FRENCH CATHEDRALS

Cathedrals are organized in the same sequence as the class sessions and the Great Courses lectures. Material on specific cathedrals is taken from the internet, primarily from Wikipedia and MappingGothic.org. The section on the Gothic Revival is taken from Alain Erland-Brandenburg, *The Cathedral: The Social and Architectural Dynamics of Construction*, translated by Martin Thom (Cambridge: University Press, 2009). Fuller information on some cathedrals may be found on Wikipedia or on MappingGothic.org.

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ARCHITECTURE OF FRENCH CATHEDRALS

The Transition from Romanesque to Gothic Architecture

The characteristic forms that were to define Gothic architecture grew out of Romanesque architecture and developed at several different geographic locations, as the result of different influences and structural requirements. While barrel vaults and groin vaults are typical of Romanesque architecture, ribbed vaults were used in the naves of two Romanesque churches in Caen, the Abbey of Saint-Étienne and the Abbaye aux Dames, in 1120. The ribbed vaults over the north transept at Durham Cathedral in England are probably still earlier. At Durham the pointed arches of the nave vault, 1128–1133, were used for the first time in a high vault.

Other characteristics of early Gothic architecture, such as vertical shafts, clustered columns, compound piers, plate tracery, and groups of narrow openings had evolved during the Romanesque period. The west front of Ely Cathedral exemplifies this development. Internally the three-tiered arrangement of arcade, gallery, and clerestory was established. Interiors had become lighter with the insertion of more and larger windows.

The Basilica of Saint Denis is generally cited as the first truly Gothic building; however, the distinction is best reserved for the choir, of which the ambulatory remains intact. Noyon Cathedral, also in France, saw the earliest completion of a rebuilding of an entire cathedral in the new style from 1150 to 1231. While using all those features that came to be known as Gothic, including pointed arches, flying buttresses, and ribbed vaulting, the builders continued to employ many of the features and much of the character of Romanesque architecture, including round-headed arch throughout the building, varying the shape to pointed where it was functionally practical to do so.

At the Abbey of Saint-Denis, Noyon Cathedral, Notre Dame de Paris, and at the eastern end of Canterbury Cathedral in England, simple cylindrical columns predominate over the Gothic forms of clustered columns and shafted piers. Wells Cathedral in England, commenced at the eastern end in 1175, was the first building in which the designer broke free from Romanesque forms. The architect entirely dispensed with the round arch in favor of the pointed arch and with cylindrical columns in favor of piers composed of clusters of shafts which lead into the moldings of the arches. The transepts and nave were continued by Adam Locke in the same style and completed in about 1230. The character of the building is entirely Gothic. Wells Cathedral is thus considered by John Harvey the first truly Gothic cathedral.

--http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_architecture

Gothic Styles

Early Gothic

This style began in 1140 and was characterized by the adoption of the pointed arch and transition from late Romanesque architecture. To heighten the wall, builders divided it into four tiers: arcade (arches and piers), gallery, triforium, and clerestory. To support the higher wall builders invented the flying buttresses, which reached maturity only at High Gothic during the thirteenth century. The vaults were six ribbed sexpartite vaults. Notable structures include Sens Cathedral, Lyon Cathedral, Toul Cathedral, the west façade of Chartres Cathedral, Notre Dame de Paris (started 1163), the east end of the Abbey Church of S. Denis, and Notre-Dame of Laon.
High Gothic

This thirteenth-century style canonized proportions and shapes from early Gothic and developed them further to achieve light, yet tall and majestic structures. The wall elevation was modified from four to only three tiers: arcade, triforium, and clerestory. Piers coronations were smaller to avoid stopping the visual upward thrust. The clerestory windows changed from one window in each segment, holed in the wall, to two windows united by a small rose window. The rib vault changed from six to four ribs. The flying buttresses matured, and after they were embraced at Notre-Dame de Paris and Notre-Dame de Chartres, they became the canonical way to support high walls, as they served both structural and ornamental purposes. Notable structures include the main body of Chartres Cathedral (1194–1260), Amiens Cathedral, Notre Dame de Paris, Bourges Cathedral.


Rayonnant

In French Gothic architecture, Rayonnant was the period between ca. 1240 and 1350, characterized by a shift in focus away from the High Gothic mode of utilizing great scale and spatial rationalism (such as with buildings like Chartres Cathedral or the nave of Amiens Cathedral) towards a greater concern for two dimensional surfaces and the repetition of decorative motifs at different scales. After the mid-fourteenth century, Rayonnant gradually evolved into the Late Gothic, Flamboyant style, though as usual with such arbitrary stylistic labels, the point of transition is not clearly defined.

1. Terminology

The name Rayonnant derives from the attempts of nineteenth-century French art historians (notably Henri Focillon and Ferdinand de Lasteyrie) to classify Gothic styles on the basis of window tracery. Although such efforts are now regarded as mistaken, the resulting terms have to some extent survived (Rayonnant and Flamboyant are still widely used by art historians, though the misleading old term Lancet Gothic has generally given way to High Gothic). On this basis, Focillon and his colleagues adopted the term Rayonnant (from the French word meaning “to radiate”) specifically to describe the radiating spokes of the rose windows which flourished during this period. (Some sources incorrectly derive the term from the radiating chapels spreading from the apse, however these were not specifically associated with this period and had been a standard feature of Continental architecture since the eleventh century on Romanesque buildings like Cluny Abbey and the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela).

2. Origins and Development of Rayonnant

Although elements of the new style can be found at the Cistercian abbey church of Royaumont (begun 1228, now mostly destroyed), perhaps the most important step in the development of the Rayonnant style was the building of the Abbey Church of St. Nicaise, in Reims (begun 1231). Although this church was entirely destroyed during the French Revolution, its façade is well known from eighteenth-century engravings. The architect (Hugues de Libergier) took various existing elements of the Gothic decorative vocabulary and used them to create a very new visual aesthetic. Perhaps the most influential feature of the Church of St. Nicaise was its west façade, constructed as a series of pointed gables decorated with crockets and a mixture of blind and open tracery, interspersed with narrow pinnacles. Unlike earlier Gothic west façades, with their clear three-part horizontal and vertical divisions, Libergier's design was more screen-like (indeed it
may have been inspired by earlier choir screens) and on a far more human scale than the cavernous doorways of Reims Cathedral. Several key elements of the St. Nicaise façade were soon taken up by other architects and can be recognized, for example, in the treatment of the North transept portal of Notre Dame de Paris and around the roof line of the Sainte Chapelle.

3. General Characteristics of Rayonnant Architecture

Whilst all phases of Gothic architecture were concerned to some degree with levels of illumination and the appearance of structural lightness, Rayonnant takes this to the extreme. More of the wall surface than ever before was pierced by windows (see for example the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris) and buildings were often given lace-like tracery screens on the exterior to hide the bulk of load bearing wall elements and buttresses (such as at Strasbourg Cathedral or the Church of St. Urbain in Troyes).

As well as increasing the size of window openings, the Rayonnant period coincided with the development of the band window, in which a central strip of richly colored stained glass is positioned between upper and lower bands of clear or grisaille glass, which allowed even more light to flood in.

Although changes in window design are the most oft-cited feature of the Rayonnant style, they were actually just one part of a more fundamental aesthetic shift. The key precursor was a change in the construction of window tracery; the replacement of old-fashioned plate-tracery (in which the window openings look as if they have been punched out of a flat stone plate) with the more delicate bar-tracery (in which the stone elements separating the glazing panels within a window are constructed out of narrow carved moldings, with rounded inner and outer profiles). Bar-tracery probably made its first appearance in the clerestory windows at Reims Cathedral and quickly spread across Europe. As well as being a more effective and flexible way of constructing windows, bar tracery also paved the way for the development of blind tracery (decorating an otherwise blank wall) and of open tracery, typically all using the same decorative motifs as the adjoining windows.

The final architectural innovation that emerged as part of the Rayonnant style in France was the use of glazed triforia. Traditionally, the triforium of an Early or High Gothic cathedral was a dark horizontal band, usually housing a narrow passageway, that separated the top of the arcade from the clerestory. Although it made the interior darker, it was a necessary feature to accommodate the sloping lean-to roofs over the side aisles and chapels. The Rayonnant solution to this, as employed to brilliant effect in the 1230s nave of the Abbey Church of St. Denis, was to use double-pitched roofs over the aisles, with hidden gutters to drain off the rain-water. This meant the outer wall of the triforium passage could now be glazed, and the inner wall reduced to slender bar tracery. Architects also began to emphasize the linkage between triforium and clerestory by extending the central mullions from the windows of the latter in a continuous molding running from the top of the windows down through the blind tracery of the triforium to the string course at the top of the arcading.

4. Influences of Rayonnant Architecture

Key elements of the Rayonnant style were incorporated into English architecture with the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey by King Henry III, who had been present at the consecration of Louis IX’s Ste Chapelle. The resulting mixture of styles at Westminster (a crucial step in the development of English Decorated Gothic) has been characterized by some art historians as
“French architecture with an English accent.” Rayonnant was also very influential in the Holy Roman Empire, as evidenced by the cathedrals at Strasbourg, Cologne and Prague. The style even reached as far as Cyprus (a French cultural outpost during the Middle Ages) with the most prominent example being Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Famagusta.

The various decorative elements employed in the Rayonnant style (bar tracery, blind and open tracery, gables, and pinnacles) could also be applied on a much smaller scale, both for the micro-architectural fixtures and fittings within a church (tombs, shrines, pulpits, sacrament houses, etc.) and also for small portable objects like reliquaries, liturgical equipment, ivory diptychs, etc. This combination of flexibility and portability may have been a key factor in the dissemination of Rayonnant and its various offshoots across Europe in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.


**Flamboyant**

Flamboyant (from French flamboyant, “flaming”) is the name given to a florid style of late Gothic architecture in vogue in France from about 1350 until superseded by Renaissance architecture during the early sixteenth century, and mainly used in describing French buildings. The term is sometimes used of the early period of English Gothic architecture usually called the Decorated Style; the historian Edward Augustus Freeman proposed this in a work of 1851. A version of the style spread to Spain and Portugal during the fifteenth century. It evolved from the Rayonnant style and the English Decorated Style and was marked by even greater attention to decoration and the use of double curved tracery. The term was first used by Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois (1777-1837), and like all the terms mentioned in this paragraph except “Sondergotik” describes the style of window tracery, which is much the easiest way of distinguishing within the overall Gothic period, but ignores other aspects of style. In England the later part of the period is known as Perpendicular architecture. In Germany Sondergotik (“Special Gothic”) is the more usual term.

The name derives from the flame-like windings of its tracery and the dramatic lengthening of gables and the tops of arches. A key feature is the ogee arch, originating in Beverley Minster, England around 1320, which spread to York and Durham, although the form was never widely used in England, being superseded by the rise of the Perpendicular style around 1350. A possible point of connection between the early English work and the later development in France is the church at Chaumont. The Manueline in Portugal, and the Isabelline in Spain were even more extravagant continuations of the style in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

In the past the Flamboyant style, along with its antecedent Rayonnant, has frequently been disparaged by critics. More recently some have sought to rehabilitate it. William W. Clark commented:

> The Flamboyant is the most neglected period of Gothic architecture because of the prejudices of past generations; but the neglect of these highly original and inventive architectural fantasies is unwarranted. The time has come to discard old conceptions and look anew at Late Gothic architecture.

Some notable examples include the Church of Saint-Maclou, Rouen, France; St. Lorenz, Nuremberg (nave ceiling in particular), Germany; Milan Cathedral, a relatively rare Italian building in the style, which is adopted very fully here; Vladislav Hall in Prague Castle.
(ceiling again); Seville Cathedral, Spain; the Palais de Justice, Rouen, France; the Church of Saint Vulfran, Abbeville, France; the transepts of Senlis Cathedral, France; the south transept of Sens Cathedral, France; Moulins Cathedral, Moulins, France; the Church of the Trinity, Vendôme, France; the nave of the Church of St. Ouen, Rouen, France; the Royal Monastery of Brou, France; the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Rouen, France; the Basilica of Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, Lorraine, France; the Basilica of Notre-Dame de l'Epine, Champagne, France; the Church of Notre-Dame, Louviers, Normandy, France (especially the south nave façade and porch); the Church of Notre-Dame, Caudebec-en-Caux, Normandy, France; and the north transept of Évreux Cathedral, France.

--http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flamboyant
THE GOTHIC REVIVAL IN FRANCE

After the destruction wrought by the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution, work began on the restoration of French cathedrals in the nineteenth century under the impact of Romanticism. Much of the statuary of Noyon Cathedral had been destroyed in the Wars of Religion; the tombs of France’s kings were desecrated and the roof leads melted down at the Abbey of St. Denis during the Revolution; and the heads of the statues of kings were smashed at Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris during the Revolution, which became a temple of the cult of reason and later of the cult of the Supreme Being. Victor Hugo’s novel *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831) triggered a renewed interest in Gothic architecture as a peculiarly French achievement, and Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc’s interpretation of this achievement undergirded the work of restoration.

--Byron Stuhlman

[The focal point of the renewed interest in Gothic architecture] was Notre Dame of Paris, a building of crucial significance not only in the history of architecture, but in politics also. . . . For more than a hundred years, Victor Hugo’s famous novel, *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), was to exert an influence upon the more open-minded, both specialists and amateur enthusiasts. In this novel, one of the most intriguing contributions to French Romanticism, the author depicted a medieval world which readers could readily imagine, and to which later generations remained profoundly attached. Even the cathedral fire seemed to prefigure the blaze which, in 1836, set alight the timber frame and the roofing of Chartres cathedral, and which by the same token seemed to suggest a confusion between a Hugoesque world and reality. . . . . Aside from the imaginative aspects of the work, which reality was soon to copy, two other elements helped to give the novel a quality all its own. The first concerns the subject which serves as the guiding thread of the book, namely, the cathedral itself, conceived as a living, palpitating being, not merely as a cold edifice which had been mutilated in the course of the Revolution and for a long time neglected. The second concerns the ideas elaborated upon by Hugo which were in no way contingent but rather involved themes which had undergone a long process of maturation in his mind and which, aside from a few points of detail, were never to vary. The majority of them have been incorporated into public knowledge to such a degree, owing to the huge success of the novel, that they now seem to be mere commonplaces. . . . The doctrine has been considerably reinforced since Hugo’s day. Its central tenets include the unity of the arts, the primacy of architecture with respect to the other arts, and the claim that architecture is a form of expression that is by its nature spiritual. Hugo had tried to define the conditions for creation, whether material (climate, geography, and materials) or social. It was in this area that his thinking appeared most original, as he drew a sharp contrast between Romanesque art . . . and Gothic art. The distinction was based upon a sociological analysis which, although admittedly somewhat perfunctory, at least had the virtue of being boldly drawn. Hugo claimed that there was a connection between form and social class. Indeed, in his view authority in the medieval period was vested in two different classes in succession. Romanesque art reflected the rule of a priesthood: “There is a pervading sense of authority, unity, of what is impenetrable, absolute, of Pope Gregory VII; the priestly caste is everywhere, the people nowhere.” With the coming of the Crusades, the authority of the priesthood was undermined and the people regained its rights: “The face of Europe had changed, and in like fashion, the face of architecture had changed too; like civilization, it had turned a page . . . . From this point on the cathedral was invaded by the bourgeoisie, by the commune, and by liberty” (*Notre Dame*, Book 5, chapter 2). Architecture
was above all a social and a collective art. Architecture died when the ties between art and society were sundered.

Hugo was led to analyze more precisely the role of the creator, and so to introduce the notion of ‘collective creation.’ Once he had adopted this notion, he tried to render it more systematic: “The greatest works of architecture are not so much individual as social creations; they are better seen as the giving birth of peoples in labor than as the gushing stream of genius. Such works should be regarded as the deposit left by a nation, as the accumulations of the centuries, as the residue of successive evaporations of human society, briefly, as a kind of geological formation” (Book 3, chapter 1). These peremptory assertions were tempered, however, by Hugo’s decision to reintroduce the individual creator in the course of the second stage:

The cathedral itself, a building that in former times was so dogmatic, had now been invaded by the bourgeoisie, by the commune, and by liberty, and so eluded the priest and fell into the hands of the artist. The artist built after his own fashion. He bid adieu to mystery, myth, and law, and in their stead he welcomed fantasy and caprice. Provided that the priest still had his basilica and his altar, he could raise no objection. The four walls now belonged to the artist. The book of architecture no longer belonged to the priesthood, to religion, or to Rome, but to the imagination, to poetry, and to the people.

--Book 5, chapter 2

The shift from the first to the second period was effected by means of transitional works, among them the cathedral of Paris:

The colossal work of a man and a people . . . a prodigious product of all the forces of an epoch in which, upon every single stone, one could see burst forth in a hundred different ways the fantasy of the workman disciplined by the genius of the artist; a form of human creation, in a word, powerful, and fruitful like the divine creation, from which it seemed to have wrested its twofold character of variety and unity.

