
Andrea Elizabeth Harger
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the European History Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/779
WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN VICTORIAN GREAT BRITAIN

by

Andrea Elizabeth Harger

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Department of History

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan August 1993
WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN VICTORIAN GREAT BRITAIN

Andrea Elizabeth Harger, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1993

This research examines the philosophy of William Morris. how this influenced his founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.) in 1877. and how this Society functioned in Victorian Great Britain. Two case studies, specifying the S.P.A.B.'s involvement with Westminster Abbey and Edinburgh Castle, are highlighted to detail how the Society operated in secular and ecclesiastical situations. The research concludes with an appraisal of the S.P.A.B. in the twentieth century.

This research emphasizes primary source materials, such as letters and annual reports, from the S.P.A.B. archive in London. These materials demonstrate how the S.P.A.B. met their goals of historic preservation in specific cases. Finally, they reflect how Morris and the Society gradually impressed upon the public and architects the ideological problems with the Gothic revival popular in Victorian restoration.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express acknowledgement and appreciation to my advisor and committee chairperson, Dr. Dale Porter, for his assistance, direction, and support throughout my work on William Morris and the S.P.A.B.; and to my other committee members, Dr. John Norman and Dr. Peter Schmitt, for their advice and assistance.

Appreciation is also conveyed to Dr. Ronald Davis, chair, and the Western Michigan University Department of History for the financial support to research my topic in England. Finally, my gratitude to Miss Cecily Greenhill, archivist at the S.P.A.B., for her assistance in locating information at the archive.

Andrea Elizabeth Harger
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Harger, Andrea Elizabeth, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1993
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................. ii

CHAPTER

I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORRIS'S PHILOSOPHY ........... 1

II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS ................. 26

III. THE S.P.A.B. AND WESTMINSTER ABBEY ............. 48

IV. THE S.P.A.B. AND EDINBURGH CASTLE ............... 67

V. THE S.P.A.B. AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ACTIVITIES .. 77

VI. CONCLUSION ................................................................. 86

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 92
CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORRIS'S PHILOSOPHY

William Morris (1834-96) may be best remembered as a tapestry and furniture designer, but he also wrote, designed and printed his own books, and was a dedicated Socialist. He also dedicated years towards preserving historic buildings, founding the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.) in 1877. For the last nineteen years of his life, Morris tirelessly advocated historic site protection. In this paper I describe Morris's work with the S.P.A.B. by detailing the S.P.A.B.'s early years, then highlighting two case studies. This leads me to an assessment on the present work of the Society and the continuation of Morris's goal for preservation, not restoration, of buildings.

The connection between Morris and the S.P.A.B. has received limited scholarly research. The only secondary source which substantially details Morris's involvement with the S.P.A.B. is E.P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. The only secondary source which substantially researches the S.P.A.B. in general is Charles Dellheim's *The Face of the Past: The Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England*. Many of Morris's
biographies fail to discuss the S.P.A.B. at all. Because the secondary sources are so scarce on Morris and the S.P.A.B., most of the research in this paper on the founding of the Society and the two case studies (Westminster Abbey and Edinburgh Castle) are based on primary sources found in the S.P.A.B. archive.\footnote{The S.P.A.B. is an active society, located in England at: 37 Spital Square, London E1 6DY. Tel: 071-377-1644. The archive is also housed at this location. I received gracious assistance in locating material from the current archivist, Miss Cecily Greenhill. The annual meetings are bound but are in very limited quantities and are shelved in the meeting room of the Society. Letters concerning specific sites are housed alphabetically in the lower level of the building. While many documents in London, specifically at the British Museum, were destroyed during World War II, the S.P.A.B. archive thankfully escaped any damage.}

The primary reason that the S.P.A.B. has received such limited attention from Morris scholars is probably due to the wide variety of Morris's interests. These other interests tend to be the focus in studies of Morris. Yet, the association between Morris's art, writing, and political views and his involvement in preservation are all interconnected. This defense of historic buildings merges many of his lifelong interests. Morris's aesthetic sensibility and social consciousness, as revealed in his creative work and his political beliefs, inspired his involvement in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

The motivation for Morris's work with the S.P.A.B. can be better understood by considering his personal philosophy.
of art and society and examining the sources of his inspiration: the work and ideas of John Keats, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin. Each of these individuals showed an ideological attraction to medievalism. Morris idealized Medieval society because he perceived a deep connection between art and society in the Medieval world. He felt that workers of the Middle Ages worked and lived in harmony with each other and their art; that there was "harmonious intelligence among the men." He disliked the industrializing nineteenth century because he saw a widening gap between work, life, and art. Paradoxically he looked to the future optimistically. In 1877, the same year he founded the S.P.A.B., Morris gave a lecture entitled The Lesser Arts. In it he stated many aspects of his personal philosophy that illustrate this paradox:

That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountain-sides: it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town; every man's house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: all the works of man that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful: yet all will be simple and inspiring, not childish nor enervating: for as nothing of beauty and splendour (sic) that man's mind and hand may compass shall be wanting from our public buildings, so in no private dwelling will there be any signs of

waste, pomp, or insolence, and every man will have his share of the best.3

When Morris said this in 1877 he admitted that it was a dream, but one he thought could some day be realized. This dream motivated Morris's writing, artistic endeavors, principles of design, and political activities. It also led to his founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Morris's optimistic look to the future appears unusual considering his idealization of the Middle Ages. This reverence for the Medieval and faith in the future can be traced to Romantic writers like Keats. John Keats had utopian dreams for the future of humanity because he refused to believe that people did not have the spirit to overcome life's adversities. Other Romantics held these beliefs, such as Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, but Keats had the most influence on Morris. Keats's poetry reflected a struggle between the ideals of art, love, and imagination and the harsh reality of industry, personal struggles, disease, and disappointment. A major theme in Keats's poetry was the conflict between the real and ideal.4 Morris saw this theme reflected in the conflict

---

3William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 36. This paragraph is from the lecture titled *The Lesser Arts*, delivered before Trades' Guild of Learning, December 4, 1877.

between the artist and the capitalist society of his day, between beauty and ugliness.5

Morris believed in the durability of imagination, a belief in the strength and creativity of the human spirit. This spirit was essential in his definition of beauty. Beauty was not on the surface and simply pleasant to look at, but the energy and imagination behind the surface. For this reason, his ideas of art differed from popular conceptions of art. The popular conception, based on notions founded by strict artistic guidelines from eighteenth century neoclassicism, regarded only the work found in museums and galleries as art. But Morris described art as anything that brought aesthetic quality to life, including the fine arts, craftsmanship, design, architecture, and humanity's universal pursuit of beauty.6 Morris envisioned these qualities in the medieval worker when he looked at the surviving buildings and artifacts of medieval times.

He worked, not for the profit of a master, but for his own livelihood, which, I repeat, he did not find it difficult to earn, so that he had a good deal of leisure, and being master of his time, his tools, and his material, was not bound


to turn out his work shabbily, but could afford to amuse himself by giving it artistic finish.\textsuperscript{7}

Morris believed that crafts and constructions of workers are more virtuous than elite cultural pursuits due to the honest quality of workmanship. In an 1880 lecture, entitled \textit{The Beauty of Life}, Morris claimed that the intellectual and aesthetic pursuits of the elite depended on the art of the working class.

I believe that art made by the people and for the people as a joy both to the maker and the user would further progress in other matters rather than hinder it, so also I firmly believe that the higher art produced only by great brains and miraculously gifted hands cannot exist without it.\textsuperscript{8}

Morris's ideological base and his perceptions of art had future and past references. He believed his dream of society where art and life merged would be realized in the future. His novel \textit{News from Nowhere}, first published in 1891, illustrated his hopes for a utopian society. In the novel, Morris envisioned a future society of shared work. Children would learn a craft instead of going to school and all people would create art with 'unconscious intelligence'.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{7}William Morris, \textit{Seventh Annual Report: S.P.A.B.} (London: S.P.A.B., 1884), 62. From a lecture Morris gave at the annual Society meeting.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{8}William Morris, \textit{The Beauty of Life} (London: Bentham Press, 1983), 6. From an address delivered at the Town Hall, Birmingham, 1880.}
in this idealized world. The novel concludes, "...if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream."10

Morris gave art high value, linking it with the medieval past he venerated. He dreamt of a society built on craftsmanship and cooperation. He believed that the medieval era exemplified this ideal age, one in which people expressed themselves intuitively through art and work. By defining art as "...the expression by man of his pleasure in labor" and linking this to medieval workers and their crafts Morris demonstrated his respect for historic continuity and tradition.11 This respect intensified as he saw industrial capitalism destroying much of England's pre-industrial culture.

In response to rapid changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution, England went through a medieval revival in the nineteenth century. Borrowing from the past allowed Victorians to create a culture that reminded them of past glories. This gave them a sense of their own history in swiftly changing times. As the ugliness and human degrada-


tion of industrialization advanced, the idealization of Gothic mentality in popular culture increased. Historic scholarship increasingly focused on this period, changing a romanticized ideal to a more realistic perception of medieval life.

By mid-century, conceptions of medieval life which had been identified with the artistic elite of English Romanticism integrated with English popular culture. The Gothic novels of Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters merged popular tastes with literary culture. Likewise, the revival of Gothic architecture reflected the integration of popular and artistic expression.

A principal force in shaping architecture in Victorian England, the Gothic revival displayed beauty of style, extravagant ornamentation, and individual character. Modern examples of these architectural qualities exist in the towers and gables of Victorian style English and American homes. This pulled average workers away from the toils and ugliness of everyday industrial life. During Morris's youth, a trend toward Gothic architecture intersected with Morris's first practical experiences in the field.

While all Romantic poets interested Morris, he especially appreciated Keats. Morris found many qualities in Keats' poetry and letters engrossing. The most obvious being that his work, like most Romantic poets, reflected a
pre-capitalist Gothic sensibility. Keats, like many contemporary intellectuals, shared in the radical ideas for social change which inspired Morris. Keats' poetic craftsmanship, evidenced by the time and effort he spent reworking his creations, echoed Morris's practice. Keats' use of poetic vocabulary traced words to their historical, often medieval, associations, a quality found in Morris's writings. Through his letters and poetry, Keats, like Morris, indicated an awareness of the hostility toward art demonstrated by pre-capitalistic nineteenth century society. Keats reveals this hostility by describing conflicts between the reality of daily life and the ideal, beauty of imagination. Keats knew these conflicts well. He came from a lower middle class family afflicted with disease and money woes; he had to overcome many obstacles to write and publish his poetry. For Keats, physical and mental impediments on his ability to produce poetry made him value it all the more. Morris admired Keats because he had to overcome these obstacles. In *Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats uses the nightingale to symbolize the immortal voice of poetry compared to mankind's mortal voice.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down:

The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown...13

Charles Cowden-Clarke, a former teacher of Keats expanded Morris's knowledge of his famous pupil through public lectures, literary efforts, and criticisms. Keats credited Cowden-Clarke with giving him the motivation and self-confidence to compose poetry. In gratitude, Keats dedicated a poem to Cowden-Clarke. After Keats' death in 1821, Cowden-Clarke continued to extol his former pupil's virtues and exposed Morris to some of Keats' highest qualities. In a letter to Cowden-Clarke, Morris wrote about Keats, saying that for him he had "such boundless admiration, and whom I venture to call one of my masters."14

In the changing social and industrial climate of the Victorian years, Morris's ideology developed with his education at Oxford. Morris matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford in 1852 and continued there until he received his Bachelor of Arts in 1856. While at Oxford, Morris read Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), an examination of life in the twelfth century monastery of St. Edmundsbury which contrasts the morals of industrial capitalism with those of


the cloister. In this book, Carlyle berates the preoccupation for wealth in society while he emphasizes the value of work, claiming that "work alone is noble." and that in all work "there is something of divineness."

