

# Time and Patience Vital Elements in Construction of Cathedrals

NEW YORK—On an uptown Manhattan sidewalk, the Rev. Canon Edward N. West stood with a pair of binoculars to his eyes, gazing at a figure high above.

There, kneeling on a catwalk, stonemason Mario Tommasi chipped at a limestone block, cutting an insigne in the front gable of the Cathedral of St. John The Divine.

"He'll need to go a little deeper there in one spot," the churchman told an overseer. They bent over sketches, talking, fingers pointing.

Work on the emblem, the coat

of arms of the New York Episcopal diocese, has been going on for more than two months. But that is only a moment in the making of a cathedral.

**TAKES TIME**

It takes time and in unruffled disregard of the pace of modern life, the builders of several cathedrals in the United States are going at the task in the manner of the ancients.

"Cathedrals are built for the centuries, and in building them, you think in terms of centuries, not decades," says Canon West, who expects that only future generations will see the comple-

The seasoning of the years and events has gone into several cathedrals started in this country long ago and still a-building.

The Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul (commonly known as the National Cathedral) in Washington, was conceived by the nation's first president, George Washington.

**STARTED IN 1806**

A site for it was designated in original plans for the capital city, but not until 1892 did Congress grant a charter for it, with actual construction beginning

14 years later. The work still continues.

In San Francisco, still another Episcopal structure, Grace Cathedral, is considered nearly completed, after more than a half century of work.

"Momentarily, interest centers on the public unveiling of the twin, 16-foot gold-leaf, bronze entrance doors, cast from the eastern portal of the baptistry of San Giovanni Cathedral at Florence, Italy.

"Worthy to be the gates of paradise," Michelangelo once said of it.

In Missouri, the delicate,

highly skilled art of applying mosaics to the interior of St. Louis Cathedral was started 60 years ago, when the bare main structure was finished.

Now in its final stages, the present work involves affixing mosaic scenes to the huge dome of the Roman Catholic structure, considered one of the foremost examples of Byzantine architecture in the Western Hemisphere.

Its expanses of brilliant mosaics, when complete, will cover about 65,000 square feet.

In the hearth-stone cathedrals, like St. John The Divine, shop-

In Cologne, Germany, the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Peter was started in the thirteenth century, but not finished until the 19th century, a span of 600 years.

Famed Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris also was begun in the thirteenth century, but the fleche, or slender central spire, was not erected until the last century.

The twin towers at the front of the majestic French Cathedral of Chartres were built centuries apart, one of them in highly decorative Gothic, the other of trimly, tapering Romanesque style.

Canon West, who often spends his vacations touring noted churches of the world, says that in a sense a cathedral always is evolving and changing.

**BECOMES MUSEUM**

"There's a curious cliché which goes, 'When a cathedral is finished, it is finished,'" he added. "That is, it has become static, a kind of museum, no longer a living, growing thing."

That is what has happened to St. Sophia, the magnificent Eastern Orthodox cathedral of Constantinople (Istanbul), turned by Turkey into a state museum. Its ancient Byzantine domes and turrets make it a wonder to behold.

Still to rise above St. John The Divine are towers on either side of the front facade and also the north transept. Steel scaffolding rears atop the structure for lifting granite blocks into place.

**ROUGH GUESS**

As to when everything will be complete, Canon West offers only a rough guess—perhaps 50 years. But, as in other cathedrals still in development, worship, assemblies and study have gone on these for years.

Estimated date for completion of the National Cathedral in Washington is 1977, but the goal is flexible and has been 50 years since the foundation stone was laid by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907.

Its south-transept was completed in 1952, following the north transept, and only this year, "Gloria in Excelsis" tower with carillons was finished. Twin towers at the west end of the nave still are to go up.

**STARTED AFTER QUAKE**

San Francisco's Grace Cathedral was started after the great earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed its predecessor, which dated back to 1853. Work on it was halted in 1932, because of the depression.

The work resumed in 1961, after the Rt. Rev. James M. Pike, Episcopal bishop of California, sparked a drive to get it done.

Because of the possibility of earthquakes, Grace Cathedral is built of concrete and steel; instead of the customary stone. It was dedicated Nov. 20.

The St. Louis Cathedral, also of concrete, is expected to have its mosaics completed in about a year. The work was halted for varying periods by both world wars and the depression.



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## Presidents' Signatures

Cost \$1,540

LONDON—Oxford book dealer B. H. Blackwell paid \$1,540 at a London auction recently for a collection of every American presidents signature from George Washington to John F. Kennedy.

The signatures were auctioned off by Sotheby and Company, along with a number of other documents of particular American interest.

Many of the presidents' signatures are on letters they wrote. Washington's is on a letter in his handwriting to Brigadier Glover and dated February 25, 1778.

Thomas Jefferson's autograph appears on an American ship captain's passport dated April 19, 1808. Kennedy's is on a letter to Daniel Pelton, dated February 6, 1953.

There was no indication whether the collection described as unique by a Sotheby official—had been bought for an American buyer.

New York bookbinder H. B. Kraus paid \$616 for a document signed by two American presidents — Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson — and a future president, General Ulysses S. Grant.

Kraus also paid \$3,640 for a document dated June 9, 1588, giving English explorer Sir Henry Gilbert the right "to search for lands on that part of America between the Cape of Florida and Cape Britain."

A letter from General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate forces, to the widow of General Archibald Gracie was sold for \$650 to a private buyer.

### Eggplant Idea

Ever French-fry eggplant? To do so, pare the vegetable. Cut the eggplant into strips, just as you would slice potatoes for frying. Roll the strips in seasoned flour and fry in hot deep fat until they are tender and brown.