--Book 5, chapter 2

If Victor Hugo placed so much emphasis upon the differences between Romanesque art, where the churches were “somber, mysterious, low, and as if overwhelmed by the weight of the semicircular arch,” and Gothic art, with its “tall airy churches, rich in stained glass and sculpture . . . communal and bourgeois as political symbols; free, capricious, and unfettered as works of art” (Book 3, chapter 1), he had nonetheless to show that the evolution of “art was achieved without trouble, without effort, and without reaction, as if obeying a tranquil, natural law” (Book 3, chapter 1). The comparison with nature, already operative in the writings of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and, after him, in those of Chateaubriand, was adopted by Hugo as his own and indeed taken much further. He likened the cathedral to a forest: “The pillars are thick trunks, at the pinnacle of which the shafts of fillets interweave like shadow-laden branches (En Voyage, Volume II, 1839, “Midi de France et Bourgogne,” page 275).

If I have place so much emphasis upon some of the ideas formulated by Victor Hugo, it is because they exerted an immediate and profound influence upon the minds of his contemporaries, who could not help but be impressed by the breadth of his vision. These ideas were not intrinsically original, for a number of them had been formulated by, among others, Sulpice Boisserée, whose writings Hugo had read with care. His contribution, however, was to make such ideas so familiar that a whole generation was in some way marked by them. Didron, in his introduction to his Manuel d’iconographie chrétienne (Paris, 1845), did not conceal his
debt to Hugo and, indeed, dedicated the work to him. Many other scholars could be mentioned, and there were a host of literary persons who, after reading the novel, paid their very first visit to the cathedral of Paris, meditated upon Hugo’s sublime pages, and succumbed to the strange enchantment worked by such an admirably described monument.

The imposing personality of Victor Hugo should not be allowed to obscure the existence of those others who, during the same period, helped to mold the imaginary conception of the cathedral. Two of their number took the trouble to theorize, and thereby to reduce their analyses to a systematic form. Viollet-le-Duc has been much studied, but Ludovic Vitet (1802-1873) has only recently re-emerged from the shadows, even though the role he played, both in practical terms and as a writer, was by no means a negligible one. He served as Inspector of Historical Monuments, an office to which he was appointed by Guizot on October 23, 1830, and which he held until 1834, when Prosper Mérimée succeeded him. In 1837, the Count of Salvandy founded the Committee of Arts and Monuments, the aim of which was to encourage and coordinate archeological researches, among which the study of cathedrals was to occupy a prominent place. Ludovic Vitet was commissioned to write a monograph on Noyon, while Lassus, an architect, was responsible for writing a similar work on Chartres.

The publication of Ludovic Vitet’s study of Noyon cathedral, in 1845, was of crucial importance, for it was the first monograph to be based upon the actual analysis of the monument. Vitet’s monograph also reflected a new concern with illustration. The volume containing the written text was complemented by an album of plates in which plans, cross-sections, elevations, and architectural details had been drawn with the greatest care. Vitet even went so far as to call upon the expertise of one of the great architects of the period, Daniel Ramée. If Noyon was given so important a place in the history of Gothic architecture, it was because Vitet believed that a very early date could be ascribed to the monument. He imagined that it had been embarked upon immediately after the fire of 1131, long before work began on Saint-Denis. More important still were the new theories, which played a considerable role at the time, partly because of their clarity of exposition, and partly because the high standing in official milieux enjoyed by their author ensured that his views gained a wide hearing. Vitet had derived some of these ideas Victor Hugo, especially all those arguments which concerned the evolution of architectural forms and sociological explanations. On the other hand, he represented a particular current of thought, which may be characterized as agnostic, if not anti-religious and positivist. Finally, one cannot rule out the possibility that Ramée gave him valuable assistance. The architect, himself born in Germany, was familiar with both the German and the English architectural literature. He later went on to publish a Manuel de l’histoire de l’architecture chez tous les peuples et particulièrement de l’architecture en France (1841), in which a number of Vitet’s theories were elaborated further.

In many respects Viollet-le-Duc belonged to this same intellectual current, to which he gave a further, and quite spectacular, development. In addition, he had the merit of expounding to a wide audience, both through his various writings and through his actions, the arguments which he professed. Even today such arguments inform many discussions of medieval architecture, and this is even more apparent in the case of Gothic architecture. I do not propose to rehearse the whole analysis advance by this famous architect, but what was involved was a system of thought designed to provide a global account of a reality the extraordinary diversity of which had profoundly impressed him. Viollet-le-Duc’s ideas were further developed in his Dictionnaire, the first volume of which was published in 1854, but earlier formulations were sketched out ten
years before in a series of articles published, from 1844 on, in Didron’s *Annales archéologiques* (“De la construction des édifices religieux en France”). One thus has to accept that it is difficult to identify the authorship of certain arguments propounded at around the same date by Lassus, Verneilh, and Vitet, who held very much the same views, and who tended to publish in the *Annales*. The general public, however, was convinced that the theory, as far as medieval rationalism was concerned, has emerged fully fledged from the brain of Viollet-le-Duc.

In order to shed some light on the great debate of the mid-nineteenth century on the cathedral, which preoccupied both scholarly and professional milieux, I want to discuss a few of the central issues. Viollet-le-Duc’s position was expounded in “Cathédrale,” an article published in 1854 which in many respects rehearsed the lines of argument advanced by Victor Hugo and Vitet. He too posited a link between urban growth and the building of cathedrals. The population of the towns had reacted against the monastic and feudal order by constituting themselves as ‘communes.’ The bishops used such emancipatory movements to their own advantage by building or rebuilding their cathedrals “with the vigorous participation of the local population.” Using a formula sufficiently striking to persuade the most sceptical of his readers, Viollet-le-Duc went so far as to claim that “at the end of the twelfth century, the erection of a cathedral was a need, because it constituted a clamorous protest against the feudal order. Although he was prepared to admit that they “religious monuments,” he immediately qualified this observation by emphasizing that they “were above all national monuments.” So it was that the French cathedral, built by French society, its labor, and its financial contributions, was “a symbol of French unity,” “the first and the most powerful bid for unity.” It was then a simple matter to conclude, as Viollet-le-Duc showed no hesitation in doing, that it was the wealth of the lay population, eagerly proffered, which had served to raise up “the first genuinely popular building to be opposed to the feudal castle, which would in the end conquer it.” The historical sequence seemed to accord with such theories, for, while the building fever abated around the middle of the thirteenth century, this occurrence could easily be regarded as a consequence of the consolidation of the power of the monarchy. With the crushing of the feudal fortresses, the building of cathedrals ceased to be so urgent and, as a consequence, some of them were left unfinished. It was thanks to the efforts of bishop and canons, who rallied a flagging population, that some of the cathedrals were in fact completed.

Viollet-le-Duc gave a still more coherent formulation of this analysis in his *Histoire d’une cathédrale et d’un hôtel de ville*, which was published in 1854, and which further emphasized the link between the history of the cathedral and the revival of the city. The cathedral was defined as not merely a religious monument but also, and primarily, as the most vibrant expression of municipal existence. Together with the town hall, it allowed one to grasp just what, across history, the rise of the people had been. Indeed, the civil aspect of the cathedral was of greater importance than the religious dimension. In illustration of Viollet-le-Duc’s theory, let us consider a concrete example, the alterations to the choir of Laon cathedral. The original plan had featured a rather shallow semicircular chevet, but before long the decision was taken to opt for a long rectangular chevet. Viollet-le-Duc interpreted this change in design in terms of the democratic origin of the building, which distinguished it from the cathedrals of Chartres, Amiens, or Bourges. Laon cathedral was, he claimed, “the monument of a people that was both resourceful, energetic, and full of a virile grandeur” (Volume II, page 309). The local population had, he argued, helped the bishop to raise the building, by themselves endowing the chevet, “which was better suited, by its very design, to popular meetings.” Indeed, the bishops had
yielded in this matter to the civil authorities, whose might had found expression in the creation of the commune.

Jean-Baptiste Lassus, who from 1844 on was collaborating with Viollet-le-Duc on the site of Notre Dame, belonged to a somewhat different tendency. In his view, social and political restoration should be accompanied by religious restoration. He was therefore opposed to eighteenth-century rationalism, and was an unabashed admirer of the Middle Ages, and of the thirteenth century in particular. He drew inspiration not so much from Chateaubriand as from Joseph de Maistre, whose writings had contained hugely influential meditations on the Catholic philosophy of history. Lassus shared de Maistre’s admiration for the thirteenth century, which he derived in part from his friend Montalembert. He therefore took an opposite view to Viollet-le-Duc, declaring himself to be a Catholic architect, whose efforts would be devoted to the building of religious buildings, “in which art will forever celebrate the glory of God to whom it is consecrated.” In *Histoire et description des moeurs et usages . . . en Europe*, a work co-written by Jean-Baptiste Lassus and by Paul Lacroix and published in Paris in 1851, the symbolic signification of the church was emphasized. It was claimed that the church was “a pure creation of thought,” and the plan of the building, which evoked the shape of the cross, was stressed. Lassus died in 1857, and his premature death meant that he was never able to present his arguments in any sort of systematic form. If, however, one analyzes the few texts published during his lifetime, it soon becomes apparent that his thought was diametrically opposed to that of Viollet-le-Duc. Indeed, Lassus showed a deeper appreciation of what is to my mind, one of the most original features of this form of architecture, namely, its affirmation of spatial values. This characteristic of the Gothic is at once wholly at odds with the perceptions of antiquity and an intimation of modern and contemporary architectural theory and practice.

The theories regarding Gothic architecture advanced during this period were soon to be put into practice, through the rebuilding of the cathedrals. A number of such buildings were in every respect in urgent need of restoration. Their critical condition was due to the general neglect they had suffered during the Revolution, and the less-than satisfactory state of repairs sustained during the classical period. The cathedrals were also important counters in a religious, political, and even local struggle. Public opinion was simply no longer prepared to countenance the failure to preserve such monuments, in a period in which much thought was being given to their nature and history. Finally, the holding of religious services itself demanded that the fabric of the cathedrals be restored. Where so many disparate interests converged, such ventures were bound to prosper, even though large sums of money and protracted building works would be necessary. Some of these restorations took on an exemplary status, because the monuments in question had a particular symbolic value in historical terms. Notre-Dame of Paris was an especially telling instance here, both because of the debates which were staged and because of the choice of architects.

There should be no need to inform the reader that the decision to put the monument to rights was an indirect consequence of the publication of Victor Hugo’s novel. Several factors served to make the restoration of Notre-Dame an event of particular significance for the refurbishment of medieval monuments: the building had played a particular role in national history, and as a consequence public opinion rallied to the cause. An architectural competition was held, which was won by Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc, their aspiration being to created a site that was animated by the same faith that had prevailed in the thirteenth century.
The restoration of a monument would often entail returning it to its original state, even if, as Viollet-le-Duc acknowledged in his article “Restoration” (Volume 8, page 14), such a state had never existed. . . .

One has the sense that everyone, from architects, sponsors, amateur enthusiasts to the general public, entertained a specific conception of the cathedral. Most would seem to have believed that men of the Middle Ages had dreamed, when the building began, of an ‘ideal cathedral,’ which circumstances had in time either scotched or modified. Viollet-le-Duc gave this mythical image a concrete form in his *Dictionnaire*:

In order to give some impression of what a complete, finished thirteenth-century cathedral was supposed, according to its original conception, to have looked like, we have reproduced a somewhat free representation of a building of the period, executed at Reims. If we set aside these details, which are not of particular concern to us here, the monument designed by Robert of Coucy fits this overall conception, even though the western spires were never finished and the central spires and some transepts were made of wood and lead.

Volume II, 1859, page 324

The image made a profound impression upon contemporaries, if the sheer number of reproductions is anything to go by. I would like to emphasize here that the cathedral was viewed from the outside rather than the inside, a crucial factor where its urban setting was concerned. It was in fact a work of synthesis that was to proved persuasive to many nineteenth-century sensibilities, the breadth of its transept being modeled upon that of Chartres, its lantern-tower being derived from Laon, and its western façade being borrowed from Reims.

**The Spontaneist Theory**

The analysis of the conditions governing creation in the medieval period had led to the foundation of a far-reaching doctrine. Here too Victor Hugo had shown the way, by emphasizing the ascendancy of architecture and by asserting that the other arts had been subordinated to it. Professional architects found evidence in the documents then in print to support this argument, and were not slow to profess it themselves. The program may well have been the responsibility of the sponsor, but the definition of the overall scheme and of details fell to the master of the fabric fund. The shaping of the fabric was his sole prerogative. Viollet-le-Duc ascribed exemplary importance to this term, “for by fabric was meant everything which constituted the fixtures and fittings of a building, from foundations to tapestries, candelabras, or even to the smallest furnishings” (*Dictionnaire*, Volume I, page 107). In Viollet-le-Duc’s view, this massive task did not emerge before the Gothic period, which saw the birth of the artist in the modern sense of the term. The artist was therefore of lay origin, and his responsibilities bore a curious resemblance to those of the architects of Viollet-le-Duc’s own time. Finally, he should also be involved in the actual running of the site. Both Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc adopted this approach, stipulating in minute detail what the decor should be in the cathedrals of Paris and Moulins and in the church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Traille at Lille. As for the smooth operation of the site, Paris provided a particularly telling example, as scrutiny of the works record shows.

The architects responsible for the restoration of Notre-Dame concentrated their energies upon the actual organization of the site, for they wanted to recreate the working conditions and the spiritual ambience of the Middle Ages. It is in these terms that one should judge their relationship with Geoffroi-Dechaume, the man in overall charge of the team of sculptors,
although their task was made the easier by his remarkable personality, his powerful physique,
and even his place of birth. The works site for the restoration of Notre Dame of Paris made it
possible to imagine what a thirteenth-century site would have looked like.

The elitist theory of artistic creation nevertheless met with a spectacular failure, since the public,
both specialist and amateur, generally favored the vaguer theory endorsed by Victor Hugo. One
should further note that the surviving documents from the Gothic Middle Ages offered strong
grounds for supposing that architectural creation had in fact been both anonymous and
spontaneous.

Some texts even served to reinforce this point of view — for example, those concerning Chartres
cathedral, one of which, dated 1144, is ascribed to Robert of Torigni: “In my diocese, there is
the most extraordinary sight, for everyone, whether knight, burgess, or peasant, hastens to
Chartres in order to have the honor of working for Notre-Dame . . . they rush there in a
disordered mass, paying no heed to distinctions of rank; the load is sometimes so heavy that a
thousand men are needed for each wagon.” Other documents lent credence to this hypothesis,
which was soon regarded as established fact. A number of consequences followed, the most
important of them concerning the birth of Gothic art, which is too often reduced to being no
more than a matter of the emergence of intersecting ribs in vaults. Up until quite recently, the
tendency has been to see the clumsy vaulting of the little churches on the Île de France as a
relatively early development, as if they were the first, hesitant and groping attempts of architects
who, becoming surer of themselves after a short while, embarked upon the building of
cathedrals. The architecture which had emerged in the countryside of the Île de France would
then have made inroads into the towns and their episcopal churches. It is clear enough what
conclusions might be drawn from an argument of this sort. Even Foucillon, an independent-
minded thinker if there ever was one, claimed that “the rib as invented by masons,” although he
went on to add the rider that “it was as an organ of structure that it was conceived . . . it was as
an organ of structure that it spread” (Art d’Occident, page 144).

The nineteenth century had had the courage to grapple with the cathedral and, in the process,
made a number of errors whose gravity matched the passion brought to the task. Despite the
claims that are often advanced, these errors did not have any dramatic consequences overall. We
owe a debt to the nineteenth century anyway for having raised the issue once again, and for
having handed down this imposing inheritance to us. However, the bestowal of a mythical status
upon the cathedral worked to the advantage of the single monument, while the immediate
environment was neglected or even condemned. In this respect, the consequences of the
rediscovery of the cathedral were catastrophic. Victor Hugo, however, had been quite clear on
this point. He had had the exceptional clear-sightedness to appreciate that the cathedral of Paris
was not isolated, cut off from everyday life and from the town, but in fact participated fully in it,
and was irrigated by the teeming mass of human beings and by the proliferation of houses. Fifty
years later, the damage had been done, and Notre-Dame stood in splendid isolation on a deserted
Île de la Cité.

-- Alain Erland-Brandenburg,

The Cathedral: The Social and Architectural Dynamics of Construction,
translated by Martin Thom (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), pages 5-25
AUTUN CATHEDRAL
Cathédrale Saint-Lazare d’Autun

Saint Nazaire Cathedral

The first cathedral of Autun was built from the fifth century onwards (later dedicated to Saint Nazarius or St. Nazaire, as it held relics of Saints Nazarius and Celsus) and was several times refurbished and enlarged. In about 970 it obtained from Marseille some of the relics of Lazarus of Aix, in the belief that they were relics of Lazarus of Bethany, the friend of Jesus. These became an object of pilgrimage and the crowds became too great for the cathedral building. The Bishop of Autun, Etienne de Bâgé, therefore decided in about 1120 on the construction of a new cathedral as a pilgrimage church and for the better veneration of the relics. The new cathedral was allotted a site to the north of the earlier cathedral of Saint Nazaire, of which some remains may still be seen.