Carlyle hated governmental policies favoring capitalistic growth. He feared destruction of the individual by industrialism and he emphasized the inherent value of workmanship. These, along with his attacks on excessive materialism, influenced Morris. Carlyle disliked capitalism for its propensity to confine the human spirit by moving the common social goals towards greater levels of materialism. Carlyle romanticized the power of the individual in biographies of Schiller, Cromwell, and Frederick the Great. Morris echoed Carlyle in his validation of the power of the human spirit.

Another primary influence on Morris's personal philosophy was John Ruskin. Ruskin convinced Morris of the relation of art to socialism. Morris first encountered Ruskin's work when he was nineteen and had just entered Oxford. Ruskin was convinced that faith, morality, education, and acceptable social conditions were prerequisites


16Ibid., Chapter 12, 202.

to the creation of art. This inspired Morris in his writings on social and economic reform. Morris said of him:

...how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learnt to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization.18

To both Ruskin and Morris, art had many dimensions. Not a lofty, primarily intellectual pursuit, art should be available to all individuals. Morris complained that artists of his time "...were out of touch with everyday life. ...they wrap themselves up in dreams of Greece and Italy. ...which only a very few people even pretend to understand or be moved by."19 Ruskin bridged fine arts and craftsmanship in design, joining the natural and domestic surroundings of the workman and his craft to artistic creation associated with the fine arts.20 Ruskin's concept of design limited manufacturing to a cooperative effort toward what is necessary and well made. These ideas connected Morris's concept of socialism to the idea of craft production through a regulated system of cooperative


19Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design, 22.

action, allowing the individual workman to achieve a level of art with his craft. A 1889 article from *Cosmopolitan* interviewing Morris explained this "Industrial Art movement." 21

The terms 'craft' and 'handicraft' have been revived by the leaders in this movement in their desire to reorganize even the phraseology of the modern industrial system, which system, through the great misapplication of machinery, the over-keen competition of trade, and the artificially stimulated markets, has almost wholly destroyed hand labor, the personal element in industrial art and the workman's pride in his work. To measurably restore hand-made for machine-made goods, to accord proper recognition to the designer as distinct from the manufacturer and middleman, to maintain a high standard in all workmanship, to make the laborer happy in his labor and a sharer in the good fortune of his employer - these are, crudely stated, the motives and aims of the busy men, who, [are] gradually grouping themselves about Mr. Morris. 22

This article also mentions Morris's membership in Ruskin's Art for Schools Association. Ruskin established the group in 1883 to circulate photographs and copies of works of art among schools in an attempt to make art available to all individuals. 23

Morris's artistic and socialist beliefs intersected in a series of lectures entitled *Hopes and Fears for Art*, in which he stated, "I do not want art for a few, any more


than education for a few, or freedom for a few". Morris formally became a socialist in 1883 because he believed that the structure of society destroyed art. He claimed that art did not have a chance for survival in the modern capitalist age until the gulf between rich and poor was filled. He also claimed that "under the present state of society there seemed to be a love of dirt and squalor, especially in London and other large towns" and that by these standards art would "fade and die" and then civilization would fade and die also. He realized, like Keats before him, that for poor and middle class people increased workloads, dreary surroundings, and cheap mass industry did not allow people time for pride in the work they did at home or in the work place. They were not able to appreciate the beauty and art which added so much to the quality of life.

Ruskin's socialist beliefs influenced Morris. The strength of these beliefs were evident to Morris through Ruskin's literary works, as well as personal discussions and joint activities between the two men. Ruskin's The

---

24 Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art, 35.


26 Editor. The Times (London). 15 November 1883. 7.
Stones of Venice (3 vols. 1851-53) attracted Morris. In this work, Ruskin emphasized the development of Byzantine and Gothic architecture in Venice and the city's moral and artistic decline. He stressed that architecture was the creation of the workman and the expression of an entire society. For these reasons, Ruskin valued architecture and thought that it should be cared for with maintenance and preservation. Morris agreed with these interpretations and mentions the impression that Ruskin made on him in a letter to Thomas Wardle in 1877.

Nostalgia for the past and hopes for an idealistic and utopian future influenced Morris throughout his adult life. Along with the pull of medievalism, the seeds of socialism were in ideals of medieval craftsmanship and cooperation in production. In a utopian future this type of production merged with technical advances of the nineteenth century without the pollution and noise generated by industry. Morris's personal philosophy developed and affected every-


28Kelvin. The Collected Letters of William Morris, 368, 383. Referred to in a letter from Morris to Thomas Wardle on April 18, 1877 and in a letter from Morris to Ruskin on July 10, 1877.

29Ibid., 368.
thing he did. E. P. Thompson, the noted biographer of Morris, wrote:

...if we are to acknowledge William Morris as one of the greatest of Englishmen - it is not because he was, by fits and starts, a good poet; nor because of his influence upon typography; nor because of his high craftsmanship in the decorative arts; nor because he was a practical socialist pioneer; nor, indeed, because he was all these; but because of a quality which permeates all these activities and which gives to them a certain unity. I have tried to describe this quality by saying that Morris was a great moralist, a great moral teacher. ...he was a man working for practical revolution. It is this which brings the whole man together.30

In a lecture titled Art and Democracy, Morris claimed that commercialism and the factory system repressed people's natural instinct for beauty. Because of this repression and the lack of availability of most art to those without money, he believed that art could only revive under social reform.31 Morris felt that one way of making this possible was through architecture.

As a youth, Morris exhibited a passion for architecture. Old churches at Essex and Canterbury made such an impression on him as an eight year old that he was able to


31Editor, "Mr W. Morris at Oxford," The Times (London), 15 November 1883, 7.
describe them in detail over fifty years later. Biographer John W. MacKail notes Morris’s love for architecture in his *Life of William Morris*:

But for him, then and always, the word architecture bore an immense, and one might almost say a transcendental, meaning connected at a thousand points with all the other specific arts which ministered to it out of a thousand sources, it was itself the tangible expression of all the order, the comeliness, the sweetness, nay, even the mystery and the law, which sustain man’s world and make human life what it is. ...Not only as a craftsman and manufacturer, a worker in dyed stuffs and textiles and glass, a pattern designer and decorator, but throughout the whole range of life, he was from first to last the architect, the master-craftsman.

In his early twenties, Morris considered a career in architecture but disliked the excesses of the Gothic revival in building design and renovation so popular in Victorian England. Morris did not dislike Gothic architecture itself, only the fact that these architectural designs were repeated in excess and out of historical context. In this respect, he agreed with Carlyle and Ruskin, who focused on the workers of the past rather than Romantic idealizations of medieval life. Morris resented the disrespect shown medieval artisans in the popular medieval revival. He saw conceit and foolishness in modern attempts to reproduce material culture unique to the past, since neither mat-

---


erials nor methods could be realistically duplicated by industrial society.

In 1856, Morris worked for George E. Street, a well-known Oxford architect who specialized in Gothic revival.34 Like other nineteenth century architects, Street incorporated heavy ornamentation into building designs and added decoration to already existing buildings.35 Because he disliked the principles of Gothic revival, Morris decided against architecture as a profession and gave up working with Street after a year. This experience taught him valuable lessons in the business of architecture.

In building and furnishing Red House, his home from 1860-1865, Morris found few quality items for interior decoration and blamed industry for mass producing low quality goods. As a result, in 1861 he formed Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co. in order to produce high quality household items, such as furniture and textiles. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, C.J. Faulkner, Arthur Hughes, P.P. Marshall, Edward Burne-Jones, and Philip Webb were also the participants in the firm.36 In an 1861


35Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design, 19.

36Kelvin, The Collected Letters of William Morris, 37. Morris referred to the firm in a letter to Frederick Barlow Guy on April 19, 1861 from 8 Red Lion Square. Members mentioned in notes.
letter to a friend. Morris wrote of the foundation of his company.

...I have started as a decorator which I have long meant to do when I could get men of reputation to join me, and to this end mainly I have built my fine house. You see we are, or consider ourselves to be, the only really artistic firm of the kind, the others being only glass painters in point of fact, (like Clayton & Bell) or else that curious nondescript mixture of clerical tailor and decorator that flourishes in Southampton Street, Strand: whereas we shall do - most things.37

In 1875, Morris took full control of the firm, renaming it Morris and Co.38 The practical necessity of producing for the firm, and his creative ability for interior design, furnishings, and textiles, kept Morris busy. The firm popularized the 'Morris' chair and Morris's elaborate textile and wall covering designs. In the same period of his life, Morris became a successful author of poetry, prose, and novels, as well as a capable artist of stained glass and book design.

Morris designed projects to help modern workers experience some of the pride and satisfaction of medieval artisans. Many of Morris's textile and stained glass designs were similar to the shapes and colors found in medieval


illuminated manuscripts. The important distinction here is that Morris did not mass produce or create with the intention of increasing wealth, but carefully produced each work with love for the craft.

Morris's interest in preserving old buildings was a natural extension of his interest in medieval crafts and architecture. His fight for the preservation of architecture began in 1876, when he noticed the faulty restoration of the Burford parish church. In response, Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877. Until his death in 1896, Morris remained involved with the S.P.A.B. and the fight for quality historic preservation. Before discussing the formation and development of the S.P.A.B. in more detail, some of the accomplishments of Morris's later life should be reviewed to show their relationship to his new interest.

Through everything he did, Morris worked on his literary efforts and publications. In 1890, he founded the Kelmscott Press to publish works of art and literature he thought appropriate to the new society he was trying to realize. Morris wrote of his aims:

I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters... As to the fifteenth century books, I had noticed that they were always beautiful by mere typography, even without the
added ornamentation with which many of them are so lavishly supplied.39

Morris founded the Kelmscott Press for the same reason he did everything: if he wanted high quality craftsmanship he felt he had to do it himself.40

During the last twenty years of his life, Morris's involvement in politics, political writing, and lectures increased. Never subdued in his beliefs and actions, he did not mellow with age. Indeed, many incidents illustrate that his activities became more pronounced. In 1877, Morris declined an offer to become Chair of Poetry at Oxford because he had a "lurking doubt as to whether the Chair of Poetry is more than an ornamental one, and whether the Professor of a wholly incommunicable art is not rather in a false position..."41 That same year, because he had developed a name for himself through his firm, Morris gave his first well received public speech, entitled The Decorative Arts.

