

The Anglican church of St. George of Clarenceville

A bell-tower like wooden lace

The church of St. George of Clarenceville is incontestably an architectural oddity. Its general structure and most of the detail are classical in form, however, from first glance the impression it gives is that of a Neo-gothic construction.



Lateral view
Photo : CPRQ

An Anglican church on loyalist land

As in many of the regions in the Eastern Townships (see Plymouth Trinity United Church of Sherbrooke and St. Luke's of Waterloo) and Montérégie (see Odelltown and Sorel), Clarenceville was colonised to a great extent by loyalist families fleeing the United States at the end of the 18th century.

From 1810, the Anglican population of the seigneuries of Foucault and Noyan, where several Protestant parishes including St. Thomas and Clarenceville would be formed, was big enough to justify the construction of a church in St. Thomas. The settlement properly called Clarenceville actually began with the construction of a church in 1818.

The parish was officially established in 1822 and the church was consecrated in August 1833 by the Anglican bishop of Québec. The only important alteration to the structure in the first quarter of the 19th century was to reconstruct the upper parts of the tower. The present choir is the result of an important building project in 1864-1865. This significant addition was made in response to the liturgical renewal movement promoted by the Ecclesiological Society. From then on, chancels for the purposes of liturgy were systematically added to buildings in which the clergy stalls had been moved into the nave in closer proximity to the congregation. The church was listed as an historic monument in 1983.



Chevet
Photo : CPRQ



Interior
Photo : CPRQ

An interior with exceptional carving

The numerous additions or alterations (choir and top of the tower) perhaps explain the incongruity of the formal vocabulary which had developed over the decades. Inside, the church is panelled. At each corner and between the windows are pilasters supporting a heavily carved entablature. On the façade the entablature follows the semicircular shape of the windows. The most impressive ornamentation is at the very top of the tower. A balustrade crowns the upper cornice with gothic pinnacles at each corner.



Façade
Photo : CPRQ

An octagonal lantern decorated with classical pilasters supports an entablature similar to those lower down and decorated with eight pinnacles. These simple pinnacles are enough to give the whole a gothic character despite the fact that the other features are exclusively classical. It is particularly interesting to notice to what extent these simple verticals make the structure, with its dominant horizontal lines, more dynamic.

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Text translated by Rachel Tunncliffe

Bibliography:

- Noppen, Luc. *Les chemins de la mémoire*, t. II, Québec, Les Publications du Québec, 1991, p. 325-326.