Saint Lazare Cathedral

Historical Overview

Work on the new cathedral of Saint Lazarus or St. Lazare began in around 1120 and advanced rapidly enough for the building to be consecrated in 1130. It was mostly finished by 1146, when the relics of Lazarus were translated from the old cathedral. The Tomb of Lazarus, the shrine of the relics, was constructed in the choir in 1170-1180. The narthex or portico was not completed until the very end of the century.

St. Lazare Cathedral stands in the highest and best fortified corner of the town, and through external modifications that have been applied to the building the appearance has been much altered by the addition of a Gothic tower, a spire and side chapels in the fifteenth century. The cathedral still contains a highly Romanesque appearance on the interior. In 1462, Bishop Jean Rolin had a new belfry built in replacement of the Romanesque one that was unfortunately destroyed by a bolt of lightning.

The inspiration of the new building, both in layout and decoration, was Cluniac. The designs were the work of the bishop Etienne de Bâgé, who was particularly influenced by the Cluniac abbey of Paray-le-Monial. St. Lazare Cathedral was consecrated in 1132.

For a number of years after 1146 the two cathedrals operated in tandem, with Saint Lazare as the summer cathedral (from Easter to All Saints’ Day) and Saint Nazaire as the winter cathedral. The
The cathedral was finished in 1146, (with the exception of the porch which was added a few years later); Abbé Grivot writing in his excellent guide to the cathedral explains that the interior of the building is not Gothic, as there are no crossed diagonal ribs, but Roman vaulting as was used at Cluny III. Saint Lazare was eventually confirmed as the one cathedral of Autun in 1195.

From 1793 until 1805 it was home to the famous painting, “The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin,” by Jan van Eyck, now in the Musée du Louvre.

**St. Lazare Architecture**

**Interior**

The interior has a nave and two aisles, divided by massive columns with longitudinal carvings punctuated with beautifully decorated Romanesque capitals. The plan of the cathedral has a narthex of two bays topped by two towers, followed by a seven-bay nave flanked by side aisles and a transept with the tower surmounting cross. The twin flanking towers date from the nineteenth century.

The nave elevation is composed of three levels: grand arcade, triforium, and clerestory, each marked by a cornice. The three story elevation of St. Lazare was made possible by the use of pointed arches for the nave. Each nave bay is separated at the vault by a transverse rib. Each transept projects to the width of two nave bays and the west entrance has a narthex which screens the main portal. The triforium base is decorated with a frieze of rosettes and consists of three blind arches. The pointed arch has been debated to be adapted from Islamic Art architecture where it had been used for some time.

Many of the historiated capitals that adorn the columns within St. Lazare were carved by Gislebertus that include fine representations of the Flight into Egypt and the Adoration of the Magi. The capitals adorn columns along the nave.

What makes St. Lazare a masterpiece of Romanesque art is the quality of Gislebertus’ sculpture that appears on dozens of capitals in the nave and chancel including scenes from the Bible carved in stone in a very particular style.

**Exterior**

The Cathedral of St. Lazare has a ground-plan in the form of a Latin cross, with an aisled nave, a plain transept and a three-stage choir with a semicircular end. The Gothic spire dates from the fifteenth century although the west towers were rebuilt in the nineteenth century, based on the Romanesque style of Paray-le-Monial.

**West Façade**

**The Last Judgment Tympanum**

The West façade of St. Lazare contains the tympanum (1130–1135), signed *Gislebertus hoc fecit* (“Gislebertus made this”) within the portico which is ranked amongst the masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture in France. However, art historian Linda Seidel challenged this reading, arguing that instead Gislebertus was a patron.

The sheer size of the tympanum required that double lintels support it with a middle column to further support the sculpture. The left side of the tympanum displays the rise to the heavenly kingdom, and on the right is a portrayal of the demons in hell with an angel and a devil weighing the souls on a balance.
The Last Judgment is believed to have been created around 1130. The tympanum was saved from potential ruin as the canons who were managing the cathedral in the eighteenth century believed that Gislebertus’ work was ugly, they covered it with plaster. The tympanum was rediscovered and released from the plaster in 1837.

Zodiac signs surround the arch vault with Christ in the center portrayed as a serene figure. Christ is placed in perfect symmetrical position with a balanced composition of elongated figures. Jesus is flanked by his mother, the Virgin Mary and his apostles cast as penitents and observers of the last judgment. St. Peter guards the gate to heaven and looks on as resurrected individuals attempt to squeeze in with the assistance of the angels.

Gislebertus successfully integrated the modern view of heaven and hell and created a sculpture that would act as a visual educational device for individuals that were illiterate. Viewing the tympanum would allow pilgrim’s to know what would happen to them if they were to end up in hell. Two men near the center of the lintel carry bags bearing a cross and a seashell. These are the symbols of pilgrims that travelled from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela.

The tympanum would have inspired terror in believers that passed beneath it and viewed the detailed high relief sculpture. The bottom of the tympanum underneath the weighing of the souls has an inscription that states, “May this terror terrify those whom earthly error binds for the horror of the images here in this manner truly depicts what will be.”

The tympanum is framed by two archivolts. The inner one has carved foliage while the outer archivolt consists of magnificently detailed medallions representing the four seasons, zodiacs, and labors of the months.

**Temptation of Eve**

Gislebertus’ “Temptation of Eve” was originally the lintel of the north door of the cathedral. It is stated that the Temptation of Eve was created around the 1130s at the same time in which the Last Judgment and the narrative capitals were made. This large sculpture is now displayed in the Musée Rolin, Autun, France.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autun_Cathedral

**THE ROYAL ABBEY OF ST. DENIS**

Abbaye de Saint-Denis, Cathédrale royale de Saint-Denis, Basilique Saint-Denis
The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis is a large medieval abbey church in the city of Saint-Denis, now a northern suburb of Paris. The building is of unique importance historically and architecturally, as its choir completed in 1144 is considered to be the first Gothic church ever built.

The site originated as a Gallo-Roman cemetery, in late Roman times — the archeological remains still lie beneath the cathedral; the people buried there seem to have had a faith that was a mix of Christian and pre-Christian beliefs and practices. Around 475 St. Genevieve purchased some of the land and built a church. In the seventh century, the church was replaced by a much grander construction, on the orders of Dagobert I; it is claimed that Dagobert also moved the body of Saint Denis, a patron saint of France, to the building.

The church became a place of pilgrimage and the burial place of the French kings, with nearly every king from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries being buried there, as well as many from previous centuries. (It was not used for the coronations of kings, that function being reserved for the Cathedral of Reims; however, queens were commonly crowned there.) “Saint-Denis” soon became the abbey church of a growing monastic complex.

In the twelfth century the Abbot Suger rebuilt portions of the abbey church using innovative structural and decorative features. In doing so, he is said to have created the first truly Gothic building. The basilica’s thirteenth-century nave is also the prototype for the Rayonnant Gothic style, and provided an architectural model for cathedrals and abbeys of northern France, England, and other countries.

The abbey church was renamed as a cathedral in 1966 and is the seat of the Bishop of Saint-Denis.

**Background**

Saint Denis, a patron saint of France, became — according to legend — the first bishop of Paris. Legend relates that he was decapitated on the hill of Montmartre and subsequently carried his head to the site of the current church, indicating where he wanted to be buried. According to related legends, a martyrium was erected on the site of his grave. The high altars of the churches later built on the site allegedly stood immediately above the martyrium of St. Denis. Archeological excavations have revealed a very large pit immediately under the altar, rather than a tomb; the pit contained animal bones and fragments of Roman pots, but no human body. The pit is on public display in the crypt.

**Dagobert’s Church**

Dagobert, the king of the Franks (reigned 628 to 637), re-founded the church as the Abbey of Saint Denis, a Benedictine monastery. Dagobert also commissioned a new shrine to house the saint’s remains, which was created by his chief councilor, Eligius, a goldsmith by training. It was described in an early *vita* of Saint Eligius:

> Above all, Eligius fabricated a mausoleum for the holy martyr Denis in the city of Paris with a wonderful marble ciborium over it marvelously decorated with gold and gems. He composed a crest [at the top of a tomb] and a magnificent frontal and surrounded the throne of the altar with golden axes in a circle. He placed golden apples there, round and jeweled. He made a pulpit and a gate of silver and a roof for the throne of the altar on silver axes. He made a covering in the place before the tomb and fabricated an outside
altar at the feet of the holy martyr. So much industry did he lavish there, at the king’s request, and poured out so much that scarcely a single ornament was left in Gaul and it is the greatest wonder of all to this very day.

None of this work survives.

**Architecture**

The Basilica of St. Denis ranks as an architectural landmark—as the first major structure of which a substantial part was designed and built in the Gothic style. Both stylistically and structurally, it heralded the change from Romanesque architecture to Gothic architecture. Before the term “Gothic” came into common use, it was known as the “French Style” (Opus Francigenum).

As it now stands, the church is a large cruciform building of “basilica” form; that is, it has a central nave with lower aisles and clerestory windows. It has an additional aisle on the northern side formed of a row of chapels. The west front has three portals, a rose window and one tower, on the southern side. The eastern end, which is built over a crypt, is apsidal, surrounded by an ambulatory and a chevet of nine radiating chapels. The basilica retains stained glass of many periods (although most of the panels from Suger’s time have been removed for long-term conservation and replaced with photographic transparencies), including exceptional modern glass, and a set of twelve misericords.

**The Carolingian Church**

Little is known about the earliest buildings on the site. The first church mentioned in the chronicles was begun in 754 under Pepin the Short and completed under Charlemagne, who was present at its consecration in 775. Most of what is now known about the Carolingian church at St. Denis resulted from a lengthy series of excavations begun under the American art historian Sumner McKnight Crosby in 1937. The building was about 60 meters long, with a monumental westwork, single transepts, a crossing tower, and a lengthy eastern apse over a large crypt (parts of which survive). According to one of the Abbey’s many foundation myths a leper, who was sleeping in the nearly completed church the night before its planned consecration, witnessed a blaze of light from which Christ, accompanied by St. Denis and a host of angels, emerged to conduct the consecration ceremony himself. Before leaving, Christ healed the leper, tearing off his diseased skin to reveal a perfect complexion underneath. A misshapen patch on a marble column was said to be the leper’s former skin, which stuck there when Christ discarded it. Fantastical though they may seem now, the popularity of such myths in medieval accounts goes some way to explaining why any redevelopment of the original church was a sensitive matter and why Suger found it necessary to go to such lengths to justify his changes. Having been consecrated by Christ, the fabric of the building was itself regarded as sacred.

**The Early Gothic rebuilding**

Abbot Suger (ca. 1081–1151), friend and confidant of French kings and Abbot of St. Denis from 1122, began work around 1135 on the rebuilding and enlargement of the abbey to which he had been given as an oblate at the age of 10. In his famous account of the work undertaken during his administration, Suger was careful to explain and justify his decision to rebuild the church, complaining at length about the parlous state of the old structure and its inability to cope with the crowds of pilgrims visiting the shrine of St. Denis, particularly
... on special days such as the feast of the blessed Denis [. . .] when the narrowness of the place forced women to run to the altar on the heads of men as on a pavement with great anguish and confusion.

It is important to emphasize that Suger was the patron of the rebuilding of St. Denis but not the architect, as was often assumed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact it appears that two distinct architects, or master masons, were involved in the twelfth-century changes. Both remain anonymous, but their work can be distinguished on stylistic grounds. The first, who was responsible for the initial work at the western end, favored conventional Romanesque capitals and molding profiles with rich and individualized detailing. His successor, who completed the western façade and upper stories of the narthex, before going on to build the new choir, displayed a more restrained approach to decorative effects, relying on a simple repertoire of motifs, which may have proved more suitable for the lighter Gothic style that he helped to create.

First phase: the west front, ca. 1135–1140

Suger began his rebuilding project at the western end of St. Denis, demolishing the old Carolingian westwork, with its single, centrally located door. He extended the old nave westwards by an additional four bays and added a massive western narthex, incorporating a new façade and three chapels on the first floor level. This new façade, 34 meters (112 feet) wide and 20 meters (66 feet) deep, has three portals, the central one larger than those either side, reflecting the relative width of the central nave and lateral aisles. This tripartite arrangement was clearly influenced by the late eleventh-century façades of the abbey churches of St. Etienne and La Trinité, Caen, with which it also shared a three-story elevation and flanking towers. Only the south tower survives, its partner having been dismantled following clumsy repairs in the 1840s.

The major innovation in the façade at St. Denis is the way the unknown architects have chosen to emphasize the divisions between the different parts with massive vertical buttresses separating the three doorways and horizontal string-courses and window arcades clearly marking out the divisions. This clear delineation of parts was to influence subsequent west façade designs as a common theme in the development of Gothic architecture and a marked departure from the Romanesque. The rose window at the center of the upper story of the west portal was also innovative and influential. Although small circular windows (oculi) within triangular tympana were common on the west façades of Italian Romanesque churches, this was probably the first example of a rose window within a square frame, which was to become a dominant feature of the Gothic façades of northern France (soon to be imitated at Chartres Cathedral and many others). The overall design of the façade has an obvious resemblance to a Roman city gatehouse (an impression strengthened by the buttresses and by the crenellations around the top), which helps to emphasize the traditional notion of great churches as earthly embodiments of the heavenly city, as described in the Book of Ezekiel.

The many influential features of the new façade include the tall, thin statues of Old Testament prophets and kings attached to columns (jamb figures) flanking the portals (destroyed in 1771, but recorded in Montfaucon’s drawings). These were also adopted at the cathedrals of Paris and Chartres, constructed a few years later, and became a feature of almost every Gothic portal thereafter. Above the doorways, the central tympanum was carved with Christ in Majesty displaying his wounds, with the dead emerging from their tombs below. Scenes from the martyrdom of St. Denis were carved above the south (right hand) portal, while above the north
portal was a mosaic (lost), even though this was, as Suger put it ‘contrary to the modern custom.’ Of the original sculpture, very little remains, most of what is now visible being the result of rather clumsy restoration work in 1839. Some fragments of the original sculptures survive in the collection of the Musée de Cluny. The portals themselves were sealed by gilded bronze doors, ornamented with scenes from Christ’s Passion and clearly recording Suger’s patronage with the following inscription; 

For the glory of the church which nurtured and raised him, Suger strove for the glory of the church, Sharing with you what is yours, oh martyr Denis, he prays that by your prayers he should become a sharer in Paradise. The year when it was consecrated was the one thousand, one hundred and fortieth year of the Word.

On the lintel below the great tympanum showing the Last Judgment, beneath a carved figure of the kneeling Abbot, was inscribed the more modest plea;

Receive, stern Judge, the prayers of your Suger, Let me be mercifully numbered among your sheep.

Suger’s western extension was completed in 1140 and the three new chapels in the narthex were consecrated on June 9 of that year.

**Second phase: the new choir, 1140–1144**

On completion of the west front, Abbot Suger moved on to the reconstruction of the eastern end, leaving the Carolingian nave in use. He wanted a choir (chancel) that would be suffused with light. To achieve his aims, Suger’s masons drew on the several new elements which evolved or had been introduced to Romanesque architecture: the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, the ambulatory with radiating chapels, the clustered columns supporting ribs springing in different directions, and the flying buttresses which enabled the insertion of large clerestory windows.

It was the first time that these features had all been drawn together, and the style evolved radically from the previous Romanesque architecture by the lightness of the structure and the unusually large size of the stained glass windows. Erwin Panofsky argued that Suger was inspired to create a physical representation of the heavenly Jerusalem; however, the extent to which Suger had any aims higher than aesthetic pleasure has been called into doubt by more recent art historians on the basis of Suger’s own writings.

The new structure was finished and dedicated on June 11, 1144, in the presence of the King. The Abbey of St. Denis thus became the prototype for further building in the royal domain of northern France. Through the rule of the Angevin dynasty, the style was introduced to England and spread throughout France, the Low Countries, Germany, Spain, northern Italy and Sicily.

**Reconstruction of the Nave**

In 1231, Abbot Odo Clement began work on the rebuilding of the Carolingian nave, which remained sandwiched incongruously between Suger’s Gothic works to the east and west. Both the nave and the upper parts of Suger’s choir were replaced in the Rayonnant Gothic style. From the start it appears that Abbot Odo, with the approval of the Regent Blanche of Castille and her son, the young King Louis IX, planned for the new nave and its large crossing to have a much clearer focus as the French ‘royal necropolis.’ That plan was fulfilled in 1264 when the bones of 16 former kings and queens were relocated to new tombs arranged around the crossing, 8 Carolingian monarchs to the south and 8 Capetians to the north. These tombs, featuring lifelike
carved recumbent effigies or *gisants* lying on raised bases, were badly damaged during the French revolution though all but two were subsequently restored by Viollet le Duc in 1860.