During the last thirteen years of his life, Morris became more involved in socialist organizations. He joined


the Democratic Federation in 1883, which was renamed the Social-Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) in 1884. The Federation split into the Socialist League, of which Morris was a member, and a revised version of the S.D.F. in 1885. In 1890, Morris formed the Hammersmith Socialist League at his home just outside of London. In a letter to Reverend William Sharman, Unitarian Minister and member of the Socialist League, Morris illustrated his socialist beliefs in relation to education. The intensity of his socialist thought had moved from a subdued intellectual principle to an imperious doctrine.

...parents are the unfittest persons to educate a child: and I entirely deny their right to do so, because that would interfere with the right of the child, as a member of the community from its birth, to enjoy all the advantages which the community can give it. Mind you, I don't think this change in the family (or in religion) can be done by force. It is a matter of opinion, and must come of the opinion of people free economically. I rely on the stomach for bringing it about.42

Morris's activism continued through the last decade of his life. In September 1885, London police arrested him for assaulting a policeman in a demonstration for free speech. For two years, Morris had been holding open-air lectures in defence of socialism. These lectures involved

42Thompson, The Communism of William Morris, 3-4. Morris wrote this letter in 1886 or 1887. Many of the letters that Morris wrote on socialism, or communism, were not available to scholars before 1964 and this is evident in earlier biographies of Morris.
several persistent speakers, hecklers, a crowd of at least 500, and often, the attention of police. As attention increased, the police found ways to dissuade or break up watching crowds. The first serious attack came in May 1885, when several S.D.F. speakers were arrested. The Socialist League joined forces with the S.D.F. against police and, soon after, gained support among the London Radical Clubs. In a September meeting attended by many radical and socialist groups, delegates moved a resolution protesting police prosecutions. At the close of this meeting the police struck and arrested eight protestors. The next day, on September 21, several spectators, Morris among them, rallied at Thames Police Court to protest the sentencing. As Morris yelled "Shame!" police came forward and arrested him. Two hours later, at Morris's hearing, he was released because he had not assaulted a police officer.

Unfortunately for the police, arresting Morris, who by now had received a great deal of respect for his artistic and literary efforts, helped incite a public outcry against police and their actions. An article describing Morris's arrest appeared in *The Daily News* the next day.

At the close of the proceedings Mr. William Morris, who had the indiscretion to cry "Shame!" was arrested in the court, and charged with assaulting a policeman. His arrest and detention for a couple of hours was an undignified conclusion of a trial about which many differences of opinion will arise. Happily Mr. Saunders prudently took Mr. Morris's word rather than that of
the policeman, but had Mr. Morris been a less distinguished person, it might have gone hard with him, though the policeman's charge was utterly unsubstantiated.43

Instead of dissuading crowds from gathering, publicity surrounding Morris's arrest increased the popularity of local Socialist groups. The Daily News predicted this outcome in the conclusion of a September 22 article by stating that police interference "is already producing its inevitable results in giving the Socialist speakers audiences of thousands instead of hundreds, and making them the heroes of a petty and undignified persecution."44 One week after this incident between 30,000 and 50,000 people attended the lecture.45

The arrest incident at the Thames Police Court indicates that Morris had achieved a certain level of prominence by 1885, primarily due to his more "respectable" activities: literary works and textile designs. The wide range of his involvements, including the S.P.A.B. and Socialist politics, increased his popularity. An 1889 article in Cosmopolitan referred to Morris and his friends as "artist-socialists" and spoke of their beliefs as an

44 Ibid.
influential national movement, "one of the greatest crusades of modern times." In 1890 Morris founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society where he lived in Hammersmith, just outside of London. His involvement was so strong that he held meetings at his home, Kelmscott House.

Morris spent the last few years of his life spreading the word of socialism, but this did not slow down his work with the S.P.A.B.. As I have shown, Morris's socialist philosophy, strongly linked to his belief in 'art for all,' was a strong tenet in his founding the S.P.A.B.. A major goal of the Society was to preserve the architectural integrity of historic buildings, ensuring that they would stand intact to honor workers of the past and for the good of future generations.

---


CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS

Restoration was a popular practice in Victorian England. The excesses of enthusiasts were obvious even before the Victorian age: Byron sarcastically referred to them in Don Juan (1824).

There was a modern Goth, I mean a Gothic Bricklayer of Babel, called an architect, Brought to survey these grey walls which, though so thick, Might have from Time acquired some slight defect; Who, after rummaging the Abbey through thick And thin, produced a plan whereby to erect New buildings of correctest conformation, And throw down old - which he called restoration.48

By the 1830's, restoration had gained great popularity, especially the practice of attaching heavy ornamentation onto building surfaces. Nearly half the cathedrals and churches in England and Wales, totaling 7,144, were restored in this manner between 1840 and 1873.49


Given the full array of Morris's life achievements, it is hard to believe he had time for any involvements concerning restoration. Yet, since his architectural work at Street's office, he had bemoaned the excesses of restoration, which he thought systematically destroyed the beauty of the past. He thought that buildings should be preserved, not restored.

The difference is crucial. Preservation is the maintenance of an artifact or building in its present state. Preservationists realized they could not restore a building to its original condition. They also appreciated the fact that buildings changed over time as they were added to and modified. They wanted to preserve buildings in the state they had naturally arrived at over time by keeping them as untouched as possible but protecting them from further decay. Restoration, on the other hand, was the reconstruction or representation of an original form. It was the practice of restoring the appearance of the original building without regard for its original function or the kind of community and person that built it. 50

Morris saw restoration as vandalism. He thought it falsified historic buildings according to modern conceptions of ancient designs. At the seventh Annual Meeting of

the S.P.A.B. in 1884. Morris read from a paper about restoration:

We of this Society at least know the beauty of the weathered and time-worn surface of an ancient building. and have all of us felt the grief of seeing this surface disappear under the hands of a 'restorer:' but though we all feel this deeply enough. some of us perhaps may be puzzled to explain to the outside world the full value of this ancient surface. It is not merely that it is in itself picturesque and beautiful. though that is a great deal: neither is it only that there is a sentiment attaching to the very face which the original builders gave their work. but dimly conscious all the while of the many generations which should gaze on it: it is only a part of its value that the stone are felt to be, as Mr. Ruskin beautifully puts it, speaking of some historic French building. now probably changed into an academic model of its real self. that they are felt to be "the very stone which the eyes of St. Louis saw lifted into their places." That sentiment is much, but it is not all: nay, it is but a part of the especial value to which I wish to-day to call your attention, which value briefly is. that the untouched surface of ancient architecture bears witness to the development of man's ideas. to the continuity of history. 51

Morris enthusiastically supported the Ruskinian premise that modern workers are not able to accurately recreate medieval architecture because they did not share the medieval worker's joy in labor. Removing the parts of a building that sets it in a specific era to accommodate modern

fashion takes it out of its historic context. 52 Morris thought that historic buildings should not be restored but cared for and agreed with Ruskin's words that buildings should be maintained and preserved:

> Take care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them: watch an old building with anxious care; count its stones as you would the jewels of a crown; bind it together with iron where it loosens, stay it with timber where it declines. Do not care about the unsightliness of the aid: better a crutch than a lost limb: and do this tenderly, reverently, continually, and many a generation will still be born to pass away beneath its shadow. 53

Morris mentions the impression that Ruskin made on him in a letter to Thomas Wardle in 1877. 54 Morris also wrote to Ruskin that same year requesting permission to distribute these words on preservation and maintenance in a S.P.A.B. promotional leaflet, saying that the explanation is "so good, and so completely settle the whole matter, that I feel ashamed at having to say anything else about it." 55

---


54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 383. Referred to in a letter from Morris to Ruskin, dated July 10, 1877.
Morris saw the abuses of restoration as an affront to art. He thought very highly of architecture's relationship to art, saying that "architecture would lead us to all the arts." To Morris, the restoration of a building was no better than defacing a famous painting. He explained that it was well worth the trouble or inconvenience to take proper care of a historic building because of its artistic and social values.

Surely if it be worth while troubling ourselves about the works of art of today, of which any amount almost can be done, since we are yet alive, it is worth while spending a little care, forethought, and money in preserving the art of bygone ages, of which so little is left, and of which we can never have any more, whatever good-hap the world may attain to. No man who consents to the destruction or the mutilation of an ancient building has any right to pretend that he cares about art; or has any excuse to plead in defence of his crime against civilization and progress, save sheer brutal ignorance.

The first incident which incited Morris to action against restoration were the alterations taking place at the Burford parish church. In the summer of 1876, Morris first noticed the church restoration project. After seeing the further changes to the church that September, Morris wrote a letter urging the formation of an organization that could put a stop to what he considered the destruction of

---


57 Ibid., 15.
ancient architecture. Although the existence of this letter is only mentioned in the notes of May Morris and the letter itself has not survived, it seems likely given Morris's interests the following year. The second incident which spurred Morris into action was the planned restoration efforts on the Abbey Church at Tewkesbury. His protest against this restoration came in the form of a letter drafted on March 5, 1877 where Morris explained what should be the goals of his proposed society. This letter was printed in The Athenaeum on March 10, 1877.

My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope.

Later the same month, Morris himself organized a society which would deal with restoration attempts on historic buildings. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.


59 William Morris, Athenaeum (London), 10 March 1877, 326. This letter, written by William Morris to the editor of Athenaeum, is the first surviving document concerning the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Written 5 March 1877 at 26, Queen Square.
Buildings was formally constituted at a meeting on March 22, 1877. Ten men attended the first meeting: George Price Boyce, Alfred W. Hunt, Alfred Marks, William Morris, Thomas Wilkinson Norwood, Roddam Spencer Stanhope, F.G. Stephens, Henry Wallis, George Young Wardle, and Philip Webb. This meeting elected Morris temporary Secretary and Treasurer.60

During the same time he began to write and lecture in support of the S.P.A.B., Morris started a series of lectures with the purpose of bringing his views on art to area workers. In one of these lectures, The Lesser Arts, delivered in December of 1877, Morris further explained his views on restoration.

...these old buildings have been altered and added to century after century, often beautifully, always historically: their very value, a great part of it, lay in that... But of late years a great uprising of ecclesiastical zeal, coinciding with a great increase of study, and consequently of knowledge of medieval architecture, has driven people into spending their money on these buildings, not merely with the purpose of repairing them, of keeping them safe, clean, and wind and water-tight, but also of 'restoring' them to some ideal state of perfection; sweeping

---

away if possible all signs of what had befallen them.  

One of Morris's colleagues in the S.P.A.B., W. R. Lethaby, also wrote negatively of restoration:

It is impossible to give any notion of the violence and stupidities which were done in the name of 'restoration'. The crude idea seems to have been born of the root absurdity that art was shape and not substance; our ancient buildings were appearances of what was called 'style'. When the architect had learned what his textbooks taught of the styles he could then provide thirteenth- or fourteenth-century 'features' at pleasure, and even correct the authentic old ones. At Canterbury a wonderful twelfth-century tower was destroyed to put in its place a nineteenth-century 'fifteenth-century' erection.

