

# HISTORY

The first Catholic Church to be built in Bradford was the Church of St Mary's at Stott Hill which was constructed in 1824 to serve the Irish population of textile workers that resided in the Black Abbey and White Abbey area of the town. Following the influx of Irish immigrants after the potato famine of 1845, the priest of St Mary's, Canon Thomas Harrison, perceived the need for a new church to meet the needs of the expanding population.

Money was slowly raised for a building fund and in 1851 a parcel of land at the top of a road known as Cropper Lane, now Rebecca Street and West Grove Street opposite the Bradford Hospital, which was later to become the Bradford Infirmary, was obtained for the sum of £1,057.

The Sheffield architects Weightman, Hadfield and Goldie were appointed to produce a design and this was drawn up by George Goldie who was one of the most able and active Catholic ecclesiastical architects in the country during the second half of the 19th century.

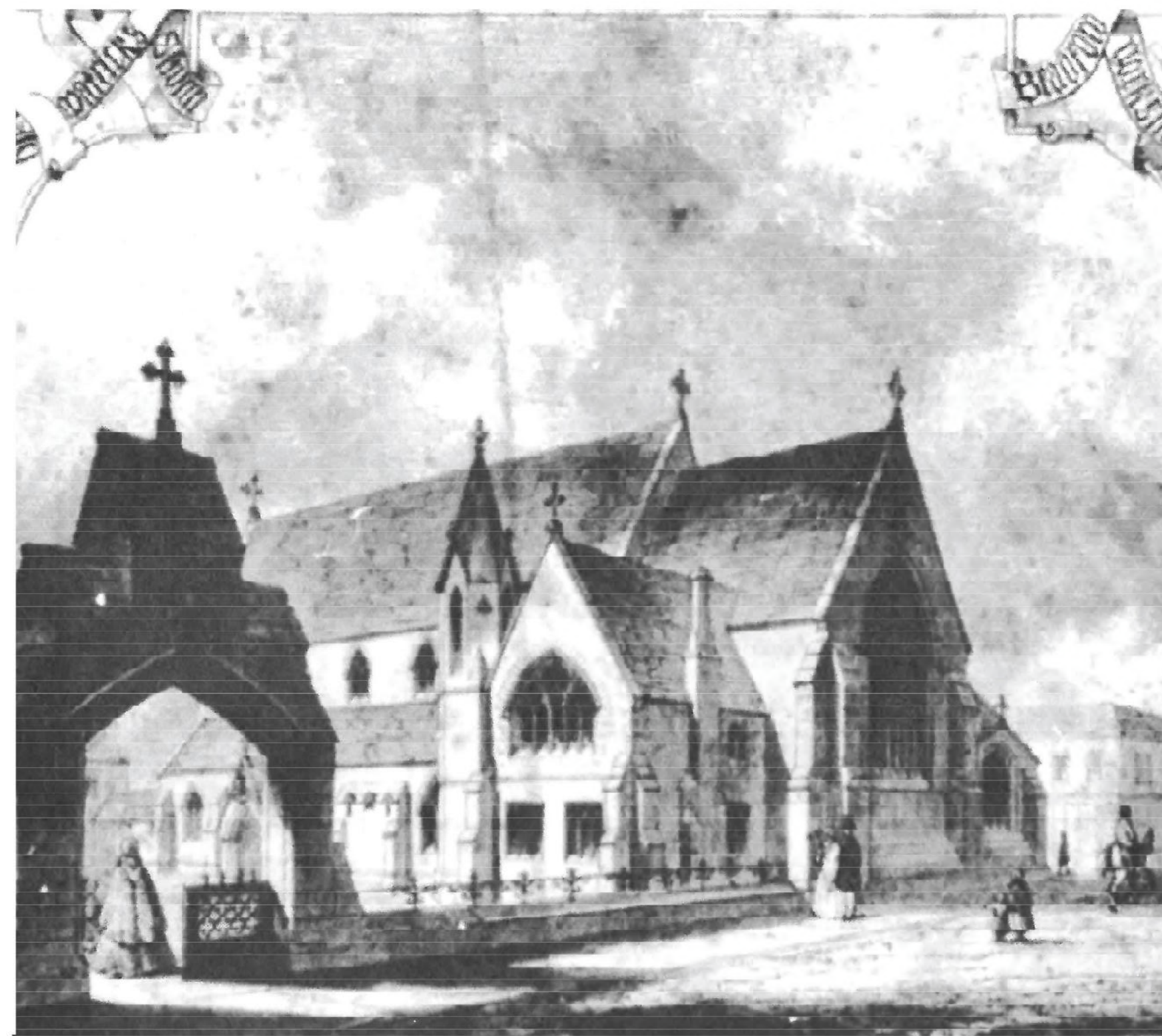
Construction work commenced in 1851, although the foundation stone was not blessed until 17th March 1852.

