

# The Anglican church of Sorel

## A pioneer in neo-gothic architecture in rural Québec



Façade  
Photo : CPRQ

Neo-gothic forms were at first the prerogative of important city churches like the basilique Notre-Dame and St. Patrick's of Montréal, built respectively in 1824 and 1843. One of the first rural neo-gothic interiors was that of the church of Saint-Hilaire in 1842. The Anglican church of Sorel, built in 1842, is one of the pioneers in the use of the neo-gothic style for the structure of a church which is not in an important urban centre.

### The first Anglican mission in Canada

An Anglican mission was established when Sorel was founded, which then became an Anglican parish. To begin with they worshipped in one of the garrison buildings. A half-timbered church replaced the first building in 1790. It was the first Protestant church in Canada. The growing population then led to the construction of a new church in 1842.

### A pioneer in architecture

The transplanting into the countryside of the gothic styles of architecture which had been developed in an urban environment took place quite naturally. The adaptation required was a simplification of detail with respect to the exterior ornamentation and a general reduction in scale. The principles developed in Sorel by the architect John Wells were later applied in the smaller neo-gothic urban constructions and in numerous rural Catholic churches. In Québec city, for example, Wells himself built the Chalmers-Wesley Church in 18?? in keeping with the formal characteristics of Sorel. Charles Baillairgé designed a neo-gothic church at Sainte-Marie de Beauce in 1854, similar to the Chalmers-Wesley Church.

The Anglican church of Sorel, consecrated in 1843, was furnished the following year and underwent various restorations in 1878 and again between 1920 and 1934. The altar and reredos were created in 1929 by P. J. Turner and A. D. Thacker. The building was listed as an historic monument in 1959, along with the vicarage.

The façade is divided into three vertical sections which are purely decorative as they do not correspond to an interior division of the nave. The pyramidal composition of the three openings echoes the line of the roofs and adds emphasis to the sense of soaring loftiness given by the pinnacles and the central bell-tower of the façade. Mouldings cling to the contour of the lancet windows and the main doorway and add character to the whole composition.



Exterior  
Photo : CPRQ



Interior  
Photo : CPRQ

**Charles Bourget**

Text translated by Rachel Tunnicliffe

### Bibliography:

- Noppen, Luc. *Les chemins de la mémoire*, t. II, Québec, Les Publications du Québec, 1991, p. 251-253.