In 1880, an active Secretary was elected and Morris became the Honorary Secretary, an office he maintained until his death. The position of Honorary Secretary gave Morris the opportunity to continue his many other interests while remaining dedicated to the goals of the S.P.A.B. through his favorite activity, public relations.

---


63 First-Twentieth Annual Reports: S.P.A.B. (London: S.P.A.B., 1877-1897). Morris is listed on each of these reports. The first Active Secretary was Newman Marks (1880-1881), then Thomas Wise (1882), then Thackeray Turner, who remained secretary until after Morris's death.
His most effective action was to write to The Times protesting various restoration activities. Some letters were insolent and abusive to the offender; others were calm and helpful. In a letter to save Chichester Cathedral, Morris calmly suggested that: "...the architect who may be chosen to direct important repairs be assisted by such an expert as an experienced engineer, who, as well as the architect, should be responsible to the committee or other body authorizing the works?"64 In another letter Morris pointedly wrote: "...how irresponsible a loss is being suffered by the whole civilized world as one link after another in the history of art is cut away to feed the vanity of some modern designer or the greed of some contractor eager for a job."65

Morris also visited historic sites to speak to offenders of the S.P.A.B.: but while Morris effectively wrote and spoke, he was not a good diplomat. He had little patience for the destruction of the buildings he loved and he could vent his anger at the perpetrators. While in Glasgow in the late 1880's, Morris was reportedly outraged at a grave architectural injustice:


We were within a few yards of the doorway when he stopped abruptly, as if struck by a rifle ball, his eyes fixed furiously on some object in front of him. As he glared he seemed to crouch like a lion for a leap at its prey, his whiskers bristling out. 'What the hell is that? Who the hell has done that?' he shouted, to the amazement, alarm, and indignation of the people near by. I looked... and saw at once what was the offending object. There it was... a sculptured memorial or sarcophagus in shining white marble jammed into the old grey stone-work of the aisle... completely cutting off a portion of the window above... 'What infernal idiot has done that?' Morris again demanded. and heedless of the consternation around him poured forth a torrent of invective against the unknown perpetrators of the crime.66

Some cases involved delicate public relations maneuvering. In these situations, the S.P.A.B. often questioned the wisdom of Morris's presence directly at the site. An example of the concern for Morris's diplomatic dealings is seen in the S.P.A.B.'s case of the York city churches. Several York churches were in danger of either being destroyed or restored. The archbishop and clergy wanted to do this because the large number of churches in a concentrated area, the center of town, did not correspond to demographic shifts. The church officials espoused a utilitarian opinion towards the churches whereas they were regarded as objects of beauty and historic worth to the S.P.A.B..

In the effort to save the churches, the Society held a public meeting in 1885 to draw supporters. Due to negative publicity from the Society's opposition, the Yorkshire archbishop and clergy. York townspeople were suspicious of the S.P.A.B.. The committee discussed if Morris might further antagonize the York audience.67 Despite their concerns, the committee decided that he was persuasive enough to include in the program to gain support. At the meeting, Morris appealed to the townspeople's civic pride by stressing the structural uniqueness of the city churches. accenting artistic aspects of the statuary and stained glass, and stressing the importance of the churches to the city's visual identity. The meeting was a success and drew enough public support to persuade the archbishop to withdraw his plans for the churches.68 Although the York city churches were saved, it is important to emphasize that Morris's presence concerned the S.P.A.B. committee when they had to deal delicately with public relations.

A few fashionable architects profited from the practice of restoration. Sir Gilbert Scott (1811-78) was an example of an architect who supervised a vast extent of


68Ibid., 112-130. The churches in question included St. Michael's, donated by William the Conqueror, St. Mary's Bishopphill Junior, containing the oldest Saxon architectural work in York, and St. Cuthbert's, also dating back to the conquest and containing Roman antiquities.
work through his office. Once he saw a church being built and stopped to ask who the architect was, only to find that he himself was!69 Scott was a leading Gothic revival architect in Victorian England. One of Morris's colleagues in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, W.R. Lethaby, said sarcastically in reference to Scott: "The cathedral-restoring business was very thoroughly organized by him."70

Scott promoted Gothic restoration because he wanted England's churches and cathedrals to live up to the glory of the Victorian age. In his *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), Scott wrote:

I am no medievalist, I do not advocate the styles of the middle ages as such. If we had a distinctive architecture of our own day worthy of the greatness of our age, I should be content to follow it; but we have not: and the middle ages having been the latest period which possessed a style of its own...71

Although Scott and the S.P.A.B. disagreed concerning restoration, they did agree that the Victorian age did not have its own style of architecture. It should be pointed out that many buildings were saved from complete destruction because Scott restored them. Scott restored Kelham

70Ibid.
Hall in Nottinghamshire, the Albert Memorial, the Midland Grand Hotel in St. Pancras, sections of Westminster Abbey, St. Mary's Church in Dover Castle, and as many as twenty other cathedrals.72

Scott and the S.P.A.B. did not have many direct confrontations because Scott died the year after the S.P.A.B. founding. However, since Scott's methods were so widespread, the S.P.A.B. constantly encountered architects who agreed with him in opinion. Scott can also be recognized for inspiring Morris's establishment of the S.P.A.B. Morris used Scott's alterations to the Minster of Tewkesbury as an example in the letter to *The Athenaeum* in which Morris suggests the formation of a society to "protest all restoration."73

Scott and the S.P.A.B.'s disagreements on the subject of restoration can be illustrated in the case of Kirkstall Abbey, a Cistercian monastery in Leeds. The monastery was decaying quickly due to the levels of smoke from the industry of the city and needed immediate preservation work. Colonel Edward Akroyd, showing an interest in restoring the abbey so it could serve as a church, commissioned Scott to report on this prospect. Scott's report suggested that it


be restored and its buildings integrated into one usable church. Advocates of preservation wanted to clean it and remove the destructive vines, but keep it a ruin.74

When Kirkstall Abbey went up for sale in 1888 by its private owner, Lady Cardigan, the local townspeople were concerned about the intentions of whoever might purchase it. The local preservationists enlisted the help of the S.P.A.B., who immediately began a campaign of writing letters and alerting allies to no avail since the monastery was on private property. After a great deal of maneuvering, the local S.P.A.B. ally, Edmund Wilson, made a provisional offer to purchase the Abbey. However, Wilson first needed to secure the funds. He contacted Colonel John T. North, a wealthy former Leeds inhabitant. North, a self-made wealthy philanthropist, was happy to help preserve the integrity of the city he loved. After North learned of the obstacles Wilson encountered in obtaining the provisional rights to the Abbey, he bypassed any further difficulties by purchasing the Abbey himself and presenting it to the local preservationists. Therefore, the fate of Kirkstall Abbey was a success for the members of the Society. The architect who finally preserved the Abbey was J.T. Micklethwaite, a friend of Morris's and a supporter of the Society. In the summer of 1895, the town opened the grounds of

Kirkstall Abbey to the public and the ruin became treasured by the citizens of Leeds.75

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings created controversy. In some ways this came about as a result of Morris's unorthodox manner. However, the political nature of the Society's work often precipitated a dispute. This is primarily because it conflicted with architects who were more interested in making money than saving old buildings. In addition, the Society offended well-meaning architects who thought that their ideas of restoration glorified old architecture. Many architects preferred the polished look, safety, and function of a restored building to a preserved building that might not be safe or useful. The controversial nature of the Society also affected the public. To an aesthetically unknowing or uncaring public, Morris could sound like a raving lunatic.

Two cartoons published only months after the Society formed humorously exposed the controversy over restoration. The first appeared in the magazine Fun in July 1877.76 It laughs at the architect who intends to restore a ruin of a column to its 'original' form. The architect replies to a look of doubt: "Bless you, I've restored a whole cathedral from a chip of pavement." Punch also laughs at the restor- 

75Dellheim, The Face of the Past, 92-112.
76Fun (London), June 27 1877, 254.
ers in a cartoon published in September of 1877. The cartoon depicts a grandmother who attempts to have herself 'restored' to her original design. She claims to her children: "Well, my dears, all the fine old buildings are being restored to their original design, why shouldn't old ladies have a chance as well?" 77 An 1880 cartoon in Punch pokes fun at the preservationists. It is titled, "The Morris Dance Round St. Mark's" and depicts Morris, Ruskin, and some jesters dancing around St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice trying to protect it. 78

The S.P.A.B. referred to itself as 'Anti-Scrape.' This was in reference to the restorers' practice of scraping the stucco off old buildings. Thackeray Turner explained the nickname in a report of the Society's history.

...invented theories were frightfully mischievous when applied to realities. One of the most loudly proclaimed was the assertion that plaster and whitewash were unknown before 'church-warden days.' the truth being that ancient buildings from the earliest times have been finished with stucco of plaster, which was invariably whitened. Regardless of this easily ascertained fact, the restorers hacked off the plaster from rubble walls, and pointed to rude masonry with raised joints. 79

77Punch (London), September 8 1877.
78Ibid., January 10 1880.
The Society supported the preservation of all historic buildings. Their work encompassed a variety of styles and periods. In the address to the Society members at the First Annual Meeting, Morris explained:

We desire to declare emphatically that the Society neither has the will nor the power to enter into any 'battle of the styles;' and we beg to inform the public that it counts amongst its members persons of every shade of artistic opinion, and differing widely in their artistic sympathies, whose common bond is earnest opposition at once to neglect and meddling in matters concerning all buildings that have any claim to be considered works of art. Our enemies are the enemies of the works of all styles alike, ignorant destruction and pedantic reconstruction.80

For Morris and the Society, a historic building had a value that could not be understood by those who did not actually erect it. Historic buildings were constructed not only for function but for symbolic reasons. Cathedrals were majestic to symbolize the glory of god; governmental buildings were grand to symbolize justice or strength. Historic architecture displayed the spirit of the past. According to Morris, the present had no right to tamper with it because this spirit needed to be preserved for future generations. In a letter to the editor of The Times, Morris stresses this point:

Alas for those who are to come after us, whom we shall have robbed of works of art which it was our duty to hand down to them uninjured and

unimpaired; alas for ourselves, who will be looked upon by foreign nations and our own posterity as the only people who ever lived, who, possessing no architecture of their own, have made themselves remarkable for the destruction of the buildings of their forefathers.81

The S.P.A.B. succeeded in ensuring the preservation of hundreds of historic buildings and monuments. These included several London city churches, Lincoln Guildhall, Ashton Hall, Lancashire, and Magdalen Bridge in Oxford. Morris and the Society were so influential that by 1882, over a hundred cases were being handled annually.82 Each annual meeting report between 1877 and 1897 includes a lengthy list of buildings worked on by the Society for that year. Often, the Society could do nothing but send a letter of opposition to the offending party. But in many cases, they influenced changes in plans to restore or destroy historic buildings and sites.

The S.P.A.B. spawned chapters throughout England which kept a close watch for offenders. Local members would campaign for the cause of buildings threatened by restoration or destruction in their area. Each chapter had a


correspondent who represented the local chapters and acted as liaisons to the central branch of the S.P.A.B. in London. In 1879, twenty-two correspondents existed over eighteen British counties. By 1889, there were forty-one correspondents, four appointed in Geneva, Paris, Rome, and India.