The dark Romanesque nave, with its thick walls and small window-openings, was rebuilt using the very latest techniques, in what is now known as Rayonnant Gothic. This new style, which differed from Suger’s earlier works as much as they had differed from their Romanesque precursors, reduced the wall area to an absolute minimum. Solid masonry was replaced with vast window openings filled with brilliant stained glass (all destroyed in the Revolution) and interrupted only by the most slender of bar tracery — not only in the clerestory but also, perhaps for the first time, in the normally dark triforium level. The upper façades of the two much-enlarged transepts were filled with two spectacular 12-meter-wide rose windows. As with Suger’s earlier rebuilding work, the identity of the architect or master mason remains unknown. Although often attributed to Pierre de Montreuil, the only evidence for his involvement is an unrelated document of 1247 which refers to him as ‘a mason from Saint-Denis.’

**The Valois Mortuary Chapel**

A plan of circa 1700 by Félibien shows a large mortuary chapel in the form of a domed colonnaded “rotunda,” adjoining the north transept of the basilica and containing the tomb of the Valois. [The chapel no longer exists.]

**Disassembly of the north tower**

In 1837, lightning struck the spire of the north tower (86 meters high, built in 1219) and damaged it severely. Three years later, the north tower was once again damaged by a storm. The spire was then disassembled by the architect, as well as the upper part of the tower, and the original stones were stored at the rear of the basilica. In 1992, a “committee for the reconstruction of the tower and the north spire” was constituted by the mayor of Saint-Denis. On March 1, 2013, the mayor announced the future reconstruction of the north tower. The work is expected to begin in 2015.

**Burial site**

The abbey is where the kings of France and their families were buried for centuries and is therefore often referred to as the “royal necropolis of France.” All but three of the monarchs of France from the tenth century until 1789 have their remains here. Some monarchs, like Clovis I (465–511), were not originally buried at this site. The remains of Clovis I were exhumed from the despoiled Abbey of St. Genevieve which he founded.

The abbey church contains some fine examples of cadaver tombs. The effigies of many of the kings and queens are on their tombs, but during the French Revolution, these tombs were opened by workers under orders from revolutionary officials. The bodies were removed and dumped in two large pits nearby and dissolved with lime. Archaeologist Alexandre Lenoir saved many of the monuments from the same revolutionary officials by claiming them as artworks for his Museum of French Monuments.

The bodies of the beheaded King Louis XVI, his wife Marie Antoinette of Austria, and his sister Madame Éléabeth were not initially buried in Saint-Denis, but rather in the churchyard of the Madeleine, where they were covered with quicklime. The body of the Dauphin, who died of an illness, was buried in an unmarked grave in a Parisian churchyard near the Temple.
Napoleon Bonaparte reopened the church in 1806, but allowed the royal remains to be left in their mass graves. During Napoleon’s exile in Elba, the restored Bourbons ordered a search for the corpses of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The few remains, a few bones that were presumably the king’s and a clump of greyish matter containing a lady’s garter, were found on January 21, 1815, brought to Saint-Denis and buried in the crypt. In 1817 the mass graves containing all the other remains were opened, but it was impossible to distinguish any individual in the collection of bones. The remains were therefore placed in an ossuary in the crypt of the church, behind two marble plates bearing the names of the hundreds of members of successive royal dynasties interred in the church.

King Louis XVIII, upon his death in 1824, was buried in the center of the crypt, near the graves of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The coffins of royal family members who died between 1815 and 1830 were also placed in the vaults. Under the direction of architect Viollet-le-Duc, famous for his work on Notre-Dame de Paris, church monuments that had been taken to the Museum of French Monuments were returned to the church. The corpse of King Louis VII, who had been buried at the Abbey at Saint-Pont and whose tomb had not been touched by the revolutionaries, was brought to Saint-Denis and buried in the crypt. In 2004 the mummified heart of the Dauphin, the boy who would have been Louis XVII, was sealed into the wall of the crypt.

--http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_St_Denis

**SENS CATHEDRAL**

*Cathédrale Saint-Étienne de Sens*

Sens Cathedral was one of the earliest Gothic buildings in the country, and the largest of the early Gothic churches. The choir was begun in 1140. As was typical in cathedral construction work progressed westwards, building the nave, with the west front completed around 1200. The structure was finally completed in the sixteenth century. The architecture of its choir influenced, through the architect William of Sens, that of the choir of Canterbury Cathedral.

**Description**

Sens was a place of considerable importance in the twelfth century, seat of the “Primate of Gaul” and superior to the bishopric of Paris. The cathedral church was therefore built on a large scale according to the latest principles. Sens’ nave is unusually wide, and the church is larger in overall scale than its contemporaries at Saint Denis, Noyon, or Senlis. As is typical with early Gothic architecture, the vaulting is sexpartite, surmounting a modest clerestory, with alternating
piers and columns between bays. Sens may have been the first church to be completely vaulted in this manner. A triforium gallery opens into the roof space between the aisle arcade and the clerestory. The interior elevation resembles that of Le Mans, but with less massive walls. Flying buttresses were originally employed on the outside, but were replaced with new ones in the thirteenth century. Sens did not initially have transepts; these were only completed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in the late Gothic rayonnant style.

-- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

SENLIS CATHEDRAL
Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Senlis

Older portions of the cathedral shaded

Plan
The church, cathedral of the former diocese of Senlis, is an aisled basilica with sexpartite vaults over alternating supports; originally there was no transept. The transepts were added between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. The chevet is a five-segment hemicircle with ambulatory and shallow radiating chapels with a deeply projecting (added) axial chapel. The harmonious western façade has two towers. The cathedral was heavily damaged in 1504; the entire clerestory was subsequently rebuilt.

Elevation
The building has a three-story elevation of arcade, a vaulted gallery, and clerestory. The clerestory was enlarged in the sixteenth century.

History
A Roman city on the site was enclosed inside oval walls. An early Christian presence was associated with the mission and cult of Saint Rieul, whose shrine was outside the Roman wall. Notre-Dame of Senlis replaced St.-Rieul as the principal church, becoming a cathedral toward the end of the tenth century, when the seventh-century church on the site was replaced under bishop Eudes I (986-995). The county of Senlis was attached to the royal domain in 987 under Hugh Capet: this was a principal residence of Capetian kings, who were responsible for the foundation of several ecclesiastical institutions in the city, including the collegiate church of St.-Frambourg and the abbey of St.-Vincent. In the twelfth century Senlis was considered a royal
city of the same rank as Paris, Pontoise, Poissy, and Compiègne. The construction of the Gothic cathedral is associated with the initiative of Bishop Thibaut, elected in 1151 and the support of King Louis VII — Thibaut was a close associate of Abbot Suger of St.-Denis. Construction work was continued by Bishops Amaury (1156-1167), Henri (1169-1185) and Geoffrey (1169-1185), under whom the dedication took place. In 1504, lightning struck and set the edifice afire, engendering the collapse of the roof structure and eaves. Louis XII and Francis I contributed to repair work that amounted to a reconstruction: the vault was raised eight meters and the southern façade was recreated in the Flamboyant Gothic style. The eastern chapels date from the same period. During the French Revolution the large statue-columns of the western portal were decapitated and the furnishings destroyed. During the twentieth century, in celebration of the thousand-year-old Capetian Dynasty, which originated only a few dozen meters away, the cathedral’s interior was restored and the southern tower and its spire were entirely rebuilt.

**Significance**

It is hard to separate the construction of Senlis cathedral from the growing power of the Capetian monarchs, Louis VI and VII. The western portal (1160s-1170s), a depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin, is the earliest surviving monumental expression of the new fervent Gothic spirit based on the Song of Songs. Supple dampfold drapery and animated bodies associated with the ‘Antique Revival’ mode. This portal is located directly outside and facing the royal palace. The galleried (‘royal’) elevation has importance as prototypes for the builders of Notre-Dame of Paris. The western frontispiece refers to Saint-Denis.

-- http://mappinggothic.org/building/1050

**NOYON CATHEDRAL**

*Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Noyon*

Noyon Cathedral was formerly the seat of the Bishopric of Noyon, abolished by the Concordat of 1801 and merged into the Diocese of Beauvais. The cathedral was constructed on the site of a church burned down in 1131 and is a fine example of the transition from Romanesque to Gothic architecture.
Features

In plan it is a Latin cross, with a total length from east to west of about 105 meters; the height of the nave vaulting is 23 meters. The west front has a porch, added in the fourteenth century, and two unfinished towers, their upper portions dating from the thirteenth century; their decorations have been greatly mutilated. The nave consists of eleven bays, including those of the west front, which, in the interior, forms a kind of transept, similar to some narthexes of English churches. The windows of the aisles, the arches of the triforium gallery, and the windows of the clerestory use round-headed arches, but double pointed arches appear in the lower gallery and in the vaults of the nave and aisles. The vaulting was originally sexpartite, but were rebuilt after a fire in 1293 in the prevailing quadripartite style. The transepts have apsidal (semicircular) terminations. Side chapels were added in the north aisle in the fourteenth century and in the south aisle in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. One of the latter (fifteenth) is especially rich in decorations. The flying buttresses of the building were restored in the nineteenth century in the style of the twelfth century. From the northwest corner of the nave runs the western gallery of a fine cloister erected in 1230; and next to the cloister is the chapter house of the same date, with its entrance adorned with statues of the bishops and other sculpture.

The main interior elevation is typical for a transitional Gothic church, with four stories: aisle arcade, gallery arcade, blind triforium, and clerestory. The overall elevation closely resembles that at Tournai Cathedral, with arches springing from columns. This is altered in the transepts, where there is an aisle arcade, blind triforium, and lower and upper clerestories, and the line of the respond extends all the way to the floor.

Noyon’s choir was rebuilt following an 1131 fire. The arrangement of the apse, with its arc of columns, is similar to those of Saint Denis and Senlis Cathedral.

The bishops tombs within the cathedral were destroyed during the French Revolution. World War I also caused considerable damage, requiring twenty years of repair work.

-- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noyon_Cathedral

History

At the beginning of the twelfth century, after the fire which destroyed the Carolingian cathedral in 1131, Bishop Simon de Vermandois began construction of a new building outside the Gallo-Roman walls. Work began with the chevet, ca. 1145-1150. Once this was completed in 1170, work continued with the destruction of the walls located at the site of the present transept and those of the old church, followed by the construction of the transept between 1170 and 1185 and the construction of the episcopal chapel and the treasury, ca 1160-1170. The nave was finally built between 1185 and 1230. Work on adjacent sites came next, including the reconstruction of the episcopal palace, ca. 1150-1160, and the canons’ cloister between 1230 and 1240. New work was then undertaken between the fourteenth century and the Renaissance, with the establishment of chapels along the side of the cathedral and the erection of the timber-framed library in 1506. After nineteenth-century restorations, the destruction caused by the bombing of 1917-1918 resulted in the rebuilding of much of the structure in concrete in 1922.

--translation adapted from http://mappinggothic.org/building/1037
Notre-Dame de Paris, also known as Notre-Dame Cathedral or simply Notre-Dame, is a historic cathedral on the eastern half of the Île de la Cité in the fourth arrondissement of Paris, France. The cathedral is widely considered to be one of the finest examples of French Gothic architecture and among the largest and most well-known church buildings in the world. The naturalism of its sculptures and stained glass are in contrast with earlier Romanesque architecture.

As the cathedral of the Archdiocese of Paris, Notre-Dame is the church that contains the cathedra, or official chair, of the archbishop of Paris. The cathedral treasury is notable for its reliquary which houses some of Catholicism’s most important first-class relics including the purported Crown of Thorns, a fragment of the True Cross, and one of the Holy Nails.

In the 1790s, Notre-Dame suffered desecration during the radical phase of the French Revolution when much of its religious imagery was damaged or destroyed. An extensive restoration supervised by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc began in 1845. A project of further restoration and maintenance began in 1991.

**Architecture**

Notre-Dame de Paris was among the first buildings in the world to use the flying buttress (arched exterior supports). The building was not originally designed to include the flying buttresses around the choir and nave but after the construction began, the thinner walls (popularized in the Gothic style) grew ever higher and stress fractures began to occur as the walls pushed outward. In response, the cathedral’s architects built supports around the outside walls, and later additions continued the pattern.

Many small individually crafted statues were placed around the outside to serve as column supports and water spouts. Among these are the famous gargoyles, designed for water run-off, and chimeras. The statues were originally colored as was most of the exterior. The paint has worn off, but the gray stone was once covered with vivid colors. The cathedral was essentially complete by 1345. The cathedral has a narrow climb of 387 steps at the top of several spiral staircases; along the climb it is possible to view its most famous bell and its gargoyles in close quarters, as well as having a spectacular view across Paris when reaching the top. The design of St. Peter’s Anglican Cathedral in Adelaide, Australia was inspired by Notre-Dame de Paris.
**Contemporary Critical Reception**

John of Jandun recognized the cathedral as one of Paris’s three most important buildings in his 1323 “Treatise on the Praises of Paris:”

That most awesome church of the most glorious Virgin Mary, mother of God, deservedly shines out, like the sun among stars. And although some speakers, by their own free judgment, because [they are] able to see only a few things easily, may say that some other is more beautiful, I believe, however, respectfully, that, if they attend more diligently to the whole and the parts, they will quickly retract this opinion. Where indeed, I ask, would they find two towers of such magnificence and perfection, so high, so large, so strong, clothed round about with such a multiple variety of ornaments? Where, I ask, would they find such a multipartite arrangement of so many lateral vaults, above and below? Where, I ask, would they find such light-filled amenities as the many surrounding chapels? Furthermore, let them tell me in what church I may see such a large cross, of which one arm separates the choir from the nave. Finally, I would willingly learn where [there are] two such circles, situated opposite each other in a straight line, which on account of their appearance are given the name of the fourth vowel [O]; among which smaller orbs and circlets, with wondrous artifice, so that some arranged circularly, others angularly, surround windows ruddy with precious colors and beautiful with the most subtle figures of the pictures. In fact I believe that this church offers the carefully discerning such cause for admiration that its inspection can scarcely sate the soul.

—Jean de Jandun, *Tractatus de laudibus Parisisus*

**Construction History**

In 1160, because the church in Paris had become the “Parisian church of the kings of Europe,” Bishop Maurice de Sully deemed the previous Paris cathedral, Saint-Étienne (St. Stephen’s), which had been founded in the fourth century, unworthy of its lofty role, and had it demolished shortly after he assumed the title of Bishop of Paris. As with most foundation myths, this account needs to be taken with a grain of salt; archaeological excavations in the twentieth century suggested that the Merovingian Cathedral replaced by Sully was itself a massive structure, with a five-aisled nave and a façade some 36 meters across. It seems likely therefore that the faults with the previous structure were exaggerated by the Bishop to help justify the rebuilding in a newer style. According to legend, Sully had a vision of a glorious new cathedral for Paris, and sketched it on the ground outside the original church.

To begin the construction, the bishop had several houses demolished and had a new road built in order to transport materials for the rest of the cathedral. Construction began in 1163 during the reign of Louis VII, and opinion differs as to whether Sully or Pope Alexander III laid the foundation stone of the cathedral. However, both were at the ceremony in question. Bishop de Sully went on to devote most of his life and wealth to the cathedral’s construction. Construction of the choir took from 1163 until around 1177 and the new high altar was consecrated in 1182 (it was normal practice for the eastern end of a new church to be completed first, so that a temporary wall could be erected at the west of the choir, allowing the chapter to use it without interruption while the rest of the building slowly took shape). After Bishop Maurice de Sully’s death in 1196, his successor, Eudes de Sully (no relation) oversaw the completion of the transepts and pressed ahead with the nave, which was nearing completion at the time of his own death in 1208. By this stage, the western façade had also been laid out, though it was not
completed until around the mid-1240s. Over the construction period numerous architects worked on the site, as is evidenced by the differing styles at different heights of the west front and towers. Between 1210 and 1220, the fourth architect oversaw the construction of the level with the rose window and the great halls beneath the towers.

The most significant change in design came in the mid thirteenth century, when the transepts were remodeled in the latest Rayonnant style; in the late 1240s Jean de Chelles added a gabled portal to the north transept, topped off by a spectacular rose window. Shortly afterwards (from 1258) Pierre de Montreuil executed a similar scheme on the southern transept. Both these transept portals were richly embellished with sculpture; the south portal features scenes from the lives of St. Stephen and of various local saints, while the north portal featured the infancy of Christ and the story of Theophilus in the tympanum, with a highly influential statue of the Virgin and Child in the trumeau.

