

# Summary : relations between English and Swiss Architecture in the 19th Century

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*Relations between English and Swiss Architecture in the 19th Century*

## Summary

p. 70 – p. 81

### ENGLISH CHURCHES IN SWITZERLAND

(André Meyer)

A number of English churches were built in Switzerland within a short space of time in the second half of the 19th century. The central artistic problem facing the English architects was whether their native High Gothic stylistic model could be combined with the traditions of Swiss architecture, and if so, how. It was up to the designers to take their starting points firstly from the prevailing English principle, then from the specifically Swiss traditions, and not least from rural church architecture on both sides of the Channel.

The *Holy Trinity Church in Geneva* (1851–3), the earliest English church in Switzerland, and the *St Mark's Church in Lucerne* (1898–9) may be regarded as the most thoroughly English of all in style. Their ground-plans link them with the ideas of Pugin and constitute early examples of asymmetrical structure in Swiss church architecture, whose goals around 1850 remained the clarity, simplicity and legibility of the volumes. Stylistic features common to the English town churches in Geneva, Lausanne and Lucerne are the straight termination of the chancel, the open roof construction in the interior, the picturesque surfaces of the irregularly distributed masonry, the tendency to complicate the ground-plan, and the silhouette effect obtained by ranging individual components together. Such forms strove towards a functional and unadulterated Gothicism. They first took root in Switzerland in the 1880's, due to the influence of English and German theorists.

These English-oriented stylistic methods manifest themselves quite dogmatically in Alexander Koch's design for

the reconstruction and extension of the English Church in Zurich (1895–6). They include the irregular ground-plan arrangement, silhouette effects with strong outlines, graduated building masses, a textile top-surface structure, and an organization of individual components that is unrelated to a rigid main axis and subsidiary axis, or to the subordination of certain elements to others. There can be no doubt that here Koch was imitating the Picturesque Style, which had begun around 1750 with Walpole's Strawberry Hill.

In contrast to the town examples, the English churches situated in the alpine valleys of the Valais, the Bernese Oberland and the canton of Grisons reveal a much looser adherence on the part of the architect to medieval forms. The *Holy Trinity Church in Pontresina*, built in 1882 by the Englishman Richard Popplewell Pullan, is the most important specimen of English church architecture in Switzerland. Pullan shows a remarkable feeling and consideration for the local traditions, and achieves an interior design of unparalleled beauty by the almost exclusive employment of timber. For the English chapel in Meiringen, too, the (unknown) architect very skillfully managed to incorporate the essence of the local practice in his artistic composition. Here as in the *St James Church in Grindelwald*, the ingenious open roof within is particularly striking. We must not forget, however, that 19th-century Swiss architecture offers many similar examples, such as the "Festhütten" of the 1840s and the chalets built as a result of Ernst Gladbach's illustrated book *Der Schweizer Holzstyl* (The Swiss Timber Style) 1882–6. Thus it may be assumed that the timber constructions of English churches in Switzerland were also to some extent affected and stimulated by this tradition. But conversely, such Swiss interior designs as that of the Protestant church in Zurich-Wiedikon would be inconceivable without their English models.

ENGLISH FEATURES OF THE ZÜRICH  
NEUMÜNSTER CHURCH AND OTHER BUILD-  
INGS BY LEONHARD ZEUGHEER

(Hanspeter Rebsamen)

The Neumünster church in the Zurich suburb of Riesbach was built by *Leonhard Zeugheer* (1812–66) between 1836–9. The competition for the design, one of Switzerland's earliest, was held in 1834 and adjudicated by the best Zurich architects of the Classicist period: *Hans Kaspar Escher* and *Hans Konrad Stadler*. Some important outside architects including *Melchior Berri* of Basle were consulted as judges in the controversy over the "right Protestant church" which arose after the prize had been awarded. In his lengthy proposals Berri advocated the ancient odeion as the best ground-plan, but in the end the longitudinal scheme in Zeugheer's design prevailed. Zeugheer had won the first prize with a Gothic Revival design, but the holding company was unwilling to carry this out in its capacity as proprietor. In the interim Daniel Pfister displaced Zeugheer with a scheme combining Classicist and Gothic Revival elements. Finally, however, Zeugheer had his way with a church whose front tower was crowned by an octagonal belvedere on the lines of the Athenian "tower of the winds". This and the Lysicrates monument had been very much favoured tower motifs (either juxtaposed or combined) in English church architecture since *Christopher Wren*, but especially in the 1820s. Zeugheer had family connections with England—his brother Hans Jakob (1803–65), known as "Zeugheer-Herrmann", was a celebrated musician in Manchester and Liverpool. Leonhard Zeugheer's tower design for Stäfa in Canton Zurich (1835) was influenced by *Nicholas Hawksmoor's* churches, while the Neumünster was influenced by churches of the 1820s built by *Henry William Inwood* (St Pancras, Upper Woburn Place, London), *Francis Bedford*, *Charles-Ferdinand Porden* and *William Bernard Clark*. *Charles Barry's* buildings for London clubs (Travellers' 1829–32, Reform Club 1837–40) had an effect on Zeugheer's later work.