The foreign correspondents show that the S.P.A.B. had a concern in preserving structures abroad. St. Mark's in Venice and St. Sophia's in Constantinople are two examples of the widespread interests of the Society. In 1879, Morris began a campaign to save St. Mark's from restoration when he learned that the Italian government planned to restore the damaged west basilica of the cathedral. Temporarily halted by concerned public inquiries, the restoration eventually continued with only a few modifications. In an 1882 letter to the editor of The Times, Morris attacked the restoration efforts of Italy with a vengeance:

In Pavia the early Lombardic Church of St. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro is being rebuilt and its western facade replaced by a new one of different design. The fine terra-cotta mosaic pavement in the transepts of the Church of the Certosa, near Pavia, has been destroyed for the sake of putting a new one of marble. The rich and elaborate terra-cotta ornaments of the facade have been

---


painted over with thick red pigment, which has
destroyed the sharpness of the delicate reliefs,
and a general white washing over the walls of the
cloisters and cells of the monastery has obliter­
ated all the remains of the old fresco deco­ra­
tion. These are a few examples of the manner in
which the modern Italians are treating their
priceless relics of art. 85

Although the attempts to save St. Mark's from restora­
tion were unsuccessful, the S.P.A.B. did save a large
proportion of the buildings brought to their attention.
They succeeded partly because Morris recruited many of the
most distinguished men of the age. Author and artist,
Samuel Butler, architects. Alfred Waterhouse and George
Street, and novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy were all active
members. Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, painter, E. Burne­
Jones, and writer and critic, Leslie Stephen were all
committee members. Ruskin for over twenty years. Carlyle
wrote in support of Morris and the Society in their work
with the London city churches.

I can have but little hope that any word of mine
can help you in your good work of trying to save
the Wren Churches in the City from destruction;
but my clear feeling is, that it would be a
sordid, nay sinful, piece of barbarism to do
other than religiously preserve these churches as
precious heirlooms; many of them specimens of
noble architecture, the like of which we have no

85 William Morris. "Vandalism in Italy." The Times (London),
12 April 1882, 10. On behalf of the S.P.A.B..
prospect of ever being able to produce in England again. 86

Many notable individuals gave Morris their support by signing petitions or speaking in support of the S.P.A.B.. For example, statesmen, William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli signed the petition to save St. Mark's in Venice. 87

The S.P.A.B. believed that it was the trust of modern humanity to preserve the buildings of the past for future generations. The Society realized the transience of their times and established this idea in their objectives. The conclusion of the Principles of the Society as written in 1877 reads: "...protect our ancient buildings, and hand them down instructive and venerable to those that come after us." 88

Finally, the impact of the S.P.A.B. was not just in its active work, such as publications, promotional activities, active support given to individuals and groups in the process of saving local architecture, and fund-raising. The greatest impact of the S.P.A.B. could be seen in the changes of public attitude in support of building preserv-


87Dellheim, The Face of the Past. 86.

tion and maintenance. Whether an individual truly tried to do their best to save historic architecture or whether they were merely trying to avoid the wrath of Morris and outspoken leaders since, the Society's greatest achievement was to promote a different perspective toward historic buildings. They helped people see buildings as historic artifacts and symbols of times past rather than capitalistic ventures or structures existing only for modern convenience.
The S.P.A.B. concerning itself with hundreds of cases in the nineteenth century, but I am specifying two in these next chapters: Westminster Abbey and Edinburgh Castle. These sites were chosen because they were large cases which required much attention and correspondence, and they each demonstrate different situations and obstacles. Finally, while the S.P.A.B. involvement at Edinburgh Castle was considered successful, the action at Westminster Abbey had many disappointments.

The S.P.A.B. stayed actively involved in the architectural condition of Westminster Abbey. The first written evidence of the Society's concern with Westminster Abbey is found in the 1880 annual report and it continued an interest through the rest of the nineteenth century. Due to the Abbey's historical significance, location in London, architectural worth, and popularity, the Society continues to monitor its condition in the present.

The S.P.A.B. fought against various plans for restoration at Westminster Abbey from 1880 to 1897. During this period, the Society tried to prevent restoration projects for the North Transept Porches, the rose window located in
the North Transept, Ashburnham house, the cloisters, and the Abbey interior, including the monuments. The techniques and arguments used to influence the Dean, the Chapter, and the official architect along with the public are an important example of the internal workings of the S.P.A.B. Further, the case of Westminster Abbey emphasizes complications and obstacles that could typically confront the S.P.A.B. in ecclesiastical cases. This is especially important since most buildings that the S.P.A.B. worked on were churches, abbey's, or cathedrals.

Unfortunately, the Westminster Abbey case cannot be considered a success for the S.P.A.B. Many of its oldest and most architecturally unique features fell prey to restoration either before or during the Society's attempts to preserve it. However, the degree of restoration would have been more extensive had the S.P.A.B. not campaigned for the Abbey's historical and artistic integrity. Moreover, the shift of the Abbey's caretakers towards better maintenance and preservation in the twentieth century is a direct influence of the S.P.A.B. in the nineteenth century.

The Abbey is a significant historical site not only for its architectural beauty but for its historical prominence. Since 1066 every sovereign except Edward V and Edward VIII has been crowned at the Abbey. For just as
long it has been the burial place for many kings, queens, and other notables.

Westminster Abbey began with a church and abbey on the site, dedicated to St. Peter, built by the Saxon King Sebert in the early seventh century. The Danes destroyed this church in the Viking invasions of 865 to 880. Edward the Confessor founded the present Westminster Abbey, officially called the Collegiate Church of St. Peter in Westminster, in 1065. Henry III rebuilt Edward the Confessor's Norman style church in the thirteenth century in a style influenced by French Gothic. After suffering destruction in a fire in 1298, the architect Henry Yevele rebuilt sections of the abbey in 1388 on the basis of the thirteenth century Gothic plans. Abbot Islip completed the vaulting of the nave by 1506, and Henry VII rebuilt the chapel. The Gothic-style west front, including the two towers, was the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor in the eighteenth century.

Maintaining the dominant Gothic style was a key consideration in naming the official Abbey architects, or surveyors, in the nineteenth century. Those named were the Gothic revival architects: Edward Blore, official architect from 1809 to 1849; Sir Gilbert Scott, official architect from 1849 to 1878; and John Pearson, official architect from 1878 to 1897.
The S.P.A.B. maintained that the continuation of the Gothic style for Westminster Abbey after the eighteenth century was fraudulent and the restorations unnecessary. They did not consider the work done earlier either false in style or unwarranted. The S.P.A.B. contended that changes made before the nineteenth century were necessary since they were either repairs made to destroyed segments of the Abbey or additions made to segments of the Abbey that had not been completed according to earlier plans. Further, repairs or additions were made according to the plans of Henry III. Ideally, the original Norman structure should never have been destroyed but since most of it was, the integrity of the next oldest plan should be maintained. According to the S.P.A.B., changes made during the nineteenth century were superfluous because they were made with little regard to original designs or structural need. For the most part, restorations during the nineteenth century were made according to the personal aesthetic tastes of the official architect.

Interference of church officials and the opinion of the designated architect were the two biggest obstacles to preventing restoration at Westminster Abbey. The church officials, the Dean of Westminster Abbey and the Chapter committee members, were generally unwilling to listen to the S.P.A.B.'s suggestions. A letter from the Dean to the
Society in 1892 declined to receive "from individuals, however eminent, general advice or directions."89 In short, according to the report, the "care of the Abbey was the Dean and Chapter's business, and nobody else's."90

One of the biggest deterrents the S.P.A.B. could encounter was the Church of England. This was partially due the Oxford Movement, a nineteenth century religious movement which tried to revitalize the church by reintroducing traditional Catholic practices, rituals, and doctrines. This linked the theological aspect of religion to the cultural. Church officials needed the architecture, interior and exterior, to reflect these theological and cultural interests of the community. To the S.P.A.B., Westminster Abbey and other churches were valuable as historic examples of architecture. The Church of England, on the other hand, saw churches as a place of worship, a vital part of the community and obligated to serve the community. Further, the needs of the congregation constantly changed and this needed to be reflected in changing architecture and interior design. The S.P.A.B. and the Church of England viewed Westminster Abbey and other chur-


ches from a different perspective which explains why they often disagreed.

The designated architect also proved to be a problem for the S.P.A.B. in their work against restoration, particularly with the Dean and Chapter's practice of selecting Gothic revival architects. The S.P.A.B. could not publicly protest the restoration work of Blore and Scott since they both were out of office by 1878, only a year after the Society formed. By contrast, John Pearson, architect from 1878 to 1897, directly interceded with the S.P.A.B.'s promotion of preservation over restoration at the Abbey.

Morris found fault with all the Gothic revival architects at Westminster Abbey. He spoke negatively of Scott's and Pearson's restoration work, calling it "architect's architecture, the work of the office." 91 He asserted that "a long series of blunders of various kinds, all based on a false estimate of the true value of the building, have damaged the exterior of the Abbey so vitally that scarcely any of its original surface remains." 92 Morris thought that Blore, Scott, and Pearson could not understand the "true value" of Westminster Abbey because they were not

---


92 Carpenter. A House of Kings. 332.
part of the intellectual, social, and physical environment of the workers and designers who erected it. Further, he claimed that the restorations done to the Abbey were "ill-conceived and disastrous pieces of repair of various degrees of stupidity."93 Morris referred specifically to Blore's and Scott's recasing of the north aisle of the Abbey which destroyed the detailed work of twelfth and thirteenth century artisans.94 Because of this perspective, Morris and the S.P.A.B. did their best to instigate changes in the policy of restoration at the Abbey.

The first evidence of S.P.A.B. attention to Westminster Abbey was on July 21, 1880, concerning the proposed restoration of the North Transept Porches. They were especially active in this case since in 1870 the South Transept had already been restored in Gothic style which was, to them, inaccurate. The Society wrote to the Dean and Chapter of the Abbey when they noticed the central doorway of the North Transept Front undergoing alterations. Newman Marks, the S.P.A.B. secretary at the time, drafted a letter objecting to these changes. In this letter, he claimed the impending alterations were not only unnecessary

but that they do "not seem to be intended to reproduce the design as it appeared during any period of existence."

