562), Resurrection, Greenwood (577), Christ Church, Lancaster (586), St. Stephen's, Ridgeway (604), Our Savior, Rock Hill (607), Advent, Spartanburg (612), St. Stephen's, Willington (622), and St. John's School, Spartanburg (778). One explicit mention of adaptation is noted: "The

consist[ed] of his ability to adapt high style architectural thinking to necessarily modest churches in the upcountry of South Carolina."²⁴ McCollough, then in Spartanburg, was also the missionary in Union. He and Thomas S. Arthur, Rector of Christ Church, Greenville, knew each other well; in 1852 they both had made an impassioned plea to the diocese to provide money for church construction.²⁵ Window glass and altar furniture for Christ Church, Greenville, had been procured from Wills & Dudley so Wills and his work would certainly have been known to McCollough.²⁶

By 1857 the Diocese of South Carolina had established the "The Protestant Episcopal Church Building Society of South Carolina" whose stated purpose was to aid in building churches, chapels, and parsonages in the diocese. Its trustees included banker J.K. Sass, who was also diocesan treasurer and layman in charge of diocesan missions.²⁷ From this Society, the Church of the Nativity received a grant of \$500.00 for its new building.²⁸ Parishioners also supported the building project. In 1856 land was given to the Church of the Nativity by Thomas Dawkins and Clinton Wilson.²⁹ Further information on the financing of the building is provided in the report of an episcopal visitation in 1860:

Church [Resurrection, Greenwood] was planned by Messrs. McCollough and Schad after the style of the Chapel of the Holy Comforter at Fairmont near Sewanee designed by Mr. Silas McBee" (577).

²⁴Judith Bainbridge, *"Building the Walls of Jerusalem": John DeWitt McCollough and his Churches* (forthcoming, 1999).

²⁵*Charleston Gospel Messenger and Protestant Episcopal Register*, 28 (April 1852), 50.

²⁶"The entire cost of [Christ Church] is sixteen thousand (\$16,000). . . . It is lighted by five lancet windows on either side designed by Wills of New York The [Bishop's Chair] is one of Wills' simple and beautiful designs . . . [The church has] a very large and massive font, (designed also by Wills) . . ." *Southern Episcopalian*, (January 1856), 446. Wills is not mentioned in S. S. Crittenden's *History of Christ Church, Greenville, S.C., 1826-1901* (n.p., 1901), where the architect was said to be John D. McCollough (17, 23), nor in Robert Woods' history of Christ Episcopal Church, *The Parish in the Heart of the City* (Greenville: Keys Printing, 1976). He too attributes the design of Christ Church to McCollough.

²⁷Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church Building Society of South Carolina, 1857. *Southern Episcopalian*, (February 1857).

²⁸Thomas, *Historical Account*, 670.

²⁹The land, which had been bought by Thomas Dawkins and Clinton Wilson for \$200 from the executors of John McLure (November 24, 1854), was deeded to the Vestrymen of the Church of the Nativity by Dawkins and Wilson on December 22, 1856. Union County *Deed Book*, Y-17, 206-209 (includes plat recorded August 31, 1858).

"The Church has been erected entirely by the combined exertions of the congregation [with] little help, comparatively, being received from abroad. All have made common cause, some giving their time and others money. One gentleman has contributed four thousand dollars in cash, and two thousand dollars in labor and materials. Another has also given four thousand dollars in cash. Another five hundred. Fifteen hundred dollars have been raised in the village by general subscription. And twelve hundred dollars came from abroad. A neat Communion service is the gift of a gentleman from Charleston."³⁰

With this information as background, it should be possible to offer a somewhat different version of the architectural origin of the Church of the Nativity. When it was decided to build an Episcopal Church in Union, McCollough, who had conducted services in Union for some time, would become the organizing rector. With the encouragement of Thomas and Mary Poulton Dawkins who had generously offered land, materials, and labor for the project, and of John Laurens Young, President of the Spartanburg & Union Railroad (who served as head of the building committee), McCollough probably contacted Dudley & Wills who provided plans that Wills had originally drawn for St. Anne's Chapel in Fredericton.³¹ With minor modifications (such as the stepped corner buttresses and a simpler

³⁰"An Account of the Episcopal Visitation of the Bishop of the Diocese' by H.", *Southern Episcopalian*, (December 1860), 486-487. Benjamin Franklin Arthur "was a member of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity and one of the original subscribers to the building fund." John Amasa May, *South Carolina Secedes* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1960), 110. In a letter to her sister, Kate McLure, dated October 5, 1856, Mary Dawkins writes: "Col. Dawkins is in better health but sadly depressed. Is much disappointed to find the church in debt 25 hundred dollars! when we thought we were making punctual payments. I shall after court write to several points soliciting subscriptions. Will do all I can to relieve him of this burden." Butt and Carroll, *While the Cotton Blooms*, 190.