When the church was opened in July 1853 it consisted of a shell with no presbytery or porch and was surrounded by lawned areas on the south and west sides. The condition of the church remained largely unchanged until 1863 when Fr. William Scruton became the parish's fourth priest and undertook the development of the whole site, which was to include the building of a presbytery, a school, a porch and convent.

The church was finally consecrated in 1903, during the incumbancy of Canon Earnshaw, when the debt from the construction work was settled, and this coincided with the church's Golden Jubilee.

The church comprises of a 6-bay nave with a pointed arcade on alternating octagonal and cylindrical piers, with carved stone statues of the twelve apostles installed between arches. The Sanctuary has a 3-bay hammer beam roof which was over-boarded in the reordering of 1968-72. The Caen stone Lady Chapel altar dates from 1867 and the oak parclose screen, designed by Dunn, Hansom and Dunn of Newcastle, was installed after 1887. The lean-to aisle ceilings were covered in polystyrene tiles as part of the late 20th century re-ordering however, these have now been removed to once again expose the stencilled boarding. The East window is by Hardman, of Powell and Hardman of Birmingham, and this was installed in 1871.

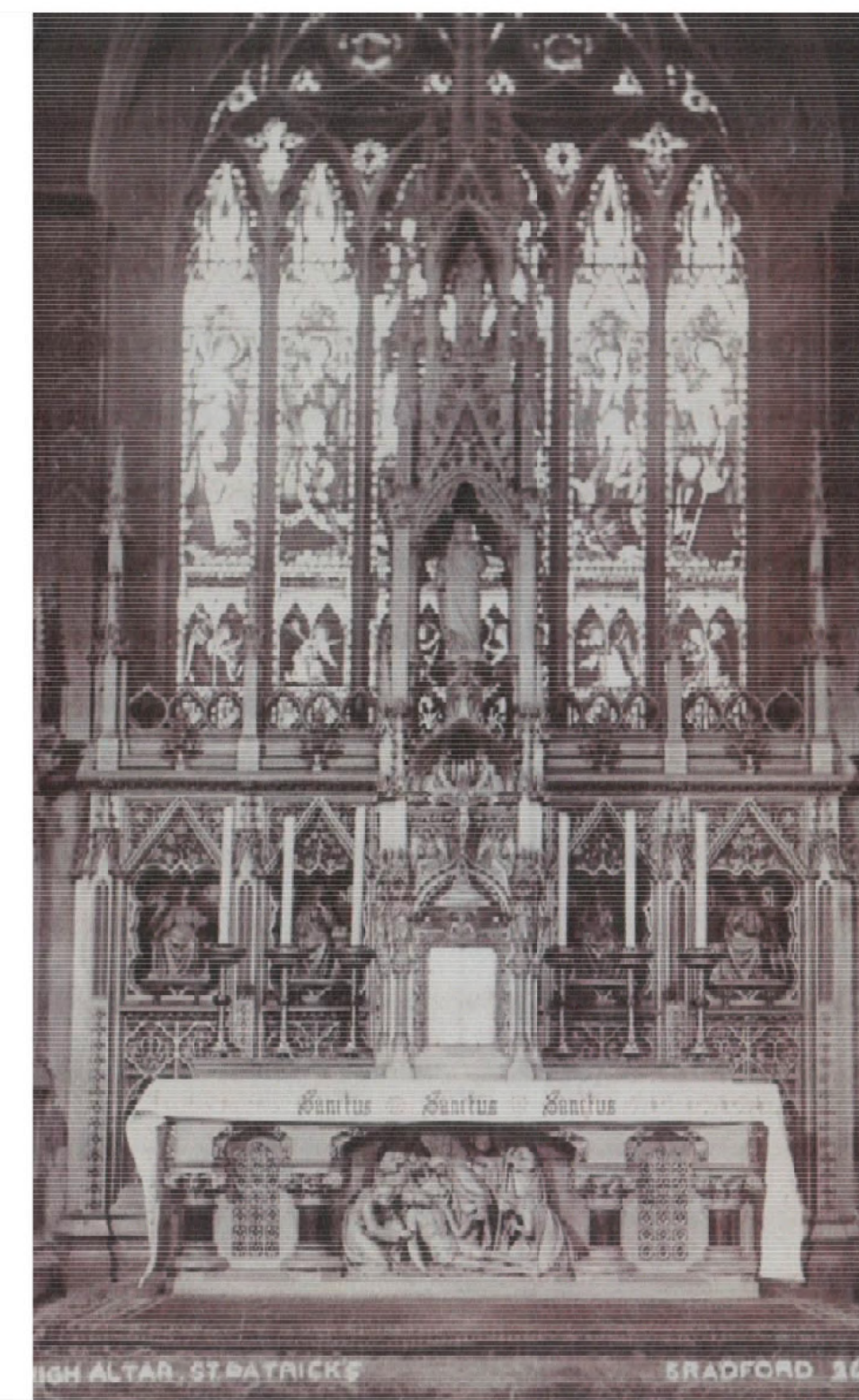
The church remained largely unaltered until internal re-ordering, to comply with the Directive of the Second Vatican Council that churches should be of more simple design with the altar brought forward was undertaken between 1968 and 1972. The original character of the church was much altered by these works with a lot of the original fixtures and fittings being stripped out.