An answer came from the son of Sir Gilbert Scott, John Oldrid Scott, who was overseeing the projects begun by his father before his death in 1878. Scott contradicted the explanations concerning the architectural style and necessity of the restorations on the structure of the Abbey. He stated that the changes were necessary because he felt the appearance of the Abbey would improve. Further, he also felt the designs were accurate historical representations because his father had researched the Abbey's history carefully. Taking him at his word, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster allowed Scott's plans to continue. They maintained the right to make whatever changes they deemed necessary. Decisions were generally made on the word of the official architect since they appointed him. During the period that the S.P.A.B. worked on preserving the Abbey, their opinions tended to clash with decisions made.


by either John Pearson or the past plans of Scott.97 The S.P.A.B. annual report for 1888 regretfully admitted that this section of the Abbey is "too jealously guarded from public view for anything to be said about it now."98

The S.P.A.B. next took an interest in the rose window located in the restored front of the North Transept Porches. The painted glass window in question was put up in 1722. According to the S.P.A.B., the window contained an exceptionally fine example of English glass-painting. For this reason, they protested its destruction. The official architect at the time, John Pearson, wanted to put in a completely new window to match the new North Transept front. In 1888 the S.P.A.B. reported that a "promise has been given that the curious early eighteenth-century rose window, with its glass, shall be preserved."99 However, according to the 1890 S.P.A.B. report, this claim seems to have been modified by Pearson.

97This tendency has been noted in many of the S.P.A.B. annual reports dating from 1880 to 1897 concerning Westminster Abbey. A description of the decisions of the Dean and Chapter concerning the Abbey in Victorian England can also be located in A House of Kings: The Official History of Westminster Abbey, Edward Carpenter, ed., (New York: John Day. 1966), 273-338.


...the old glass has been cut up and mangled after a most strange and barbarous fashion. Except a little piece in the middle, none of it occupies the place it did before, and the figures of our Lord and the Apostles have positively been cut off short at the knees to make them fit Mr. Pearson’s new tracery lights.100

Therefore, although the S.P.A.B. won a temporary victory in the promise to preserve the rose window, the outcome was not a success.

Another attempt the S.P.A.B. made towards Westminster Abbey concerned Ashburnham house. Ashburnham house, located past the cloisters next to the Abbey gardens, had originally served as the prior’s apartments in the eleventh century. In 1542, it became the residence for the Dean of Westminster. From 1712 to 1731, the house served as a library until a fire left it vacant. In the 1830’s, the Canon and Sub-Dean Lord John Thynne provided the funding to restore the destroyed section of the house. Thynne lived in the house until his death in 1881. Until this date, the house remained part of Abbey property, and therefore, under control of the Dean and Chapter.101

Due to provisions made in the Public Schools Act of 1868, Ashburnham house was to be transferred to Westminster School upon Thynne’s death. This would change the classi-


ification of the house from being property of a public historic monument to, simply, being public property. The Abbey officials did not want to surrender the house, particularly when the school suggested that it be demolished to make room for additional classrooms. The S.P.A.B. formed a special committee in 1881 to object to the transfer of ownership to Westminster School and to protest any alterations made to either the exterior or interior of the house.102 But little could be done to challenge the parliamentary rule and to the dismay of the Abbey officials and the S.P.A.B., the house became school property in May, 1881.103 The school decided not to destroy the house but extensive restoration was underway by 1882. The 1882 annual report of the S.P.A.B. read that the "house is in possession of the school, and a good deal of interesting fifteenth and sixteenth century work at the western part of the House has been destroyed."104 This is because the S.P.A.B.'s interests were at odds with the school's interests: while the Society wanted the house left as is, the school needed to use the space for students. The final


entry in the S.P.A.B. records concerning Ashburnham house and school property in general indicates that the Society was unsuccessful in influencing any decisions made in this case.

The school authorities have gone on with their work of destruction amongst such of the Abbey buildings as are in their hands. This year they have destroyed the indications of the eleventh-century entrances to the dormitory from below, and have "restored" part of the dormitory itself (now the schoolroom) and of the basement below it into sham Norman. Each holiday time they set to work, and the most important remains of the old Abbey within their power are already destroyed. 105

The S.P.A.B. next tried to prevent the restoration of the tombs and monuments already existing inside Westminster Abbey while asking that no additional memorials be constructed. Opponents of the S.P.A.B., who argued in support of restoration because it kept buildings from falling apart, argued in this case that burials had gone on at the Abbey for so long that the S.P.A.B. was interfering with history and tradition. The two viewpoints were difficult to negotiate because the S.P.A.B.'s perspective was a more static view of history while their opponents view was more progressive. The results were mixed and neither side was satisfied: while some memorials were restored, many were

left alone and while additional memorials were added, no new construction of memorial space was carried out.

The first discussion of the monuments in the S.P.A.B. record appeared in the annual report of 1889. This discussion involved a public concern that the Abbey was running out of designated burial locations. The Society recorded that they were against any additions or alterations which would allow for more burial space.106

In April of 1890, the Crown nominated a Royal Commission to determine the capability of Westminster Abbey to continue with burials on the site, and to consider plans for providing additional space at the Abbey. The S.P.A.B. attempted to have a member appointed to this commission. S.P.A.B. committee member, Rt. Hon. G. Cavendish Bentinck, M.P., addressed the parliament requesting that an architect who is not a member of the Royal Academy of Arts be allowed to serve on the committee.107 The response was:

The Government are not prepared to act on the suggestion of my right hon. Friend, as they are satisfied that the Royal Commission, as at present constituted, is perfectly competent to advise

---


Still, the final report of the Commission worked to the benefit of the S.P.A.B.. The report, given in July of 1891, included a history of burials and a listing of possible suggestions to increase tomb and memorial space. These suggestions were narrowed down to four possibilities: adding a building at the north side of the nave, adapting the Chapter House, building a chapel to the east and south of "Poets' Corner", and building a chapel connecting to the south side of the cloister. However, a final decision was not made because, according to the report of the Royal Commission, it was not necessary since there were between ninety and ninety-five burial spots still available in 1891. Even if burials continued at the same rate as the previous two centuries, there existed enough room for at least another century.

This outcome satisfied the S.P.A.B. until the church officials and segments of the public continued to discuss options. In response, the S.P.A.B. published Morris's


report on Westminster Abbey in 1893. Morris argued that nothing more should be altered for memorials at the Abbey:

...the burden of their ugliness must be endured, at any rate until the folly of restoration has died out. For the greater part of them have been built into the fabric, and their removal would leave gaps, not so unsightly indeed as these stupid masses of marble, but tempting to the restorer, who would not be contented with merely patching them decently, but would make them excuses for further introduction of modern work.110

Another problem concerning the tombs and monuments in the Abbey involved maintenance and restoration. Plans for restoring some of these memorials began in 1895. The S.P.A.B., while claiming that many memorials were inferior in artistic quality, maintained that they still held historical value. Morris sent a letter to *The Times* concerning the care of the monuments in 1895.

I fear there are those who wish to change the present appearance of the monuments, who believe that it is possible to bring them back to their original slendour. ...the "restorers" would try their experiments on the very historical records and works of art themselves; which means, in plain words, that before "restoring" them they would have to destroy them. The record of our remembered history embodied in them would be gone; almost more serious still, the unremembered history, wrought into them by the hands of the craftsmen of bygone times, would be gone also. And to what purpose? To foist a patch of bright,

new work, a futile academical study at best...111

As in the past, objections of the S.P.A.B. had little influence on church officials. The officials had to consider many factors when deciding on actions to take with the Abbey: finances and repair costs, interests of those with financial and political influence, and demands of the public. These factors tended to overpower the uncompromising interests of the S.P.A.B. Still, the proposed restorations of monuments resulted in limited alterations. This is because the new official architect, John Thomas Micklethwaite, a supporter of preservation over restoration, took office only two years later. The Dean and Chapter named Micklethwaite as Abbey architect for several reasons: he worked with Scott from 1862 to 1869, his work was recognized for accuracy and quality, his emphasis on maintenance would save the Abbey money, the demand for Gothic restoration had abated somewhat, and the S.P.A.B. and other preservation and historical groups supported him.

The S.P.A.B. also achieved success with the cloisters, one of the oldest sections of the Abbey. Temporarily, the cloisters were in danger of being structurally altered during the Ashburnham house case but this never amounted to

anything. A more serious threat to the cloisters occurred when the Abbey officials wished to secure additional room for the burial of noted individuals. The officials quickly dismissed two suggestions from Abbey chapter members: that bodies be interred within the cloister walls or that a large glass roof be installed over the open center of the cloisters so that burials might be made in the center. Another suggestion proposed the erection of a monumental chapel on the old Refectory site at the south side of the cloister for burials.112 The 1889 S.P.A.B. annual report comments on this:

...tragic folly of an utterance that the great cloisters (which at present have comparatively escaped the greedy eye of the monument sticker) should, when the church itself is choke-full (sic) of dull monumental jests, itself be sacrificed: as if the beauty of the vaulted cloister would equally well lend itself to refined cruelty of treatment.113

None of the suggestions were carried out and the cloisters remained intact through the nineteenth century. Attempts


at preserving the cloisters began in 1905 with a lime wash under the Micklethwaite's surveyorship.114

Micklethwaite helped the S.P.A.B. in their goals, not only with specific sites like Kirkstall Abbey and Westminster Abbey, but in more wide-reaching ways. The quality of his preservation work allowed officials and the public to see the validity of the S.P.A.B.’s opinion. Micklethwaite (1843-1906) began his architectural work with Scott in 1862 but started a partnership with friend and architect Somers Clarke in 1869. Micklethwaite was responsible for many projects, some being: St. Matthias' church at Cambridge, St. George’s church at Oxford, and St. Mary Magdalene’s in London. His historic preservation work with Kirkstall Abbey and Clifford's Tower at York are excellent examples of the S.P.A.B.‘s goals being met in his work. He was also a committee member of the Antiquaries' Society, a master of the Art Workers' Guild, and guest speaker at the 1892 S.P.A.B. meeting. His surveyorship at Westminster Abbey lasted from 1897 to his death in 1906.

Due to Micklethwaite, the techniques of preservation became the preferred standard versus the techniques of restoration in Westminster Abbey from 1897 onward. By this

114W.R. Lethaby, Westminster Abbey Re-Examined (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1972), 297. W.R. Lethaby was also a member of S.P.A.B.
time the exterior of the Abbey had been nearly completely restored but the interior was mostly intact and still able to benefit from preservation techniques. While much of the Abbey succumbed to restoration, the S.P.A.B. struck a victory in the naming of Micklethwaite as official architect.
CHAPTER IV

THE S.P.A.B. AND EDINBURGH CASTLE

The S.P.A.B. worked on the Edinburgh Castle case from 1883 to 1891. They were primarily interested in two segments of the Castle: Parliament hall and St. Margaret's Cathedral. Edinburgh Castle was considered a successful case since no restoration occurred at St. Margaret's, only necessary work was completed at Parliament hall, and practices of preservation began with the direct involvement of the S.P.A.B.. Further, the architect who initiated the work at the Castle researched prospective actions and listened to the suggestions of the S.P.A.B.. Finally, the architect who completed the work became a member and local correspondent of the S.P.A.B..

There were naturally some similarities between Edinburgh Castle and Westminster Abbey: they both received a great deal of public attention, being centrally located in the middle of large and prosperous cities and both had been restored repeatedly in the past. However, the differences between the two changed the way the S.P.A.B. dealt with Edinburgh Castle compared to Westminster Abbey. Although Westminster Abbey and Edinburgh Castle both ended up with
architects of historic preservation, the ongoing restoration work at the Castle had been less. No one ever tried to incorporate Gothic architecture into the simplistic sturdy structural lines of the Castle, making it easier to preserve accurately. Many sections of the Castle were left completely untouched by alterations.