The Gothic Revival design for the Neumünster (1834) must have shown similar English influences. Unfortunately it has not been preserved. The significance of extant 1834 ground-plan drawings from England (country houses in the Liverpool area), and of a water-colour portraying a "chapel and parsonage in Redditch" (Worcestershire) remains to be clarified.

Via Zeugheer's Neumünster, the influence of English Classicist front towers reappeared in the church at Zurich-Fluntern by *Karl Moser* (1860–1936). This church was built in 1918–20. Moser had made reconstruction studies for the lantern of the Neumünster tower in 1917, likewise

*Alfred Friedrich Bluntschli* (1842–1930) two years earlier. The schemes of these two professors at the Zurich Federal Polytechnic led to solutions that are once more reminiscent of Zeugheer's English models.

GOTTFRIED SEMPER (1803–79) AND HIS  
WHITEHALL PALACE PROJECT

(Martin Fröhlich)

In 1857, at the start of his stay in Zurich, Semper began to sketch the layout of a building complex and palace for a competition. It provides a good insight into Semper's design methods and is at the same time a valuable complement to his other designs. The object of the competition was to remodel the governmental district of London's Whitehall and to mark out large blocks of buildings for the government houses. In addition Semper proposed a palace, though we do not know for what purpose. In its layout this palace would have resembled the Dresden "Zwingerforum" (Barbican) which Semper designed between 1835–46, but unfortunately never carried out. The nucleus of the Whitehall design would have been formed by William Kent's Horse Guards building, while Inigo Jones' Banqueting House would have served as part of one of the wings. Semper bound the whole complex into a dense tissue of axes and collateral lines so as to unite the palace with the other prominent buildings of Westminster, which are likewise inter-related. The resulting scheme is hardly comparable with such older designs as that of Versailles, because although it is organized along a central axis it does not form a true spatial sequence. Since the individual outer and inner areas are separated by colonnades, triumphal arches and gateways, the extent of their relationship is necessarily limited.

The sketch is important to Semper's *œuvre* because it shows how often Semper concerned himself with this kind of town-planning. Other schemes dating from his Zurich period also have affinities with the idea of the "Zwingerforum". The realization of this idea in the shape of the Viennese "Kaiserforum" and Court Museums was Semper's final and crowning achievement.

The sketch for the Whitehall project consists of a leaf from a London city map, on which Semper made drawings, and of several fragments of a larger ground-plan sketch from Semper's assistants. Drawings for publication were later affixed to these in order to stabilize them. The fragments were found by accident when the comprehensive Semper legacy was being put in order in the Zurich Polytechnic, and the connection was seen with the sketch on the London map.

## NEU-BUONAS VILLA ON THE LAKE OF ZUG

(Reto Locher)

The villa of Neu-Buonas stood on a peninsula on the west bank of the Lake of Zug, surrounded by a park and bordered by the medieval castle of Alt-Buonas. An industrialist named Carl A. von Gonzenbach acquired Buonas in 1871. The Oxford architect William Wilkinson designed the plans, and the building of Neu-Buonas was carried out in 1873–7 by the Zurich architect Adolf Nabholz. Wilkinson (1819–1901) was one of Oxford's leading architects, although he had started as an artisan. He did most of his work in and around Oxford, the later part in association with his nephew Harry Wilkinson Moore.

The ground-plan of Neu-Buonas divided into two sections: the owner's quarters, opening out from the central hallway, and the servants' quarters. Great care was taken of the fittings, and since they were preserved in virtually their original state they provided a good picture of the style of the period. Neu-Buonas is one of the costliest and most representative country houses in Wilkinson's *œuvre*.