**Timeline of Construction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Maurice de Sully (named Bishop of Paris) orders the original cathedral demolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1163</td>
<td>Cornerstone laid for Notre-Dame de Paris; construction begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1182</td>
<td>Apses and choir completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1196</td>
<td>Bishop Maurice de Sully dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1200</td>
<td>Work begins on western façade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1208</td>
<td>Eudes de Sully dies. Nave vaults nearing completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1225</td>
<td>Façade completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Towers and north rose window completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1245–1260s</td>
<td>Transepts remodelled in the Rayonnant style by Jean de Chelles then Pierre de Montreuil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250–1345</td>
<td>Remaining elements completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alterations, Vandalism, and Restoration**

In 1548, rioting Huguenots damaged features of Notre-Dame, considering them idolatrous. During the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV, the cathedral underwent major alterations as part of an ongoing attempt to modernize cathedrals throughout Europe. A colossal statue of St. Christopher, standing against a pillar near the western entrance and dating from 1413, was destroyed in 1786. Tombs and stained glass windows were destroyed. The north and south rose windows were spared this fate, however.

In 1793, during the French Revolution, the cathedral was rededicated to the Cult of Reason, and then to the Cult of the Supreme Being. During this time, many of the treasures of the cathedral were either destroyed or plundered. The statues of biblical kings of Judah (erroneously thought to be kings of France), located on a ledge on the façade of the cathedral were beheaded. Many of the heads were found during a 1977 excavation nearby and are on display at the Musée de Cluny. For a time, Lady Liberty replaced the Virgin Mary on several altars. The cathedral’s great bells managed to avoid being melted down. The cathedral came to be used as a warehouse for the storage of food.

A controversial restoration program was initiated in 1845, overseen by architects Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Lassus and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. Viollet-le-Duc was responsible for the restorations of several dozen castles, palaces, and cathedrals across France. The restoration lasted twenty five
years and included a taller reconstruction of the flèche (a type of spire) which was destroyed during the French revolution, as well as the addition of the chimeras on the Galerie des Chimères. Viollet-le-Duc always signed his work with a bat, the wing structure of which most resembles the Gothic vault (see Château de Roquetaillade).

The Second World War caused more damage. Several of the stained glass windows on the lower tier were hit by stray bullets. These were remade after the war, but now sport a modern geometrical pattern, not the old scenes of the Bible.

In 1991, a major program of maintenance and restoration was initiated, which was intended to last ten years, but was still in progress as of 2010, the cleaning and restoration of old sculptures being an exceedingly delicate matter. Circa 2014, much of the lighting was upgraded to LED lighting.

**Sculptural program**

As with the rest of the cathedral of Paris, the sculptural program is the product not only of twelfth- and thirteenth-century projects, but also the result of the mid-nineteenth century restoration scheme of Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc. Bearing this in mind, we will trace the sculptural program roughly in chronological order.

The twelfth-century St. Anne portal exemplifies a process that took place with relative frequency -- namely, the installation of an older sculptural program into a later architectural setting. In the case of this portal, twelfth-century sculpture from more than a single portal was placed in a thirteenth-century frame at the south entrance within the scheme of the western frontispiece. The lower lintel, which was carved when the portal was installed in the thirteenth century, depicts scenes from the lives of Joachim and Anna. The tympanum, upper lintel, and jamb figures all date to around 1150, slightly postdating the twelfth-century portals at Chartres. The presence of both king and bishop in the tympanum of this portal have led to a healthy scholarly debate about the identification and significance of these figures, particularly on the face of the cathedral of this important city in this century. For more on this matter, consult references by Cahn, Horste, Gillerman, and Thirion. Williamson has pointed to the St. Anne portal as a stylistic bridge between the late Romanesque of Chartres and St.-Denis and the securely Gothic portals of Senlis, Mantes, and Sens.

The central portal is devoted to the theme of the Last Judgment. Christ sits in the lintel; the division of the souls occupies the upper lintel; and the resurrection of the dead is represented in the lower lintel. A varied host of attendants oversee the central theme from the voussoirs above, including prophets, martyrs, virgins, all of whose knees and heads are tilted toward the central drama of the tympanum and lintels. The twelve apostles appear as column figures, and in the jambs below the allegorical representations of the virtues and vices appear under trilobed arcades. An image of Christ appears in the trumeau, and at his feet the parable of the wise and foolish virgins is retold in stone. Williamson has noted that the presence of the virtues and vices at eye level demarcated an important shift in the relationship of the layman to a sculptural program: “the apostles and the heavenly congregation in the voussoirs were out of reach of the public, but the very human vices of cowardice, anger, and so on were plain for all to see.” The virtues and vices appeared later on the south porch at Chartres and on the jambs of the west front at Amiens. The reliefs of the virtues and vices of the central portal are also related to allegorical reliefs at Sens.
The theme of the south portal is the Coronation of the Virgin. In the tympanum, the Virgin appears already crowned, receiving a blessing from Christ, who is seated beside her, and her Assumption takes up the entirety of the upper lintel. In the lower lintel, the ark of the covenant is given pride of place, with seated prophets and kings flanking it. Saints with potent local significance appear as jamb figures, and in the lower recesses of the embrasures, a calendar and zodiac signs are carved in relief. The Virgin’s status as the theme of this portal is assured by her central presence in the trumeau. The socles and jambs of the north and central portals were likely finished by 1215.

A band of 28 kings serves to unify the three vertical units of the building and divide the western frontispiece vertically. These kings are reproductions from the minds of restorers; however, more than 20 of the original heads of these Old Testament kings -- which had been lobbed off during the French Revolution -- were rediscovered in an excavation in the 1970s. These kings were originally executed in the late 1220s, and the heads that were recovered are now housed in the Musée de Cluny in Paris.

The north transept portal is the result of remodeling campaigns that took place at the cathedral in the middle decades of the thirteenth century. This portal was in all likelihood completed before the portal fronting the south arm of the transept. The north portal was carved around 1245-1250. The Virgin occupies the trumeau, and although they are now missing, three kings once adorned the now-empty niches to the left, and allegorical figurations of Faith, Hope, and Charity were originally nestled in the niches to the right of the trumeau. The panoply of figures in the voussoirs appear in supple drapery emblematic of the Paris region. The scenes depicted in the lower lintel are the Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Massacre of the Innocents, and the Flight into Egypt. The upper lintel is devoted to a Golden Legend account of Theophilus, a Sicilian vicar who made a deal with the devil and later regretted it, appealing to the Virgin for deliverance. The latter complied, assisting him in dissolving his initial bargain and lightening the weight of his soul. This tale is represented across four scenes in the upper lintel — where the Virgin’s powerful intercessory role is visible in stone — and it concludes in the tympanum, with the moralizing presentation of Theophilus’ contract with the devil.

An inscription to the right of the portal on the south arm of the transept provides a secure author and date for this portal. It was designed around 1257 by Jean de Chelles, undoubtedly with additions by Pierre de Montreuil. The tympanum and lintel features narratives from St. Stephen's hagiography. The niche and trumeau figures all date to the nineteenth century, but initially they were key local saints still well known to us today, including St. Denis, St. Germain, Rusticus, Eleutherius, and Marcellus. For a detailed discussion of the style of the transept portals, see Kimpel.

Laon Cathedral is one of the most important examples of the Gothic architecture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, earlier than the cathedrals of Sens and Notre Dame of Paris and ranking with them in importance. It is located in Laon, Picardy, France, and is the seat of the Bishop of Laon. It has been listed among the Monuments Historiques since 1840.

**Previous Cathedrals on the Site**

The current cathedral is built on the site of an earlier edifice commenced under the episcopacy of Gerfrid (774-800). That Carolingian cathedral was consecrated on September 6, 800 in the presence of the emperor himself.

The Carolingian building was replaced under Bishop Élinand (1052–1095). The present new building was inaugurated with the second coronation of the future King Philip I. This cathedral was torched during the Easter Insurrection on April 25, 1112. During the revolt Laon’s unpopular Bishop Waldric (in French Gaudry) was killed, despite taking the precaution of hiding in a barrel in the cellar of the episcopal palace. The cathedral was not destroyed, however, and after a repair program lasting two years it was rededicated in 1114 under Bishop Barthélemy de Jur.

**History**

The present Laon Cathedral dates from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, an early example of the Gothic style that originated in Northern France. The former cathedral was burned out and damaged during the communal insurrection in 1112, then occasioned by the revocation of the commune’s charter. The present reconstruction began with a choir in about 1160 and was finished as far as the east side of the transept by 1174. In a second campaign, which started about 1180, the nave was built, and completed after 1205. Then the choir was replaced by the greatly lengthened present choir in 1215.

The building is cruciform, and the choir terminates in a straight wall instead of in an apse. The articulation of the interior is remarkably regular. There is a four-story elevation throughout.
Sexpartite vaulting covers the main vessel, but the designers choose not to reflect an alternation in the supports which except for the eastern bays of the nave are made up of cylindrical columns. Of the seven planned towers flanking the façades, only five are complete to the height of the base of the spires, two at the west front, with life-size figures of oxen beneath the arcades of their upper portion, two more, one at each end of the transept, and a square central crossing tower that forms a lantern illuminating the crossing.

The west front, then with three porches, the center one surmounted by a fine rose window of 1210, ranks next to that of Notre Dame de Paris in the purity of its Gothic style. Because of the use of white stone in the interior, however, the luminosity is remarkably greater than at Notre-Dame. The cathedral has stained glass of the thirteenth century and a chancel screen of the eighteenth century. Although the cathedral suffered some damage during the French Revolution and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, it escaped both World Wars unharmed.

The famous medieval artist Villard de Honnecourt made detailed drawings of one of the towers of Laon, ca. 1230.

-- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laon_Cathedral
-- http://mappinggothic.org/building/1024

**CHARTRES CATHEDRAL**

Basilique Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres

Chartres Cathedral, also known as Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Chartres, is located in Chartres, France, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) southwest of Paris. It is considered one of the finest examples of French Gothic architecture and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The current cathedral, mostly constructed between 1194 and 1250, is the last of at least five which have occupied the site since the town became a bishopric in the fourth century.

The cathedral is in an exceptional state of preservation. The majority of the original stained glass windows survive intact, while the architecture has seen only minor changes since the early thirteenth century. The building’s exterior is dominated by heavy flying buttresses which allowed the architects to increase the window size significantly, while the west end is dominated by two contrasting spires — a 105-meter (349 feet) plain pyramid completed around 1160 and a 113-meter (377 feet) early sixteenth-century Flamboyant spire on top of an older tower. Equally
notable are the three great façades, each adorned with hundreds of sculpted figures illustrating key theological themes and narratives.

Since at least the twelfth century the cathedral has been an important destination for travelers — and remains so to this day, attracting large numbers of Christian pilgrims, many of whom come to venerate its famous relic, the *Sancta Camisa*, said to be the tunic worn by the Virgin Mary at Christ’s birth, as well as large numbers of secular tourists who come to admire the cathedral’s architecture and historical merit.

**Social and economic context**

As with any medieval bishopric, Chartres Cathedral was the most important building in the town — the center of its economy, its most famous landmark and the focal point of many activities that in modern towns are provided for by specialized civic buildings. In the Middle Ages, the cathedral functioned as a kind of marketplace, with different commercial activities centered on the different portals, particularly during the regular fairs. Textiles were sold around the north transept, while meat, vegetable and fuel sellers congregated around the south porch. Money-changers (an essential service at a time when each town or region had its own currency) had their benches, or *bancues*, near the west portals and also in the nave itself. Wine sellers plied their trade in the nave, although occasional thirteenth-century ordinances survive which record their being temporarily banished to the crypt to minimize disturbances. Workers of various professions gathered in particular locations around the cathedral awaiting offers of work.

Although the town of Chartres was under the judicial and tax authority of the Counts of Blois, the area immediately surrounding the cathedral, known as the *cloître*, was in effect a free-trade zone governed by the church authorities, who were entitled to the taxes from all commercial activity taking place there. As well as greatly increasing the cathedral’s income, throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this led to regular disputes, often violent, between the bishops, the chapter and the civic authorities — particularly when serfs belonging to the counts transferred their trade (and taxes) to the cathedral. In 1258, after a series of bloody riots instigated by the count’s officials, the chapter finally gained permission from the King to seal off the area of the *cloître* and lock the gates each night.

**Pilgrimages and the legend of the Sancta Camisa**

Even before the Gothic cathedral was built, Chartres was a place of pilgrimage, albeit on a much smaller scale. During the Merovingian and early Carolingian eras, the main focus of devotion for pilgrims was a well (now located in the north side of Fulbert’s crypt), known as the *Puits des Saints-Forts*, or the ‘Well of the Strong Saints’, into which it was believed the bodies of various local Early-Christian martyrs (including saints Piat, Cheron, Modesta and Potentianus) had been tossed. The widespread belief that the cathedral was also the site of a pre-Christian druidical sect who worshipped a ‘Virgin who will give birth’ is purely a late-medieval invention.

In ca. 876 the cathedral acquired the *Sancta Camisa*, believed to be the tunic worn by the Blessed Virgin Mary at the time of Christ’s birth. According to legend, the relic was given to the cathedral by Charlemagne who received it as a gift from Emperor Constantine VI during a crusade to Jerusalem; however this legend was pure fiction (Charlemagne never went to the Holy Land) — probably invented in the eleventh century to authenticate some relics at the Abbey of St. Denis. In fact, the relic was a gift to the cathedral from Charles the Bald and there is no evidence for its being an important object of pilgrimage prior to the twelfth century. By the end
of the twelfth century however, the church had become one of the most important popular pilgrimage destinations in Europe. There were four great fairs which coincided with the main feast days of the Virgin: the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Assumption and the Nativity. The fairs were held in the area administered by the cathedral and were attended by many of the pilgrims in town to see the cloak of the Virgin.

Specific pilgrimages were also held in response to outbreaks of disease. When ergotism (more popularly known in the Middle Ages as “St. Anthony’s fire”) afflicted many victims, the crypt of the original church became a hospital to care for the sick.

Today Chartres continues to attract large numbers of pilgrims, many of whom come to walk slowly around the labyrinth, their heads bowed in prayer — an entirely modern devotional practice but one which the Cathedral authorities accommodate by removing the chairs from the nave once a month.

**Earlier buildings and the west façade**

There have been at least five cathedrals on this site, each replacing an earlier building damaged by war or fire. Nothing survives of the earliest church, which was destroyed during an attack on the city by the Danes in 858. Of the Carolingian church that replaced it, all that remains is a semicircular chamber located directly below the center of the present apse. This chamber, known as the Lubinus Crypt (named after the mid-sixth-century Bishop of Chartres), is lower than the rest of the crypt and may have been the shrine of a local saint, prior to the church’s rededication to the Virgin. Another fire in 962 is mentioned in the annals, though nothing is known about the subsequent rebuilding. A more serious conflagration occurred in 1020, after which Bishop Fulbert (bishop from 1006 to 1028) began the construction of an entirely new building. Most of the present crypt, which is the largest in France, dates from that period. The rebuilding proceeded in phases over the next hundred years or so, culminating in 1145 in a display of public enthusiasm dubbed the “Cult of the Carts” — one of several such incidents recorded during the period. It was claimed that during this religious outburst, a crowd of more than a thousand penitents dragged carts filled with building supplies and provisions including stones, wood, grain, etc., to the site.

In 1134, another fire damaged the town, and perhaps part of the cathedral. The north tower was started immediately afterwards – the south tower some time later. From the beginning, it was intended that these towers flank a central porch of some sort and a narthex. When the north tower rose to the level of the second storey, the south was begun – the evidence lies in the profiles and in the masons marks on the two levels of the two towers. Between them on the first level, a chapel was constructed to Saint Michael. Traces of the vaults and the shafts which supported them are still visible in the western two bays. This chapel was probably vaulted, and those vaults saved the western glass. The stained glass in the three lancets over the portals date from some time between 1145 and 1155, while the south spire, some 103 meters high, was also completed by 1155 or later.

Work was begun on the Royal Portal with the south lintel around 1136 and with all its sculpture installed up to 1141. Opinions are uncertain as the sizes and styles of the figures vary and some elements, such as the lintel over the right-hand portal, have clearly been cut down to fit the available spaces. The sculpture was originally designed for these portals, but the layouts were changed by successive masters; see careful lithic analysis by John James. Either way, most of the
carving follows the exceptionally high standard typical of this period and exercised a strong influence on the subsequent development of gothic portal design.

Some of the masters have been identified by John James, and drafts of these studies have been published on the web site of the International Center of Medieval Art, New York.

**Construction of the present cathedral**

On June 10, 1194, another fire caused extensive damage to Fulbert’s cathedral. The true extent of the damage is unknown, though the fact that the lead came holding the west windows together survived the conflagration intact suggests contemporary accounts of the terrible devastation may have been exaggerated. Either way, the opportunity was taken to begin a complete rebuilding of the choir and nave in the latest style. The undamaged western towers and façade were incorporated into the new works, as was the earlier crypt, effectively limiting the designers of the new building to the same general plan as its predecessor. In fact the present building is only marginally longer than Fulbert’s cathedral.

