

The "Bride's Room"

By John Duerkop

One of the two Archivists of the Cathedral

The original bell tower at St. George's cracked due to the force exerted by the swinging weight of the bell. The tower was removed in 1837. William Coverdale was engaged to design a new narthex (lobby or vestibule), bell tower and portico in 1838. Work continued until 1846.

Included in the work were galleries or balconies on the sides and back of the nave (the largest part of the building where the pews are located). One of them, at the back and above the front entrance to the Church, included the organ and space for the choir. A new stone structure was needed to not only support the bell tower but also to include the main "front" door to the Church and staircases to access the galleries.

Coverdale's solution to these needs was to design a structure that included three circular spaces leading up from the main floor. The central one of the three was the narthex connecting the main entrance to the nave of the Church. On either side of the narthex, and directly connected to it as well as having their own exterior doors and doors to the northeast and southeast corners (geographical directions, not ecclesiastical) of the nave, were two rooms, each containing a circular staircase that accessed the inside galleries above.

In 1891-92, work was done that almost doubled the size of the nave and added the dome. The work also removed the galleries on three sides of the nave. The staircases in the corners therefore became redundant.

One of the staircase spaces, the north one, remains today as undesignated space. It contains the access to the top of the bell tower and now has a ceiling for the room on the main floor. It still has an outside door of its own, a door to the nave and is still connected to the narthex through an arch.

The former staircase space on the south side became the "Bride's Room." With a new ceiling above the main floor level, it also retains three doors. One is to the outside, permitting a bride and her father (and more recently often her mother) to enter the Cathedral directly without going through the narthex. They can wait there until the ceremony is to begin. The second door is an open arch that leads to the narthex and thereby to the nave. The third door still leads directly to the southwest corner of the nave.

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