A second difference is that, although the Castle was still in use by a Scottish militia, the officials were not as domineering as those at the Abbey. The Castle officials were headed by a governor, appointed by the Crown of England. Other officials consisted of: a captain and a lieutenant, responsible for the militia, a constable, a lieutenant-governor, and a fort-major. These officials were not controlling like Westminster Abbey officials because the Castle held a different function than that of the Abbey. The Abbey, a place of worship and ongoing regal tradition, needed to reflect that in the architecture and interior design. The Castle's primary function, by the late nineteenth century, was to house the militia and the officials. The Castle did not have regular church services or a tradition of burials like the Abbey.115

Finally, the architects assigned to the Castle work from 1883 to 1891 were not given a free hand enjoyed by those at the Abbey. They were hired for specific jobs, not appointed for ongoing work. They had to petition for funds and have any alterations approved by the officials. Further, William Nelson and Hippolyte Blanc, the architects after 1883, were willing to work with the S.P.A.B..

Located on an isolated basalt base 437 feet above sea level, the Castle towers above the city of Edinburgh. A fitting setting to its historic relevance. The Romans were the first known inhabitants on the site. They constructed a hill-fort in the first century A.D. After their departure, the Picts established a village at the site called Dun-edin or 'fortress on the ridge.' The Angles of Northumbria occupied the area in the seventh century. They were led by King Edwin who rebuilt the fort and, in transposing the Gaelic name into Anglo-Saxon, called it Edwinesburgh. The site changed hands in a series of battles between Gaelic factions and Saxon factions throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. King Malcolm III Canmore, last of the Gaelic kings, constructed a royal residence at the site between 1057 and 1076. Around 1076 he built a chapel for his Saxon queen, St. Margaret, grand-niece of Edward the Confessor. David I built a walled town to the east of the Castle in the early twelfth century. The first Scottish
Parliament convened at Edinburgh Castle during the rule of William the Lion (1165-1214) and, under King Alexander III (1249-1286), the Castle held the national records and the Scottish regalia. A battle over succession for thirty years after Alexander's death resulted in the naming of Robert the Bruce as King of Scotland in 1323. Robert the Bruce destroyed nearly everything of the Castle except St. Margaret's chapel. Edward III rebuilt the Castle in 1344, and Regent Morton erected the Half Moon Battery in 1574. Construction on Parliament Hall and the royal apartments continued in the sixteenth century. Queen Mary made additions to the royal apartments and her son, James VI, built the stone-vaulted Crown Room and the Great Hall. Alterations to the Castle were limited after 1760, primarily because building was accelerated in the city itself with the massive project of the New City.116

The architects assigned to work on nineteenth century alterations on Edinburgh Castle were selected primarily for architectural expertise. It did not matter if the architect had experience with Gothic revival restoration because the Castle contained no Gothic architectural characteris-

tics. In addition, the architect needed to petition the Castle officials for funding which put a check on the amount and expense of any proposed alterations. This worked in the S.P.A.B.'s best interest because it generally was much more expensive to do restoration work than preservation work. The architects which the S.P.A.B. worked with in connection with the Castle were William Nelson, architect until his death in 1887, and Hippolyte Blanc, architect from 1885 until the work was completed in 1891 and member of S.P.A.B. In addition, the architects and the Society corresponded with the Scottish archaeologist Sir Daniel Wilson and members of the Edinburgh Architectural Association.

The first written evidence of the S.P.A.B.'s involvement in Edinburgh Castle is recorded in the 1883 annual report, which only noted that the Castle would possibly receive restoration work. In the February of 1884 the S.P.A.B. inquired about details of the proposed restoration project for Parliament Hall. A letter drafted on February 24, 1884 by Mr. Eustace Balfour offers preservation advice as well as a suggestion to check with the Edinburgh Archi-

The need for archaeological research and the necessity of securing funds delayed any further considerations of work on Parliament Hall.

The next correspondence occurred in the summer and fall of 1885 concerning St. Margaret's Chapel. William Nelson, the architect assigned to the Castle, wrote to the S.P.A.B. describing his intentions for the Chapel and he diplomatically explained his plans:

The great interest which attaches to the ancient chapel of St. Margaret in Edinburgh Castle induces me to offer to undertake the cost of certain restorations which competent archaeological authorities recommend for restoring it externally to the condition which may be assumed to have originally characterized it.

Later in the same letter, Nelson adds that he's enlisted the help of the noted archaeologist, Sir Daniel Wilson, to insure that the restoration work be architecturally accurate.

Nelson felt he was making an offer that the S.P.A.B. would support because he offered to contribute his own funds and because he employed outside professional expertise. Concerned about Nelson's suggestions, the

---


120 Ibid.
S.P.A.B. assigned committee member J.J. Stevenson to take up correspondence with Nelson. Stevenson wrote to Nelson explaining that the "restoration" that he referred to "involves the risk of falsifying history by adding to the Chapel features which may not properly belong to it." Stevenson suggested that discussion continue on the fate of St. Margaret's and that Nelson find time to meet with him since he would soon be in Scotland. The next letter, Nelson to Stevenson, explains that although the restoration plans were approved by the Commissioner of Works that he would continue discussion with the S.P.A.B. on St. Margaret's.

Parliament Hall also received attention in 1885 from the S.P.A.B. and Nelson. Nelson offered to defray the cost of restoration at Parliament Hall as he did at St. Margaret's Chapel. However, he felt that the need for restoration at the Hall was greater than that at St. Margaret's and decided to begin there first. When Nelson fell ill, architect Hippolyte Blanc offered to assist him in the proposed projects. Blanc took over preparation of the


plans of both St. Margaret's Chapel and Parliament Hall. Actually, even a supporter of historic preservation had to admit that Parliament Hall badly needed some type of alterations. Turned into a hospital barracks in the seventeenth century, its filthy condition could be no match for regular preservation techniques. The original ceiling and walls were covered with plaster and hospital beds installed. Further, seventeenth century drainage pipes for sewage created an unpleasant health hazard.123 Due to the deficient state of the Hall, Blanc carried out the alterations in a manner supported by the S.P.A.B.. The Times reported the restoration work of the Hall upon its completion in 1891:

Mr. Blanc has rediscovered its original features, where they survived, and has ornamented the edifice. Restorations, as a rule, are a sorry business. They destroy what was old, and replace it with what is new and garish. Mr. Blanc has destroyed literally nothing of any historical interest or artistic merit; has reopened passageways, stairs, and chimneys which had been bricked up, has displayed the fine old roof, which was hidden by a modern ceiling, and, in his panelling and decoration, has shown erudition and a good and quiet taste.124

Next, Blanc dealt with the proposed restoration of St. Margaret's Chapel. Since the Chapel is the oldest existing building at the Castle site and since masses were not being

123William Lyon, The Builder (London), 30 April 1887, 638.
held there, the S.P.A.B. suggested to Nelson in 1885 that no alterations be carried out. Although it was Nelson's intent to restore the Chapel, he died in 1887 before any restoration could be done. Blanc, left in charge of Nelson's plans, did not choose to do the restoration work but instead, applied preservation and maintenance techniques by keeping the interior and exterior clear of dirt, vines, and mold. *The Times* reported on the condition of St. Margaret's positively in 1891:

> Perhaps the most interesting thing in Edinburgh Castle, to some visitors, is simply the black crest of basalt which crops up on the highest eminence, beside the defaced and formless chapel of St. Margaret. ...the chapel is really more historical in its present curious and shapeless condition.125

The S.P.A.B. worked on Edinburgh Castle for nine years. During this period, several Society goals were accomplished. S.P.A.B. involvement insured the integrity of St. Margaret's, the oldest structure on the site. This was the Society's most gratifying success. S.P.A.B. involvement also insured accurate restoration in the case of Parliament Hall and the proper maintenance of Castle buildings to prevent the need to restore any other sections.

The participation of Hippolyte Blanc helped to make the Castle case a success. Blanc became a member of the

S.P.A.B. in 1885 and the same year, became the local correspondent in Edinburgh. He continued as the correspondent and an active member through 1897 and enlisted a number of supporters in Edinburgh.

Blanc's support of historic preservation and architectural knowledge mixed with both Nelson's and Blanc's willingness to correspond with the London S.P.A.B. members helped to secure the positive outcome of the Edinburgh Castle case. Although some restoration occurred at Parliament Hall, many sections within the hall were preserved. This, along with the preservation at St. Margaret's, indicated that the S.P.A.B.'s message was being heard.
CHAPTER V

THE S.P.A.B. AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ACTIVITIES

The S.P.A.B. became more effective as the nineteenth century drew to a close. By this time, not only did the Society enjoy increasing public support, but the fervor for restoration had abated. In his speech to the S.P.A.B., Micklethwaite stated that he could testify to the "better position which this Society holds before the public." He went on to say that people are "ready to take the teachings of this Society seriously," and that architects "are dreadfully ashamed of the word 'restoration.'"126

The S.P.A.B. grew in effectiveness throughout the twentieth century as public support for their goals increased. The officers of the S.P.A.B. noted the changed climate of public opinion, stating that the Society was no longer controversial. Other groups joined in the fight for accurate historic preservation. Many were local groups, such as the City Church and Churchyard Protection Society located in London, and some more widespread, such as the National Trust and English Heritage.

While the prevention of restoration had and would always be important to the S.P.A.B., they began to emphasize preservation techniques and education. Suggested preservation processes were not always common knowledge, even to architects. In 1903, the Society published a book, *Notes on the Repair of Ancient Buildings*, to aid in the process of preservation. The proper treatment of most repair jobs is described and diagrams are provided. The treatment of windows, wall coverings, bell-cages, ivy, ironwork, and surface drains are examples of problems addressed.127

In 1920, Thackeray Turner, a retired secretary of the S.P.A.B., observed that "...we practically now have no opposition."128 The quantity of the S.P.A.B.'s accomplishments attests to this. For example, the Society made an attempt to save historic bridges in 1925 when they recorded over nine hundred historic bridges. Specific photographs were given to the Ancient Monuments Department of the Office of Works in Parliament with a request that they be scheduled as ancient monuments. From this, over three


hundred bridges in England and Wales were given this ti­
tle. In addition, the Society had enough interest
within its membership to develop a special committee, The
Windmill Section of the Society for the Protection of
Ancient Buildings. This committee worked for the preserva­
tion of windmills in England and exists to this day.

In 1937, the Society printed its first quarterly
report. This quarterly report contains an assortment of
material from the Society archives, including the letter
that Morris wrote to the Athenaeum in 1877 suggesting the
formation of the Society and a short history of the So­
ciety's work. This publication referred to the changed
climate of cooperation towards the S.P.A.B.:

When a fine old church comes to be repaired, the
Society has not so often to fight its way into
some sort of control of the processes by which
this work is to be done: indeed, its advice is
frequently and spontaneously sought.

A major question for the S.P.A.B. in the twentieth
century was how to draw the line between restoration and
preservation. Controversies exist in England concerning
the possible validity of careful restoration projects. Age

1937), 8-9. Palmer was the Society secretary at the time.