Its formal idiom was derived from the Tudor period. Certainly no particular model can be identified, yet the individual elements and the manner of their employment are easily traced back to that epoch. The quality of Neu-Buonas lay not so much in isolated details as in its heterogeneous over-all appearance.

For Switzerland, this villa was among the early examples of country-house architecture based on English models. It was pulled down in 1970—a regrettable loss to the Swiss architectural scene.

## GEORGE EDMUND STREET AND SWITZERLAND

(Georg Germann)

George Edmund Street is one of the leading Gothic Revival architects. This article will examine from the English viewpoint the churches that Street completed or projected for the Anglicans in Switzerland. The English church ideal of the 1840s was the picturesque, asymmetrical rural church, above all in the English Decorated Style. In the 1850s there was a growing involvement with continental models on the one hand, and with the larger kind of town church on the other. Street wrote a number of articles

defending this betrayal of the English tradition. Church projects for the continent were a welcome opportunity to break the bounds of accepted practice.

Street's design for a Berne chapel, previously known solely from the description in the journal *The Ecclesiologist*, has been preserved in facsimile in Berne. It was commissioned in 1857, i.e. directly before Street's famous churches of St James the Less in Westminster and St Philip and James in Oxford. The design reflects Street's encounter with Swiss medieval churches, which he had got to know on his travels, and also the beginnings of his mastery as an architect.

In his design of 1875 for the English church in Lausanne, Street had recourse to such features of the Berne project as the turret and the west porch. Erected in the years 1877–8, the church was extended in 1898.

Street's English church at Mürren was also built in 1878. From the English standpoint it may be classified with the Colonial timber churches, from the American with early examples of the Shingle Style, and from the Swiss standpoint with the first conscious adaptations to the local architectural tradition. We may also recall that Street's own dwelling was partly covered by shingles.

The church built to Street's designs at Vevey in 1880 shows the least traces of particular English or Swiss models from the Middle Ages. The Early Gothic forms of the vaulted chancel are reminiscent of those of Lausanne Cathedral.

## ALEXANDER KOCH

(Othmar Birkner)

The Zurich architect Alexander Koch (b. Zurich 1848, d. London 1911) lived in the period of the Revivals and of Art Nouveau. He began to study architecture in Zurich with Semper, in 1866, and continued his studies in Berlin during 1870–1. In the latter year he opened an office in his home town with Heinrich Ernst. In 1885 Koch moved to London, where he worked in conjunction with Charles William English and was co-founder of the *Academy Architecture and Annual Architectural Review* (1889).

At first his often pompous architecture shows all the shades of the late Eclecticism. It consists of stylistic experiments which are apt to take on positively grotesque features. His concert-hall design for Solothurn (1895), for instance, combines elements of local 15th-century architecture with filigree-like panelling in the English Renaissance style. But Koch's work did not end here, and it is by looking at his plans that we can best see the importance

of his efforts. He might be summed up as a master of the ground-plan, where he was a pioneer in two fields: the school building and the dwelling-house. We find that even his most amazing stylistic ideas are subordinate to the ground-plan. The school building is distinguished by its large window areas, and so for this he modified the style of 16th-century English architecture. The style also permits of asymmetrical dispositions and hence of an optimal lighting and ventilation of the rooms, all obtained by the most economical method. As early as 1876 people spoke of the "hygienic principle" inherent in his school buildings. Domestic buildings also provided Koch with a rewarding field for experiment, and he went along with the thinking of Thomas Graham Jackson, who recommended a revival of English Gothic architecture out of practical considerations. Let us remember also Koch's great model Norman

Shaw, for whom, said Hermann Muthesius, the house exterior had little or no interest. In 1889 Koch was already affirming in the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* that the Englishman "simply builds houses and does not go in for architecture". It was just this attitude, he claimed, which led to houses that were comfortable as well as very good value for money, and his Swiss colleagues should try and take a similar line. Even before Muthesius, Koch was promoting the English type of dwelling by means of the *Annual Architectural Review*. This journal published the achievements of both English and Swiss architects, furthering an exchange of ideas which in many ways can still serve as an example today. After Koch's death the journal was continued even during the difficult years of the First World War—a valuable record of international friendship.