One of the unusual features of Chartres cathedral is the speed with which it was built — a factor which helped contribute to the consistency of its design. Even though there were innumerable changes to the details, the plan remains remarkably consistent. The major change occurred six years after work began when the seven deep chapels around the choir opening off a single ambulatory were turned into shallow recesses opening off a double-aisled ambulatory.

Australian architectural historian John James, who made a detailed study of the cathedral, has estimated that there were about 300 men working on the site at any one time, although it has to be acknowledged that current knowledge of working practices at this time is somewhat limited. Normally medieval churches were built from east to west so that the choir could be completed first and put into use (with a temporary wall sealing off the west end) while the crossing and nave were completed. Canon Delaporte argued that building work started at the crossing and proceeded outwards from there, but the evidence in the stonework itself is unequivocal, especially within the level of the triforium: the nave was at all times more advanced than ambulatory bays of the choir, and this has been confirmed by dendro-chronology.

The history of the cathedral has been plagued by more theories than any other, a singular problem for those attempting to discover the truth. For example Louis Grodecki argued that the lateral doors of the transept portals were cut through the walls at a later date, and van der Meulen that they had wanted to rebuild the western portals (then only 50 years old). None of these theories refer back to the actual stonework, and it is only when one has done so, as John James did exhaustively in 1969, that one realizes that the construction process was in fact simple and logical.

It is important to remember that the builders were not working on a clean site but would have had to clear back the rubble and surviving parts of the old church as they built the new. Nevertheless, work progressed rapidly. The south porch with most of its sculpture was installed by 1210, and by 1215 the north porch had been completed and the western rose installed. The nave high vaults were erected in the 1220s, the canons moved into their new stalls in 1221 under a temporary roof at the level of the clerestory, and the transept roses were erected over the subsequent two decades. The high vaults over the choir were not built until the last years of the 1250s, as was rediscovered in the first decade of the twenty-first century.
Each arm of the transept was originally meant to support two towers, two more were to flank the choir, and there was to have been a central lantern over the crossing – nine towers in all. Plans for a crossing tower were abandoned in 1221 and the crossing was vaulted over. Work on the remaining six towers continued at a slower pace for some decades, until it was decided to leave them without spires (as at Laon Cathedral and elsewhere). The cathedral was consecrated on October 24, 1260, in the presence of King Louis IX of France, whose coat of arms was painted over the apsidal boss.

Compared with other medieval churches, relatively few changes have been made to the cathedral since its consecration. In 1323 a substantial two story construction was added at the eastern end of the choir, with a chapel dedicated to Saint Piat in the upper floor accessed by a staircase opening onto the ambulatory (the chapel of St. Piat is normally closed to visitors, although it occasionally houses temporary exhibitions). The chamber below the chapel served the canons as their chapter house.

Shortly after 1417, a small chapel was placed between the buttresses of the south nave for the Count of Vendôme. At the same time the small organ that had been built in the nave aisle was moved up into the triforium where it remains, though some time in the sixteenth century it was replaced with a larger one on a raised platform at the western end of the building. To this end, some of the interior shafts in the western bay were removed and plans made to rebuild the organ there. In the event, this plan was abandoned, the glass in the western lancets was retained and the old organ was replaced with the present one.

In 1506, lightning destroyed the north spire, which was rebuilt in the ‘Flamboyant’ style by local mason Jehan de Beauce (who also worked on the abbey church in Vendôme). It is 113 meters high and took seven years to construct. After its completion Jehan continued working on the cathedral, and began the monumental screen around the choir stalls, which was not completed until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In 1757, a number of changes were made to the interior to increase the visibility of the Mass, in accordance with changing religious customs. The jubé (choir screen) that separated the liturgical choir from the nave was torn down and the present stalls built (some of the magnificent sculpture from this screen was later found buried underneath the paving and preserved, though it is not on public display). At the same time, some of the stained glass in the clerestory was removed and replaced with grisaille windows, greatly increasing the illumination of the High Altar.

In 1836, the old lead-covered roof, with its complex structure of timber supports (known as ‘the forest’) was destroyed by fire. It was replaced with a copper-clad roof supported by a network of cast iron ribs, known as the Charpente de fer. At the time, the framework over the crossing had the largest span of any iron framed construction in Europe.

**French Revolution**

The cathedral was damaged in the French Revolution when a mob began to destroy the sculpture on the north porch. This is one of the few occasions on which the anti-religious fervor was stopped by the townfolk. The Revolutionary Committee decided to destroy the cathedral via explosives, and asked a local architect to organize it. He saved the building by pointing out that the vast amount of rubble from the demolished building would so clog the streets it would take years to clear away. However, when metal was needed for the army the brass plaque in the center
of the labyrinth was removed and melted down – our only record of what was on the plaque was Felibien’s description.

The Cathedral of Chartres was therefore neither destroyed nor looted during the French Revolution and the numerous restorations have not diminished its reputation as a triumph of Gothic art. The cathedral has been fortunate in being spared the damage suffered by so many during the Wars of Religion and the Revolution, though the lead roof was removed to make bullets and the Directorate threatened to destroy the building as its upkeep, without a roof, had become too onerous.

**World War II**

All the glass from the cathedral was removed in 1939 just before the Germans invaded France, and it was cleaned after the War and re-leded before replacing. While the city suffered heavy damage by bombing in the course of World War II, the cathedral was spared by an American Army officer who challenged the order to destroy it.

Colonel Welborn Barton Griffith, Jr., questioned the strategy of destroying the cathedral and volunteered to go behind enemy lines to find out whether the German Army was occupying the cathedral and using it as an observation post. With a single enlisted soldier to assist, Griffith proceeded to the cathedral and confirmed that the Germans were not using it. After he returned from his reconnaissance, he reported that the cathedral was clear of enemy troops. The order to destroy the cathedral was withdrawn, and the Allies later liberated the area. Griffith was killed in action on August 16, 1944, in the town of Leves, near Chartres.

**Current history**

In the last decade the fabric has seen an almost continuous program of cleaning and restoration. In recent years a major project has been underway to clean all the stone vaults of the choir and nave and repaint them in emulation of the thirteenth-century polychromy.

**Description**

**Statistics**

- Length: 130 meters (430 feet)
- Width: 32 meters (105 feet) / 46 meters (151 feet)
- Nave: height 37 meters (121 feet); width 16.4 meters (54 feet)
- Ground area: 10,875 square meters (117,060 square feet)
- Height of south-west tower: 105 meters (344 feet)
- Height of north-west tower: 113 meters (371 feet)
- 176 stained-glass windows
- Choir enclosure: 200 statues in 41 scenes

**Plan and elevation**

The plan is cruciform. A two bay narthex at the western end opens into a seven bay nave leading to the crossing, from which wide transepts extend three bays each to north and south. East of the crossing are four rectangular bays terminating in a semicircular apse. The nave and transepts are flanked by single aisles, broadening to a double-aisled ambulatory around the choir and apse. From the ambulatory radiate three deep semi-circular chapels (overlying the deep chapels of
Fulbert’s eleventh-century crypt) and three much shallower ones. Of the latter, one was effectively lost in the 1320s when the Chapel of St. Piat was built.

The elevation of the nave is three-storied, with arcade, triforium, and clerestory levels. By eschewing the gallery level that featured in many early Gothic cathedrals (normally between arcade and triforium), the designers were able to make the richly glazed arcade and clerestory levels larger and almost equal in height, with just a narrow dark triforium in between. Although not the first example of this three-part elevation, Chartres was perhaps the first of the great churches to make a success of it and to use the same design consistently throughout. The result was a far greater area of window openings. These windows were entirely glazed with densely colored glass, which resulted in a relatively dark interior — but one which accentuated the richness of the glass and the colored light that filtered through them.

Increasing the size of the windows meant reducing the wall area considerably, something which was made possible only by the extensive use of flying buttresses on the outside. These buttresses supported the considerable lateral thrusts resulting from the 34 meters high stone vaults, higher and wider than any attempted before in France. These vaults were quadripartite, each bay split into four webs by two diagonally crossing ribs, unlike the sexpartite vaults adopted in many earlier Gothic cathedrals such as at Laon.

Another architectural breakthrough at Chartres was a resolution to the problem of how to arrange attached columns or shafts around a pier in a way that worked aesthetically — but which also satisfied the desire for structural logic that characterized French high gothic. The nave at Chartres features alternating round and octagonal solid-cored piers, each of which has four attached half-columns at the cardinal points, two of these (on the east-west axis) support the arches of the arcade, one acts as the springing for the aisle vault and one supports the cluster of shafts that rise through the triforium and clerestory to support the high-vault ribs. This pier design, known as pilier cantonné was to prove highly influential and subsequently featured in a number of other high gothic churches.

Although the sculpture on the portals at Chartres is generally of a high standard, the various carved elements inside, such as the capitals and string courses, are relatively poorly finished (when compared for example with those at Reims or Soissons) – the reason is simply that the portals were carved from the finest Parisian limestone, or ‘calcaire,’ while the internal capitals were carved from the local Berchere stone that is hard to work and can be brittle.

**Windows**

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Chartres Cathedral is the extent to which architectural structure has been adapted to meet the needs of stained glass. The use of a three-part elevation with external buttressing allowed for far larger windows than earlier designs, particularly at the clerestory level. Most cathedrals of the period had a mixture of windows containing plain or grisaille glass and windows containing dense stained glass panels, with the result that the brightness of the former tended to diminish the impact and legibility of the latter. At Chartres, nearly all of the 176 windows were filled with equally dense stained glass, creating a relatively dark but richly colored interior in which the light filtering through the myriad narrative and symbolic windows was the main source of illumination.
Twelfth-century windows

The majority of the windows now visible at Chartres were made and installed between 1205 and 1240; however, four lancets preserve panels of Romanesque glass from the twelfth century which survived the fire of 1195. Three of these are located beneath the rose in the west façade; the Passion window to the south, the Infancy of Christ in the center and a tree of Jesse to the north. All three of these windows were originally made around 1145 but were restored in the early thirteenth century and again in the nineteenth. The other twelfth-century window, perhaps the most famous at Chartres is the so-called Belle Verrière, found in the first bay of the choir after the south transept. This window is actually a composite; the upper part, showing the Virgin and child surrounded by adoring angels, dates from around 1180 and was probably positioned at the center of the apse in the earlier building. The Virgin is depicted wearing a blue robe and sitting in a frontal pose on a throne, with the Christ Child seated on her lap raising his hand in blessing. This composition, known as the Sedes sapientia (‘Throne of Wisdom’), which also appears on the Portail Royale, is based on the famous cult figure kept in the crypt. The lower part or the window, showing scenes from the Infancy of Christ dates from the main glazing campaign around 1225.

Lower windows

Each bay of the aisles and the choir ambulatory contains one large lancet window, most of them roughly 8.1 meters high by 2.2 meters wide. The subjects depicted in these windows, made between 1205 and 1235, include stories from the Old and New Testament and the lives of the saints, as well as typological cycles and symbolic images such as the signs of the zodiac and labors of the months. Most windows are made up of around 25–30 individual panels showing distinct episodes within the narrative — only the Belle Verrière includes a larger image made up of multiple panels.

Several of the windows at Chartres include images of local tradesmen or laborers in the lowest two or three panels, often with details of their equipment and working methods. Traditionally it was claimed that these images represented the guilds of the donors who paid for the windows. In recent years however this view has largely been discounted, not least because each window would have cost around as much as a large mansion house to make — while most of the laborers depicted would have been subsistence workers with little or no disposable income. Furthermore, although they became powerful and wealthy organizations in the later medieval period, none of these trade guilds had actually been founded when the glass was being made in the early thirteenth century. A more likely explanation is that the Cathedral clergy wanted to emphasize the universal reach of the Church, particularly at a time when their relationship with the local community was often a troubled one.

Clerestory windows

Because of their greater distance from the viewer, the windows in the clerestory generally adopt simpler, bolder designs. Most feature the standing figure of a saint or apostle in the upper two-thirds, often with one or two simplified narrative scenes in the lower part, either to help identify the figure or else to remind the viewer of some key event in their life. Whereas the lower windows in the nave arcades and the ambulatory consist of one simple lancet per bay, the clerestory windows are each made up of a pair of lancets with a plate-traceried rose window above. The nave and transept clerestory windows mainly depict saints and Old Testament prophets. Those in the choir depict the kings of France and Castille and members of the local
nobility in the straight bays, while the windows in the apse hemicircle show those Old Testament prophets who foresaw the virgin birth, flanking scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, and Nativity in the axial window.

**Rose windows**

The cathedral has three large rose windows.

The western rose, made ca. 1215 and 12 meters in diameter shows the Last Judgment — a traditional theme for west façades. A central oculus showing Christ as the Judge is surrounded by an inner ring of 12 paired roundels containing angels and the Elders of the Apocalypse and an outer ring of 12 roundels showing the dead emerging from their tombs and the angels blowing trumpets to summon them to judgment.

The north transept rose (10.5 meters diameter, made ca. 1235), like much of the sculpture in the north porch beneath it, is dedicated to the Virgin. The central oculus shows the Virgin and Child and is surrounded by 12 small petal-shaped windows, 4 with doves (the ‘four gifts of the Spirit’), the rest with adoring angels carrying candlesticks. Beyond this is a ring of 12 diamond-shaped openings containing the Old Testament Kings of Judah, another ring of smaller lozenges containing the arms of France and Castille, and finally a ring of semicircles containing Old Testament Prophets holding scrolls. The presence of the arms of the French king (yellow fleurs-de-lis on a blue background) and of his mother, Blanche of Castile (yellow castles on a red background) are taken as a sign of royal patronage for this window. Beneath the rose itself are five tall lancet windows (7.5 meters high) showing, in the center, the Virgin as an infant held by her mother, St. Anne — the same subject as the trumeau in the portal beneath it. Flanking this lancet are four more containing Old Testament figures. Each of these standing figures is shown symbolically triumphing over an enemy depicted in the base of the lancet beneath them — David over Saul, Aaron over Pharaoh, St. Anne over Synagoga, etc.

The south transept rose (10.5 meter diameter, made ca. 1225–1230) is dedicated to Christ, who is shown in the central oculus, right hand raised in benediction, surrounded by adoring angels. Two outer rings of twelve circles each contain the 24 elders of the Apocalypse, crowned and carrying phials and musical instruments. The central lancet beneath the rose shows the Virgin carrying the infant Christ. Either side of this are four lancets showing the four evangelists sitting on the shoulders of four Prophets — a rare literal illustration of the theological principle that the New Testament builds upon the Old Testament. This window was a donation of the Mauclerc family, the Counts of Dreux-Bretagne, who are depicted with their arms in the bases of the lancets.

**Post-thirteenth-century changes to the windows**

On the whole, Chartres’ windows have been remarkably fortunate. The medieval glass largely escaped harm during the Huguenot iconoclasm and the religious wars of the sixteenth century although the west rose sustained damage from artillery fire in 1591. The relative darkness of the interior seems to have been a problem for some. A few windows were replaced with much lighter grisaille glass in the fourteenth century to improve illumination, particularly on the north side and several more were replaced with clear glass in 1753 as part of the reforms to liturgical practice that also led to the removal of the jubé. The installation of the Vendôme Chapel between two buttresses of the nave in the early fifteenth century resulted in the loss of one more lancet window, though it did allow for the insertion of a fine late-gothic window with donor portraits of Louis de Bourbon and his family witnessing the Coronation of the Virgin with assorted saints.
Although estimates vary (depending on how one counts compound or grouped windows) approximately 152 of the original 176 stained glass windows survive — far more than any other medieval cathedral anywhere in the world.

Like most medieval buildings, the windows at Chartres suffered badly from the corrosive effects of atmospheric acids during the Industrial Revolution and subsequently. The majority of windows were cleaned and restored by the famous local workshop Atelier Lorin at the end of the nineteenth century but they continued to deteriorate. During World War II most of the stained glass was removed from the cathedral and stored in the surrounding countryside to protect it from damage. At the close of the war the windows were taken out of storage and reinstalled. Since then an ongoing program of conservation has been underway and isothermal secondary glazing is gradually been installed on the exterior to protect the windows from further damage.

**Portals**

The cathedral has three great façades, each equipped with three portals, opening into the nave from the west and into the transepts from north and south. In each façade the central portal is particularly large and was only used for special ceremonies, while the smaller side portals allowed everyday access for the different communities that used the cathedral.