³¹"Proposals for the Masonry and Carpenter work of a Stone Church, about to be created at Unionville, will be received until the 15th of August next. Plans and specifications will be made known by application to either of the undersigned, Building Committee: John L. Young, Clinton Wilson, C. B. Sims, Ch. Kaiser, Theo. Liv. Chase." Classified advertisement in the *Unionville Journal*, August 3, 1855. Edward D. Sloan, Jr., a great-grandson of John Laurens Young, indicates that he has not been able to find any of Young's papers, if indeed they still exist. Letters, April 21 and May 4, 1998. He also says: "I think Young had no significant construction

interior), the members of Nativity could be assured that their building conformed to the highest "ecclesiological" standards of the day. This would have met with the approval of Bishop Thomas Davis whose predecessor, Christopher Gadsden, along with John Medley, had been a Patron of the New York Ecclesiological Society, and whose diocesan treasurer, Charleston architect Jacob Sass, was still a member. If Mary Poulton Dawkins remembered Frank Wills from Exeter, the home town of her English childhood, making use of his plans would have added a nice personal touch.³²

Support for such a scenario is found in two contemporary reports in the *Southern Episcopalian*. The first, written in October 1859 one month after the consecration of the Church of the Nativity (September 9, 1859), states that "the Church edifice is said to be one of the handsomest in the state. It is of stone and of Gothic architecture, *the design having been furnished by the Rector [McCollough] who, in several other instances in our Diocese, has exhibited his taste in the design of churches.*"³³

The second, written fifteen months later, in December 1860, says, "*the design of the building was taken from 'Wills' Parish Churches,' the perspective of St. Anne's, Fredrickton [sic], N. B. [New Brunswick]. The ground plan and elevations were made by the Rector. The details were made by the same member of the congregation who carved the pulpit, and to whose indefatigable superintendence, combined with unusual skill and taste, is due the admirable execution of this beautiful design.*"³⁴

experience prior to 1855. I suspect that he became involved for the same reasons that he became President of the railroad: he had some money, was literate, and could read an engineering drawing and because Dawkins was a friend. I think Arthur, Wallace, Dawkins, and Young were all neighbors . . . Their homesites were all within a half a dozen blocks of Nativity, but that means about all of mid-19th century Union." Ibid.

³²Sarah Carroll suggests that Mary Poulton, or her husband on behalf of the building committee, might have written in the early 1850s to the Bishop of Exeter or someone else who then referred them to Bishop John Medley at Fredericton and his young architect, Frank Wills. Letter, November 8, 1997. One would suppose, however, that if such a contact (and subsequent referral to Wills) had been made, the circumstance would have been worthy of mention *somewhere*—whether in Mary Poulton's diary or letters, in reports of the dedication, or in the records of the diocese. It seems more likely that the initiative came from McCollough, by then experienced in such matters, who was using the momentum of diocesan interest in building new churches to good advantage.

³³*Southern Episcopalian*, (October 1858), 383. Italics added.

³⁴*Southern Episcopalian*, (December 1860), 486-487. Italics added. No book by Wills is known to have been published with the title, "Wills' Parish Churches." In all likelihood, the writer is referring to Wills' *Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture* . . . (1850), the Appendix of which includes Wills' own description and drawing of St. Anne's Chapel (108-111).

The architectural significance of the Church of the Nativity as it exists today can be viewed from several perspectives. By its connection to St. Michael's at Long Stanton, the church is linked to the pre-Reformation tradition of thirteenth century England. As an outstanding example of Gothic revival architecture, it is an enduring expression of ideals inherited from the Oxford movement and the nineteenth century ecclesiological societies. With its connection to St. Anne's Chapel in New Brunswick, the building is a reminder of the international character of the Anglican Communion. In this historic landmark, South Carolina possesses a splendid example of church design by the very gifted nineteenth century church architect, Franks Wills.

On August 30, 1974, the Church of the Nativity was entered in the National Register of Historic Places. As a building of exceptional beauty, the Church of the Nativity is an architectural treasure, an exquisite gem to be valued and preserved.