130William Palmer, Quarterly Report, 1-11.
131Ibid., 5.
and pollution contribute jointly to the deterioration of historic sites to the point where sometimes even careful preservation techniques are not enough to secure their safety. Major disasters and the destruction of wars often necessitate alterations. Finally, modern versions of restoration are generally more reasonable than many of the nineteenth century restoration schemes because they do not try to alter everything to resemble Gothic architecture. Considering all this, what does the S.P.A.B. support to date?

The S.P.A.B. in the twentieth century adheres to the original Manifesto written by Morris in 1877. In this, he supports the maintenance and preservation of buildings. He strongly denounces any type of restoration because it falsifies history. To Morris, it was better to leave supports and scaffolding in place than to change the fabric of the historic site. The Manifesto reads:

...we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands: if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one: in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying. ...thus only can we protect our ancient buildings, and hand them
down instructive and venerable to those that come after us. 132

The present S.P.A.B. cannot philosophically support any type of restoration. However, it aids in preservation and maintenance and supports structural changes that do not destroy old materials and are obviously there for support or covering. Finally, each building is an individual case and generalizations can be misleading. In every case, the present S.P.A.B. strives to preserve buildings to leave in place as much original work as possible.

The S.P.A.B.'s first goal is to prevent or lessen decay by advocating daily care and maintenance. They also support any new technology in preservation and maintenance that can clean or repair a surface without damaging the historic fabric. A combination of research into adequate preservation methods and education of how to preserve is used by the S.P.A.B. at present.

The S.P.A.B.'s second aim is to ensure that the historical and aesthetic integrity of historic buildings is preserved by making only those repairs needed to prevent further decay and erosion. The present S.P.A.B. offers a program of repair courses, lectures, and visits, as well as

providing a panel of experts to evaluate individual buildings. The S.P.A.B. claims that today, it is:

...a leading authority on the 'how' of repairing and maintaining old buildings, and performs a vital advisory, campaigning and educational role. Our technical panel of experts advises on the repair of historic buildings of every kind and age. And the Society's technical expertise enables campaigning to go hand in hand with constructive proposals about how a building can be saved.\footnote{133}

A third goal of the S.P.A.B. is to safeguard historic sites. This is more along the lines of the nineteenth century cases of Kirkstall Abbey, the York city churches, Westminster Abbey, and Edinburgh Castle described in this paper. Included in this responsibility is the need to maintain awareness of the care of historic sites, to correspond with either cooperative preservers or stubborn restorers, and to support and instigate the passing of legislation which could legally safeguard historic sites. An example of positive legislation is the 'Town and Country Planning Act' (1971).\footnote{134} Under this, the S.P.A.B. has to be notified of "every application to demolish or partly demolish any building listed by the Department of the Environment as being of architectural or historic interest."


\footnote{134}{Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd ser., vol. 823 (1971), cols. 739-742.}
or in a conservation area."135 Unfortunately, only a small portion of historically valuable architecture falls under this governmental listing since historic sites are so numerous in England.

The controversy between historic preservation and restoration continues today. While bigger organizations are apt to let an occasional restoration project go on, the S.P.A.B. does their best to protest any such efforts. A reporter enthusiastically related the restoration project going on at Barley Hall of York in The Times. He claimed that the restoration was completely accurate because the same construction techniques were being used and forty-seven of the 520 sections of oak were original.136 The 1992 Chairman of the S.P.A.B., James Boutwood, responded in much the same manner as Morris:

Now that the work has been carried out only 9 per cent of the original frame survives and virtually none of the later (and listed) alterations. By taking it down to ground level prior to reconstructing it, the entire history of the building has been destroyed, leaving what is left as a lifeless museum object and not part of a living building. It is now virtually worthless as an object of serious study because of the destruc-


tion wrought to recreate yet another contribution to our Disneyland heritage.137

This letter also points to the fact that Barley Hall had been listed as an ancient monument and therefore, given statutory protection.138 "Disneyland heritage" refers to England's latest trend of turning some historic sites into tourist attractions. Another example of this is a proposed "Cadfael Centre" on the grounds of Shrewsbury Abbey, named after Brother Cadfael and based on Ellis Peter's character in her popular novels set in medieval times.139

Besides the S.P.A.B., two other preservation groups have widespread popularity in England today: the National Trust, a charity founded in 1895, and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, known as English Heritage, a government-funded organization founded in 1984. While these organization's goals may not be as restrictive as the S.P.A.B. concerning restoration, their emphasis is still to maintain and preserve historic sites as accurately as possible. Calke Abbey, a 1989 National Trust project, provides an example of how the organization tried to preserve the structure as accurately as it could.

138Ibid.
There were four epicenters of dry rot. We re­placed all the affected timber, but did not cut out any sound timber, as is often done, beyond the outbreak itself: we wanted to preserve as much of the building as possible.\textsuperscript{140}

English Heritage, the youngest British conservation organization, is probably the most effective because it is government-funded. It operates more than four hundred historic sites, ranging from the Castlerigg Stone Circle in Cumbria, dating from 2000 B.C., to the twelfth century Framlingham Castle in Suffolk. English Heritage tries to maintain the historic integrity of its sites when possible. An example is the Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island, a ruin which has been preserved by keeping it clean and well cared for.\textsuperscript{141}

The S.P.A.B. has made incredible strides in its goals. While not winning every case, the Society prevented much of the gross sorts of restoration common at its founding. Certainly, a comparison of attitudes between the nineteenth and twentieth century portrays a victory for the S.P.A.B.. The strength of interest in historic sites and what these sites represent are an example of the effectiveness of the Morris and the S.P.A.B..


CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

William Morris and the S.P.A.B. in the nineteenth century are the main focuses of this paper. However, it is difficult to ascertain the Society's effectiveness and motivation without understanding what drove the founder. In the first chapter, I show the relationship between Morris's art, writing, and political views and his founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Understanding his personal philosophy necessitated a brief analysis of the individuals who most intellectually influenced Morris: John Keats, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin.

The second chapter examines the S.P.A.B. in the nineteenth century. This section focuses on the Society's founding, the important difference between historic preservation and restoration, the manner in which the Society carried out its work, the type of people involved in the Society, and some of its projects. Highlighted are the brief case studies of the York city churches and Kirkstall Abbey. The York city churches case provided an accurate description of the type of ecclesiastical opposition the Society could encounter as well as the type of public relations maneuvering the Society could carry out. The Kirk-
stall Abbey case highlighted the secular opposition confronting the S.P.A.B. as well as providing a good example of the results of simply leaving a ruin, a ruin.

Although the S.P.A.B. concerned itself with hundreds of cases in the nineteenth century, this paper specifies two: Westminster Abbey and Edinburgh Castle. These were chosen because they were large cases which required a high degree of attention and correspondence while they each demonstrate different situations and obstacles. These cases are addressed in the third and fourth chapter of this paper.

Westminster Abbey provides an example of the biggest obstacle the S.P.A.B. could encounter: the Church of England. The Church of England argued that churches were a place of worship, still a vital part of the community and obligated to serve the community even if it meant changing the structure of the building. From a religious perspective, the building was not as important as the congregation. Further, the needs of the congregation constantly changed and this needed to be reflected in changing architecture and interior design.

The S.P.A.B. also felt that Westminster Abbey, and other churches, belonged to the public. The Society argued that the public did not want the Abbey altered. In their opinion, alterations made to the Abbey defaced the struc-
ture of the building. According to the S.P.A.B., the Church of England treated historic churches as their possessions, not something that was an essential part of the past to be maintained by the present for future generations.

The chapter on the Westminster Abbey details the S.P.A.B.'s involvement from 1880 to 1897. During this period, they tried to prevent restoration work on the North Transept Porches, the northern rose window, Ashburnham House, the cloisters, the interior of the Abbey, and the Abbey monuments and memorials. Although Micklethwaite, a supporter of preservation, was given the surveyorship of the Abbey in 1897, so much restoration had taken place on the exterior of the Abbey that the S.P.A.B. did not consider the case successful.

The S.P.A.B. worked on the Edinburgh Castle case from 1883 to 1891. They focused on Parliament Hall and St. Margaret's Chapel, located within the Castle walls. This case was considered a success because: no restoration occurred at St. Margaret's, the work done at Parliament Hall was necessary and most original work maintained, and practices of historic preservation began during S.P.A.B. involvement.

The case at Edinburgh Castle provides an example of the S.P.A.B. working within the secular community. It
shows how the S.P.A.B. functioned when the architect's involved were willing to work with instead of against them. The case is particularly interesting considering that the S.P.A.B. did show an unusual willingness to compromise in that, however minimal, some restoration work was done at Parliament Hall.

The final chapter briefly touches upon the S.P.A.B.'s involvement and growing effectiveness in the twentieth century. By this time, not only did the Society have more public support, but the fervor for restoration had abated in the last years of the nineteenth century. The prevention of restoration was still important to the S.P.A.B., but they began to emphasize preservation techniques and educational programs. The present Society remains active and still follows the same goals outlined by Morris in 1877.

A question inevitably raised by the study of the S.P.A.B. is: Where should the line of historic restoration be drawn? If Morris accepted the restoration work done before the nineteenth century as part of the historical continuum, then why isn't that the case with work done in the Victorian age. Morris disagreed with Victorian restoration because it copied Gothic architecture. However, the motivation for imitating this architecture was also part of
the historical continuum and possibly should be recorded architecturally.

In this paper, I have outlined the facts surrounding the founding and growth of the S.P.A.B.. Limited research has been done on Morris in relation to the S.P.A.B., and even less on the Society itself. The only two secondary sources that cover Morris and the S.P.A.B. in any depth are E.P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* and Charles Dellheim's *The Face of the Past: The Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England*. Most of the information obtained for the chapters on the founding of the S.P.A.B., Westminster Abbey, and Edinburgh Castle was primary research found in the S.P.A.B. archive. There is still more work to be done to fully understand the S.P.A.B. in the nineteenth century.

The S.P.A.B. is responsible for an abundance of historic preservation and for the change of attitude in England which places value on historic architecture. Given Morris's love for architecture and his disgust at the practice of restoration, the continuance of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings would be a great satisfaction to him. His intense love for all arts, his idealized notion of Medieval society, and his distaste for industrialization merged in his hopes for the future. The S.P.A.B. provided a way for Morris to do his part, to save
what he could for posterity. In turn, the S.P.A.B. is doing its part in preserving not only historic architecture, but history itself.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Fun (London). 27 June 1877.


________. *Hopes and Fears for Art.* London: Longman's, Green, and Co., 1903.


________. *News from Nowhere: or, An Epoch of Rest. Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance.* London: Longman's, Green, and Co., 1899.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


*Punch* (London). 8 September 1877. 10 January 1880.


*The Times* (London). 4 June 1877, 7 July 1877, 17 April 1878, 2 August 1878, 24. 29 November 1879, 12 April 1882, 15 November 1883, 10 September 1890, 11 February 1891, 1 June 1895, 14 December 1895.