**West façade: Portail Royal**

One of the few elements to survive from the mid-twelfth-century church, the Portail Royal was integrated into the new cathedral built after the 1194 fire. Opening onto the parvis (the large square in front of the cathedral where markets were held), the two lateral doors would have been the first entry point for most visitors to Chartres, as it remains today. The central door was only opened for the entry of processions on major festivals, of which the most important was the Adventus or installation of a new bishop. The harmonious appearance of the façade results in part from the relative proportions of the central and lateral portals, whose widths are in the ratio 10:7 – one of the common medieval approximations of the square root of 2.

As well as their basic functions of controlling access to the interior, portals were the main locations for sculpted images on the gothic cathedral and it was on the west façade at Chartres that this practice began to develop into a visual *summa* or encyclopedia of theological knowledge. The three portals each focus on a different aspect of Christ’s role; his earthly incarnation on the right, his second coming on the left and his eternal aspect in the center.

Above the right portal, the lintel is carved in two registers with (lower) the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds, and (upper) the Presentation in the Temple. Above this the tympanum shows the Virgin and Child enthroned in the *Sedes sapientiae* pose. Surrounding the tympanum, as a reminder of the glory days of the School of Chartres, the archivolts are carved with some very distinctive personifications of the seven liberal arts as well as the classical authors and philosophers most associated with them.

The left portal is more enigmatic and art historians still argue over the correct identification. The tympanum shows Christ standing on a cloud, apparently supported by two angels. Some see this as a depiction of the Ascension of Christ (in which case the figures on the lower lintel would represent the disciples witnessing the event) while others see it as representing the *Parousia*, or Second Coming of Christ (in which case the lintel figures could be either the prophets who foresaw that event or else the ‘Men of Galilee’ mentioned in Acts 1:9-11). The presence of angels in the upper lintel, descending from a cloud and apparently shouting to those below,
would seem to support the latter interpretation. The archivolts contain the signs of the zodiac and the labors of the months – standard references to the cyclical nature of time which appear in many gothic portals.

The central portal is a more conventional representation of the end of time as described in the Book of Revelation. In the center of the tympanum is Christ within a mandorla, surrounded by the four symbols of the evangelists (the Tetramorph). The lintel shows the twelve apostles while the archivolts show the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse.

Although the upper parts of the three portals are treated separately, two sculptural elements run horizontally across the façade, uniting its different parts. Most obvious are the jamb statues affixed to the columns flanking the doorways — tall, slender standing figures of kings and queens from whom the Portail Royal derived its name. Although in the eighteenth and nineteenth century these figures were mistakenly identified as the Merovingian monarchs of France (thus attracting the opprobrium of Revolutionary iconoclasts) they almost certainly represent the kings and queens of the Old Testament — another standard iconographical feature of gothic portals.

Less obvious than the jamb statues but far more intricately carved is the frieze that stretches all across the façade in the sculpted capitals on top of the jamb columns. Carved into these capitals is a very lengthy narrative depicting the life of the Virgin and the life and Passion of Christ.

**North transept façade**

In northern Europe it is common for the iconography on the north side of a church to focus on Old Testament themes, with stories from the lives of the saints and the Gospels being more prominent on the physically (and hence, spiritually) brighter southern side. Chartres is no exception to this general principle and the north transept portals, with their deep sheltering porches, concentrate on the precursors of Christ, leading up to the moment of His incarnation, with a particular emphasis on the Virgin Mary. The overall iconographical themes are clearly laid-out; the glorification of Mary in the center, the incarnation of her son on the left and Old Testament prefigurations and prophecies on the right. One major exception to this scheme is the presence of large statues of St. Modesta (a local martyr) and St. Potentian on the north west corner of the porch, close to a small doorway where pilgrims visiting the crypt (where their relics were stored) would once have emerged blinking into the light.

**South transept façade**

If the north transept portals are all about the time leading up to Christ’s incarnation and the west façade is about the events of his life and Passion, then the iconography of the south transept portals addresses the time from Christ’s death until his Second Coming. The central portal concentrates on the Last Judgment and the apostles, the left portal on the lives of martyrs and the right on confessor saints (an arrangement also reflected in the windows of the apse).

Just like their northern counterparts, the south transept portals open into deep porches which greatly extend the space available for sculptural embellishment. A large number of subsidiary scenes depict conventional themes like the labors of the months and the signs of the zodiac, personifications of the virtues and vices and also further scenes from the lives of the martyrs (left porch) and confessors (right porch).
Cathedral School

In the Middle Ages the cathedral also functioned as an important cathedral school. In the early eleventh century Bishop Fulbert established Chartres as one of the leading schools in Europe. Although the role of Fulbert himself as a scholar and teacher has been questioned, perhaps his greatest talent was as an administrator, who established the conditions in which the school could flourish, as well as laying the foundations for the rebuilding of the cathedral after the fire of 1020. Great scholars were attracted to the cathedral school, including Thierry of Chartres, William of Conches, and the Englishman John of Salisbury. These men were at the forefront of the intense intellectual rethinking that culminated in what is now known as the twelfth-century renaissance, pioneering the Scholastic philosophy that came to dominate medieval thinking throughout Europe.

By the early twelfth century the status of the School of Chartres was on the wane. It was gradually eclipsed by the newly emerging University of Paris, particularly at the School of the Abbey of St. Victor (the ‘Victorines’). By the middle of the century the importance of Chartres Cathedral had begun to shift away from education and towards pilgrimage, a changing emphasis reflected in the subsequent architectural developments.

-- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral

AMIENS CATHEDAL

Basilique Cathédrale Notre-Dame d’Amiens

The Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Amiens, or simply Amiens Cathedral, is the seat of the Bishop of Amiens. It is situated on a slight ridge overlooking the River Somme in Amiens, the administrative capital of the Picardy region of France, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of Paris. It is the nineteenth largest church in the world.

Medieval cathedral builders were trying to maximize the internal dimensions in order to reach for the heavens and bring in more light. In that regard, the Amiens cathedral is the tallest complete cathedral in France, its stone-vaulted nave reaching an internal height of 42.30 meters (138.8 feet) (surpassed only by the incomplete Beauvais Cathedral). It also has the greatest interior volume of any French cathedral, estimated at 200,000 cubic meters.
(260,000 cubic yards). The cathedral was built between 1220 and ca. 1270 and has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1981. Although it has lost most of its original stained glass, Amiens Cathedral is renowned for the quality and quantity of early thirteenth-century Gothic sculpture in the main west façade and the south transept portal, and a large quantity of polychrome sculpture from later periods inside the building.

**Construction**

The lack of documentation concerning the construction of the Gothic cathedral may be in part the result of fires that destroyed the chapter archives in 1218 and again in 1258—a fire that damaged the cathedral itself. Bishop Evrard de Fouilly initiated work on the cathedral in 1220. Robert de Luzarches was the architect until 1228, and was followed by Thomas de Cormont until 1258. His son, Renaud de Cormont, acted as the architect until 1288. The chronicle of Corbie gives a completion date for the cathedral of 1266. Finishing works continued, however. Its floors are covered with a number of designs, such as the bent cross (to symbolize Jesus’ triumph over death). The labyrinth was installed in 1288. The cathedral contains the alleged head of John the Baptist, a relic brought from Constantinople by Wallon de Sarton as he was returning from the Fourth Crusade.

The construction of the cathedral at this period can be seen as resulting from a coming together of necessity and opportunity. The destruction of earlier buildings and attempts at rebuilding by fire forced the fairly rapid construction of a building that, consequently, has a good deal of artistic unity. The long and relatively peaceful reign of Louis IX of France brought a prosperity to the region, based on thriving agriculture and a booming cloth trade, that made the investment possible. The great cathedrals of Reims and Chartres are roughly contemporary.

**Structural defects**

The original design of the flying buttresses around the choir had them placed too high to counteract the force of the ceiling arch pushing outwards resulting in excessive lateral forces being placed on the vertical columns. The structure was only saved when, centuries later, masons placed a second row of more robust flying buttresses that connected lower down on the outer wall. This fix failed to counteract similar issues with the lower wall which began to develop large cracks around the late Middle Ages. This was solved by another patch that consisted of a wrought iron bar chain being installed around the mezzanine level to resist the forces pushing the stone columns outward. The chain was installed red hot to act as a cinch, tightening as it cooled.

**Interior**

Amiens cathedral contains the largest medieval interior in Western Europe, supported by 126 pillars. Both the nave and the chancel are vast but extremely light, with considerable amounts of stained glass surviving, despite the depredations of war.

The ambulatory surrounding the choir is richly decorated with polychrome sculpture and flanked by numerous chapels. One of the most sumptuous is the Drapers’ chapel. The cloth industry was the most dynamic component of the medieval economy, especially in northern France, and the cloth merchants were keen to display their wealth and civic pride. Another striking chapel is dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, a thirteenth-century dedication that complements the cathedral’s own very full list of martyrs.
The interior contains works of art and decoration from every period since the building of the cathedral. There are notably baroque paintings of the seventeenth century, by artists such as Frans II Francken and Laurent de La Hyre.

**John the Baptist’s Head**

The initial impetus for the building of the cathedral came from the installation of the reputed head of John the Baptist on December 17, 1206. The head was part of the loot of the Fourth Crusade, which had been diverted from campaigning against the Turks to sacking the great Christian city of Constantinople. A sumptuous reliquary was made to house the skull. Although later lost, a nineteenth-century replica still provides a focus for prayer and meditation in the North aisle.

**Renaissance polychrome sculpture**

Some of the most important works of art are sequences of polychrome sculpture, dating mainly from the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. A large sequence in the North transept illustrates Jesus’ Cleansing of the Temple, with imaginative tableaux of the Temple. Both sides of the ambulatory are lined with sequences illustrating the lives of the two saints whose cults brought large numbers of pilgrims to the cathedral: John the Baptist and St. Firmin, the first bishop of Amiens. The artists took care to create a parallelism in the telling of the stories: both saints, decapitated for offending the rich and powerful, suffer neglect and loss, until a later generation discovers their relics and houses them fittingly.

**The pulpit**

The baroque pulpit, constructed of marble and gilded wood, dominates the nave of the cathedral. It is supported by three allegorical female figures, apparently representing Faith, Hope and Charity, the three Theological Virtues.

**Elevation**

The cathedral has a three story elevation: spacious arcade capped by a prominent foliate band, a blind triforium in the nave and glazed in the choir and a tall clerestory. With a height of some forty-two meters the vertical space is divided into two equal parts by the foliage band.

Notre-Dame de Reims is the seat of the Archdiocese of Reims, where the kings of France were crowned. The cathedral replaced an older church, destroyed by fire in 1211, that was built on the site of the basilica where Clovis was baptized by Saint Remi, bishop of Reims, in A.D. 496. That original structure had itself been erected on the site of some Roman baths. A major tourism destination, the cathedral receives about one million visitors annually.

**History**

Excavations have shown that the present building occupies roughly the same site as the original cathedral, founded ca. 400 under the episcopacy of St. Nicaise. That church was rebuilt during the Carolingian period and further extended in the twelfth century.

On May 6, 1210, the cathedral was damaged by fire and reconstruction started shortly after, beginning at the eastern end. Documentary records show the acquisition of land to the west of the site in 1218, suggesting the new cathedral was substantially larger than its predecessors, the lengthening of the nave presumably being an adaptation to afford room for the crowds that attended the coronations. In 1233 a long-running dispute between the cathedral chapter and the townsfolk (regarding issues of taxation and legal jurisdiction) boiled over into open revolt. Several clerics were killed or injured during the resulting violence and the entire cathedral chapter fled the city, leaving it under an interdict (effectively banning all public worship and sacraments). Work on the new cathedral was suspended for three years, only resuming in 1236 after the clergy returned to the city and the interdict was lifted following mediation by the King and the Pope. Construction then continued more slowly. The area from the crossing eastwards was in use by 1241 but the nave was not roofed until 1299 (when the French King lifted the tax on lead used for that purpose). Work on the west façade took place in several phases, which is reflected in the very different styles of some of the sculptures. The upper parts of the façade were completed in the fourteenth century, but apparently following thirteenth century designs, giving Reims an unusual unity of style.

Unusually the names of the cathedral's original architects are known. A labyrinth built into floor of the nave at the time of construction or shortly after (similar to examples at Chartres and Amiens) included the names of four master masons (Jean d'Orbais, Jean-Le-Loup, Gaucher de Reims, and Bernard de Soissons) and the number of years they worked there, though art historians still disagree over who was responsible for which parts of the building. The labyrinth itself was destroyed in 1779 but its details and inscriptions are known from eighteenth century drawings. The clear association here between a labyrinth and master masons adds weight to the argument that such patterns were an allusion to the emerging status of the architect (through their association with the mythical artificer Daedalus, who built the Labyrinth of King Minos). The cathedral also contains further evidence of the rising status of the architect in the tomb of Huges Liberger (d. 1268, architect of the now-destroyed Reims church of St-Nicaise). Not only is he given the honor of an engraved slab; he is shown holding a miniature model of his church (an honor formerly reserved for noble donors) and wearing the academic garb befitting an intellectual.

The towers, 81 meters tall (approx. 267 feet), were originally designed to rise 120 meters (approximately 394 feet). The south tower holds just two great bells; one of them, named “Charlotte” by Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine in 1570, weighs more than 10,000 kilograms (about 11 tons).
During the Hundred Years’ War the cathedral was under siege by the English from 1359 to 1360. After it fell the English held Reims and the Cathedral until 1429 when it was liberated by Joan of Arc which allowed the Dauphin Charles to be crowned king on July 17, 1429.

In 1875 the French National Assembly voted £80,000 for repairs of the façade and balustrades. The façade is the finest portion of the building, and one of the great masterpieces of the Middle Ages.

German shellfire during the opening engagements of the First World War on September 20, 1914, burned, damaged and destroyed important parts of the cathedral. Scaffolding around the north tower caught fire, spreading the blaze to all parts of the carpentry superstructure. The lead of the roofs melted and poured through the stone gargoyles, destroying in turn the bishop’s palace. Images of the cathedral in ruins were used during the war as propaganda images by the French against the Germans and their deliberate destruction of buildings rich in national and cultural heritage. Restoration work began in 1919, under the direction of Henri Deneux, a native of Reims and chief architect of the Monuments Historiques; the cathedral was fully reopened in 1938, thanks in part to financial support from the Rockefellers, but work has been steadily going on since.

**Interior**

The interior of the cathedral is 138.75 meters (about 455 feet) long, 30 meters (approximately 98 feet) wide in the nave, and 38 meters (about 125 feet) high in the center. It comprises a nave with aisles, transepts with aisles, a choir with double aisles, and an apse with ambulatory and radiating chapels. Originally the high altar was in the crossing and the liturgical choir occupied the first three bays of the nave, separated from the nave by the jubé (torn down in 1744), on which the king was enthroned at his coronation. The cathedral has interesting stained glass ranging from the thirteenth to the twentieth century. The rose window over the main portal and the gallery beneath are of rare magnificence.

The cathedral possesses fine tapestries. Of these the most important series is that presented by Robert de Lenoncourt, archbishop under François I (1515-1547), representing the life of the Virgin. They are now to be seen in the former bishop’s palace, the Palace of Tau. The north transept contains a fine organ in a flamboyant Gothic case. The choir clock is ornamented with curious mechanical figures. Marc Chagall designed the stained glass installed in 1974 in the axis of the apse.

The treasury, kept in the Palace of Tau, includes many precious objects, among which is the Sainte Ampoule, or holy flask, the successor of the ancient one that contained the oil with which French kings were anointed, which was broken during the French Revolution, a fragment of which the present Ampoule contains.

Notre-Dame de Reims cathedral, the former Abbey of Saint-Remi, and the Palace of Tau were added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1991.

**Elevation**

The cathedral has a three-storey elevation of an arcade supported by pilier cantonné, a blind triforium, tall clerestory with bar tracery. The superstructure is supported by substantial flying
buttresses that resemble those at Soissons. In the chevet the central colonette is link in the triforium and the clerestory. In the nave that same colonette is thickened to reflect that linkage.

The Palace of Tau (the Archbishop’s Palace)

A large Gallo-Roman villa still occupied the site of the palace in the sixth and seventh centuries, and later became a Carolingian palace. The first documented use of the name dates to 1131, and derives from the plan of the building, which resembles the letter T (tau, in the Greek alphabet). Most of the early building has disappeared: the oldest part remaining is the chapel, from 1207. The building was largely rebuilt in Gothic style between 1498 and 1509, and modified to its present Baroque appearance between 1671 and 1710 by Jules Hardouin-Mansart and Robert de Cotte. It was damaged by a fire on September 19, 1914, and not repaired until after the Second World War.

The Palace was the residence of the Kings of France before their coronation in Notre-Dame de Reims. The King was dressed for the coronation at the palace before proceeding to the cathedral; afterwards, a banquet was held at the palace. The first recorded coronation banquet was held at the palace in 990, and the most recent in 1825.

The palace has housed the Musée de l'Œuvre since 1972, displaying statuary and tapestries from the cathedral, together with reliquaries and other objects associated with the coronation of the French kings.

The Palace of Tau, together with the Cathedral of Notre-Dame and the former Abbey of Saint-Remi, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991. It attracts around 100,000 visitors each year.


BOURGES CATHEDRAL
Cathédrale Saint-Étienne de Bourges
History

The site occupied by the present cathedral of Bourges, in what was once the northeastern corner of the Gallo-Roman walled city, has been the site of the city’s main church at least since Carolingian times and probably since the foundation of the bishopric in the third century. The present cathedral was built as a replacement for a mid-eleventh-century structure, traces of which survive in the crypt. The date when construction began is unknown, although a document of 1195 recording expenditure on rebuilding works suggests that construction was already underway by that date. The fact that the east end protrudes beyond the line of the Gallo-Roman walls and that royal permission to demolish those walls was only granted in 1183 shows that work on the foundations cannot have started before that date. The main phase of construction is therefore roughly contemporaneous with Chartres Cathedral (begun 1194), some 200 kilometers (124 miles) to the northwest. As with most Early- and High-Gothic cathedrals, the identity of the architect or master-mason is unknown. The choir was in use (though not necessarily complete) by 1214 and the nave was finished by 1255. The building was finally consecrated in 1324. Most of the west façade was finished by 1270, though work on the towers proceeded more slowly, partly due to the unfavorable rock strata beneath the site. Structural problems with the south tower led to the building of the adjoining buttress tower in the mid-fifteenth century. The north tower was completed around the end of the fifteenth century but collapsed in 1506, destroying the northern portion of the façade in the process. The north tower and its portal were subsequently rebuilt in a more contemporary style.

Important figures in the life of the cathedral during the thirteenth century include William of Donjeon who was Archbishop from 1200 until his death in 1209 (and was canonized by the Pope in 1218 as St. William of Bourges) as well as his grandson, Philip Berruyer (archbishop 1236-61), who oversaw the later stages of construction.

Following the destruction of much of the Ducal Palace and its chapel during the revolution, the tomb effigy of Duke Jean de Berry was relocated to the cathedral’s crypt, along with some stained glass panels showing standing prophets, which were designed for the chapel by André Beauneveu.

Generally the cathedral suffered far less than some of its peers during the French Wars of Religion and in the Revolution. Its location meant it was also relatively safe from the ravages of both World Wars.

The cathedral was added to the list of the World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 1992.

Dimensions and Structure

The cathedral’s nave is 15 meters wide by 37 meters high; its arcade is 20 meters high; the inner aisle is 21.3 meters and the outer aisle is 9.3 meters high. The use of flying buttresses was employed to help the structure of the building. However, since this was a fairly new technique, one can easily see the walls were still made quite thick to take the force. Sexpartite vaults are used to span the nave.

Plan and Elevation

Bourges Cathedral is notable for the simplicity of its plan, which did without transepts but which adopted the double-aisled design found in earlier high-status churches such as the Early-Christian basilica of St. Peter’s in Rome or in Notre Dame de Paris. The double aisles continue
without interruption beyond the position of the screen (now largely destroyed though a few
fragments are preserved in the crypt) to form a double ambulatory around the choir. The inner
aisle has a higher vault than the outer one, while both the central nave and the inner aisle have
similar three-part elevations with arcade, triforium, and clerestory windows; a design which
admits considerably more light than one finds in more conventional double-aisled buildings like
Notre-Dame. This design, with its distinctive triangular cross section, was subsequently copied at
Toledo Cathedral and in the choir at Le Mans. The flying buttresses surrounding the cathedral
are relatively slender and efficient, particularly compared to the contemporary but much heavier
flyers at Chartres. Their steep angle helps to channel the thrust from the nave vaults and the wind
loading on the roof to the outer buttress piers more effectively.

Stained Glass

Apart from the axial chapel, Bourges Cathedral retains most of its original ambulatory glass,
which dates from about 1215 (around the same time as Chartres Cathedral). The glazing program
includes a famous typological window (similar to examples at Sens and Canterbury), several
hagiographic cycles, the story of the Old Testament patriarch, Joseph and symbolic depictions of
the Apocalypse and Last Judgment. Other windows show the Passion and three of Christ’s
parables; the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and the story of Dives and Lazarus. The French
art historian Louis Grodecki identified three distinct masters or workshops involved in the
glazing, one of whom may also have worked on the windows of Poitiers Cathedral.

--http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourges_Cathedral

Sculptural Program

The western frontispiece of Bourges is articulated by a program of five sculpted portals. These
portals are dedicated, from north to south, as follows: the northernmost portal is dedicated to
William, a local saint; the portal just north of center is dedicated to the Virgin; in central position
is a Last Judgment scheme; south of center is a St. Stephen theme; and a final local saint,
Ursinus, who was a bishop of Bourges in the early Christian era, is celebrated in the southern-
most doorway. The collapse of the north tower in the sixteenth century resulted in the destruction
of the north portals of the western frontispiece, which were replaced later in that century.

Two mid-twelfth-century portals, perhaps originally intended for the western frontispiece, were
incorporated into the walls of the nave after construction of the present edifice began in 1195.
Although the figures on the north nave portal have lost their heads, the front-facing *sedes
sapientiae* has retained its dominance in the rounded tympanum of this entrance. Two angels,
swooping in and seen in profile, can still be deciphered in the upper register, and the three magi
appear to the left of the enthroned Christ. The play of the kings’ drapery, with each one frozen at
a different moment in the process of genuflection — the right-most magus lunging forward, his
garment curled into a graceful “S.” The Annunciation and Visitation appear to the right of the
Christ child, although these are rather damaged. In addition to the delicate figures, rich vegetal
and geometric patterns adorn the lintel, archivolts, and jambs, alternating between mimetic
naturalism and a kind of graphic abstraction, but in all cases exhibiting the marks of the
craftsmen’s chisels and drills.

The portal on the south flank of the nave gives pride of place to the Majestas Domini, which is
framed by an ovular mandorla and the four symbols of the tetramorph. Twelve apostles sit,
engaging each other across the rounded arcade that silhouettes these seated figures. A row of
angels, engrossed in various activities, comprises the inner archivolt, and another row of banderole-toting figures decorates the next archivolt. Floral interlace adorns the next archivolt and the embrasures. Cognates to this portal, with its cluster of jamb figures, can be found at the cathedral of Le Mans and the priory church of St.-Loup-de-Naud.

The portal on the north flank of the building dates between 1155 and 1160. The southern portals of the western frontispiece were likely carved in the early 1240s. The central portal dates between 1245 and 1250.

--http://mappinggothic.org/building/1096

**TROYES CATHEDRAL**
*Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Troyes*

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**Building Description and History**

The site of Troyes Cathedral has been used for religious buildings since at least the fourth century, when an oratory stood on the site. A cathedral was built in the ninth century, but was badly damaged by Norman invasions and was replaced in the tenth century, from about 940, when bishop Milo built a Romanesque cathedral. This building was the location of the Council of Troyes that opened on January 13, 1128/1129, at which the Order of the Knights Templar was confirmed and its rule established. The Romanesque cathedral was destroyed by fire in 1188.

Construction of the present Gothic cathedral was ordered in about 1200 by bishop Garnier de Traînel and begun under bishop Hervé in 1208. Work continued until the seventeenth century. The cathedral only has one tower, St. Peter’s; St. Paul’s tower to the south was never built, and the building is thus still in fact unfinished. A steeple, with a height of 110 meters, once stood over the crossing: it was ruined by a tornado in 1365, and struck by lightning in 1700, after which it was not rebuilt.

The cathedral structure has suffered other natural disasters: part of the choir was destroyed in a hurricane in 1228, and the roof was set alight by lightning in 1389.

The earliest part is the thirteenth century choir. The elaborate façade dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The three main portals are the work of the architect Martin Chambiges (ca.
The cathedral escaped destruction during the French Revolution, but was de-Christianized and turned into a Temple of Abundance for several years.

It is particularly noted for its exceptional stained-glass windows of dates from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, with a surface area of 1,500 square meters and for the magnificent treasure containing among many other important works the reliquary casket or shrine of Saint Bernard de Clairvaux and his closest friend Saint Malachy of Ireland.

The cathedral, containing the nave, two principal aisles, and two further subsidiary aisles, is 114 meters long and 50 meters wide (across the transepts), with a height from the top of the vault of 29.5 meters; the height of the cupola and the tower is 62.34 meters.

**Historical Events**

In May 1420, the Treaty of Troyes was signed in the cathedral between Henry V of England, his ally Philip of Burgundy, and Queen Isabel, wife of the mad Charles VI of France, whereby the throne of France would pass to Henry on the death of Charles rather than to Charles’ son the Dauphin. Henry married Catherine of Valois, the French king’s daughter, shortly afterwards in Troyes, either at the cathedral or the church of St. John.

In July 1429, Joan of Arc escorted the Dauphin to mass in the cathedral en route to proclaiming him Charles VII of France at Reims cathedral, in contravention of the recently signed Treaty of Troyes.

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The Cathedral of Saint Peter of Beauvais is an incomplete cathedral located in Beauvais, in northern France. It is the seat of the Bishop of Beauvais, Noyon, and Senlis. It is, in some respects, the most daring achievement of Gothic architecture, and consists only of a transept (sixteenth-century) and choir, with apse and seven polygonal apsidal chapels (thirteenth century), which are reached by an ambulatory.

The small Romanesque church of the tenth century, known as the *Basse Œuvre*, much restored, still occupies the site destined for the nave.
Construction History

Work was begun in 1225 under count-bishop Miles de Nanteuil, immediately after the third in a series of fires in the old wooden-roofed basilica, which had re-consecrated its altar only three years before the fire; the choir was completed in 1272, in two campaigns, with an interval (1232–1238) owing to a funding crisis provoked by a struggle with Louis IX. The two campaigns are distinguishable by a slight shift in the axis of the work and by what Stephen Murray characterizes as “changes in stylistic handwriting.” Under Bishop Guillaume de Grez, an extra 4.9 meters was added to the height, to make it the highest-vaulted cathedral in Europe. The vaulting in the interior of the choir reaches 48 meters (157.48 feet) in height, far surpassing the concurrently constructed Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Amiens, with its 42-meter (138 foot) nave.

The work was interrupted in 1284 by the collapse of some of the vaulting of the recently completed choir. This collapse is often seen as a disaster that produced a failure of nerve among the French masons working in Gothic style; modern historians have reservations about this deterministic view. Stephen Murray notes that the collapse also “ushers in the age of smaller structures associated with demographic decline, the Hundred Years War, and of the thirteenth century.”

However, large-scale Gothic design continued, and the choir was rebuilt at the same height, albeit with more columns in the chevet and choir, converting the vaulting from quadripartite vaulting to sexpartite vaulting. The transept was built from 1500 to 1548. In 1573, the fall of a too-ambitious 153-meter (502 foot) central tower stopped work again. The tower would have made the church the tallest structure in the world at the time. Afterwards little structural addition was made.

The choir has always been wholeheartedly admired: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc called the Beauvais choir “the Parthenon of French Gothic.”

Its façades, especially that on the south, exhibit all the richness of the late Gothic style. The carved wooden doors of both the north and the south portals are masterpieces, respectively, of Gothic and Renaissance workmanship. The church possesses an elaborate astronomical clock in neo-Gothic taste (1866) and tapestries of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, but its chief artistic treasures are stained glass windows of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and sixteenth centuries, the most beautiful of them from the hand of Renaissance artist Engrand Le Prince, a native of Beauvais. To him also is due some of the stained glass in St-Etienne, the second church of the town, and an interesting example of the transition stage between the Gothic and the Renaissance styles.

During the Middle Ages, on January 14, the Feast of Asses was annually celebrated in Beauvais cathedral, in commemoration of the Flight into Egypt.

Structural Condition

In the race to build the tallest cathedral in the thirteenth century, the builders of Saint-Pierre de Beauvais pushed the technology to the limits. Even though the structure was to be taller, the buttresses were made thinner in order to pass maximum light into the cathedral. In 1284, only twelve years after completion, part of the choir vault collapsed, along with a few flying buttresses. It is now believed that the collapse was caused by resonant vibrations caused by high winds.
There are lateral iron supports between the flying buttresses; it is not known when these external tie rods were installed. The technology would have been available at the time of the initial construction, but the extra support might not have been considered necessary until after the collapse in 1284, or even later. In the 1960s, the tie rods were removed; the thinking was that they were disgraceful and unnecessary. However, the oscillations created by the wind became amplified, and the choir partially disassociated itself from the transept. Subsequently, the tie rods were reinstalled, but this time with rods made of steel. Since steel is less ductile than iron, the structure became more rigid, possibly causing additional fissures.

The original design included a nave that was never built. Thus, the absence of shouldering support that would have been contributed by the nave contributes to the structural weakness of the cathedral.

With the passage of time, other problems surfaced, some requiring more drastic remedies. The north transept now has four large wood and steel lateral trusses at different heights, installed during the 1990s to keep the transept from collapsing. In addition, the main floor of the transept is interrupted by a much larger brace that rises out of the floor at a 45-degree angle. This brace was installed as an emergency measure to give additional support to the pillars that, until now, have held up the tallest vault in the world.

These temporary measures will remain in place until more permanent solutions can be determined. Various studies are under way to determine with more assurance what can be done to preserve the structure. Columbia University is performing a study on a three-dimensional model constructed using laser scans of the building in an attempt to determine the weaknesses in the building and remedies.

**Interior**

Several of the chapels contain medieval stained glass windows made during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. In a chapel close to the northern entrance, there is a medieval clock (fourteenth-fifteenth century), probably the oldest fully preserved and functioning mechanical clock in Europe. In its vicinity, a highly complicated Beauvais Astronomical clock with moving figures was installed in 1866.
History

A church was already present at this location in late fourth century, and eventually a cathedral was established in Rouen as in Poitiers. It was enlarged by St. Ouen in 650, and visited by Charlemagne in 769.

All the buildings perished during a Viking raid in the ninth century. Rollo was baptized here in 915 and buried in 931, Richard I further enlarged the church in 950, St. Romain’s tower was built in 1035. The buildings of Archbishop Robert II were consecrated in 1065. The cathedral was struck by lightning in 1110.

Construction on the current building began in the twelfth century in the Early Gothic style for Saint Romain’s tower, front side porches and part of the nave. The cathedral was burnt in 1200. Other parts of the building were built in the High Gothic style for the main works: nave, transept, choir, and first floor of the lantern tower in the thirteenth century; side chapels, Lady chapel, and side doorways in the fourteenth century. Some windows are still decorated with stained glass of the thirteenth century, famous because of a special cobalt blue color, known as “the blue from Chartres.” The north transept end commenced in 1280.

The cathedral was again struck by lightning in 1284. In 1302, the old Lady chapel was taken down and the new Lady chapel was built in 1360. The spire was blown down in 1353, choir windows were enlarged in 1430, the upper storey of the north-west tower was added in 1477, and the gable of the north transept was built in 1478.

Other parts were built in the Late Gothic style: these include the last storey of Saint Romain’s tower (fifteenth century), the butter tower, the main porch of the front, and the two stories of the lantern tower (sixteenth century). Construction of the south-west tower began in 1485 and was completed in 1507. The Butter Tower was erected in the early sixteenth century. Butter was banned during Lent and those who did not wish to forgo this indulgence would donate six deniers Tournois for this permission.

The completion of the Butter Tower caused disturbances in the façade, and this led to the reconstruction of the central portal and the west front, which began in 1509 and was finished in 1530. The original Gothic spire suffered a fire in 1514; nevertheless the proposal for a stone spire was rejected and a wooden construction covered with gold-plated plumb was begun in 1515. A parapet was added in 1580.

In the late sixteenth century the cathedral was badly damaged during the French Wars of Religion: the Calvinists damaged much of the furniture, as well as tombs, stained-glass windows, and statuary. The cathedral was again struck by lightning in 1625 and 1642, and then damaged by a hurricane in 1683. The wood-work of the choir burnt in 1727, and the bell broke in 1786. In the eighteenth century, the state nationalized the building and sold some of its furniture and statues to raise money, and the chapel fences were melted down to make guns to support the wars of the French Republic.

The Renaissance spire was destroyed by lightning in 1822. The cathedral was named the tallest building (the lantern tower with the cast iron spire of the nineteenth century) in the world (151 meters) from 1876 to 1880. In the twentieth century, during World War II, the cathedral was bombed in April 1944 by the British Royal Air Force. Seven bombs fell on the building, narrowly missing a key pillar of the lantern tower, but damaging much of the south aisle and destroying two rose windows. One of the bombs did not explode. A second bombing by the U.S.
Army Air Force (before the Normandy Landings in June 1944) burned the oldest tower, called the North Tower. During the fire the bells melted, leaving molten remains on the floor. In 1999, during a violent wind storm, a copper-clad wooden turret, which weighed 26 tons, fell into the church and damaged the choir.

--http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rouen_Cathedral