THE ORIGINAL DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR THE CHURCH



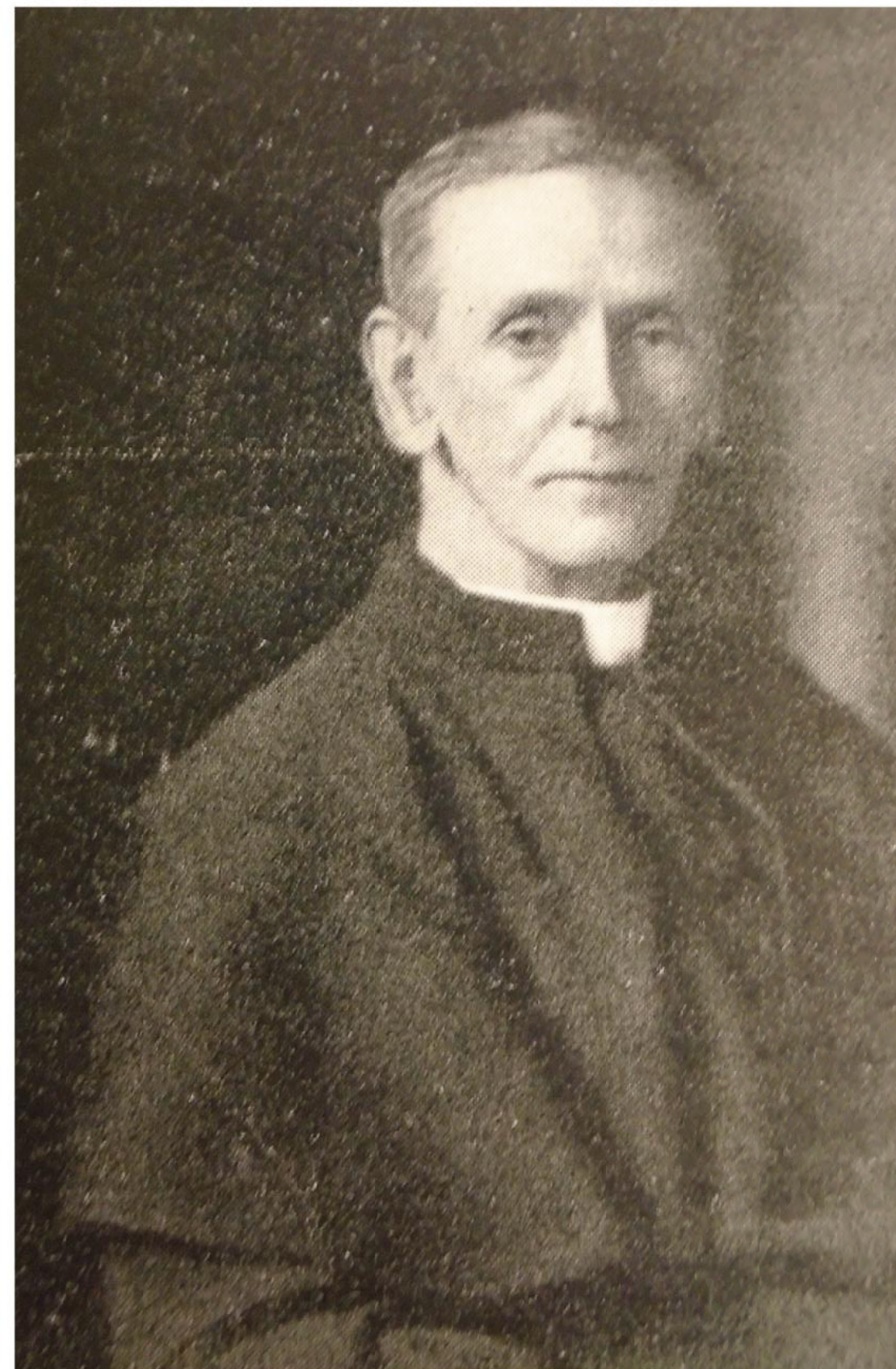
GEORGE GOLDIE OF WEIGHTMAN HADFIELD AND GOLDIE



THE REREDOS DESIGNED BY GEORGE GOLDIE



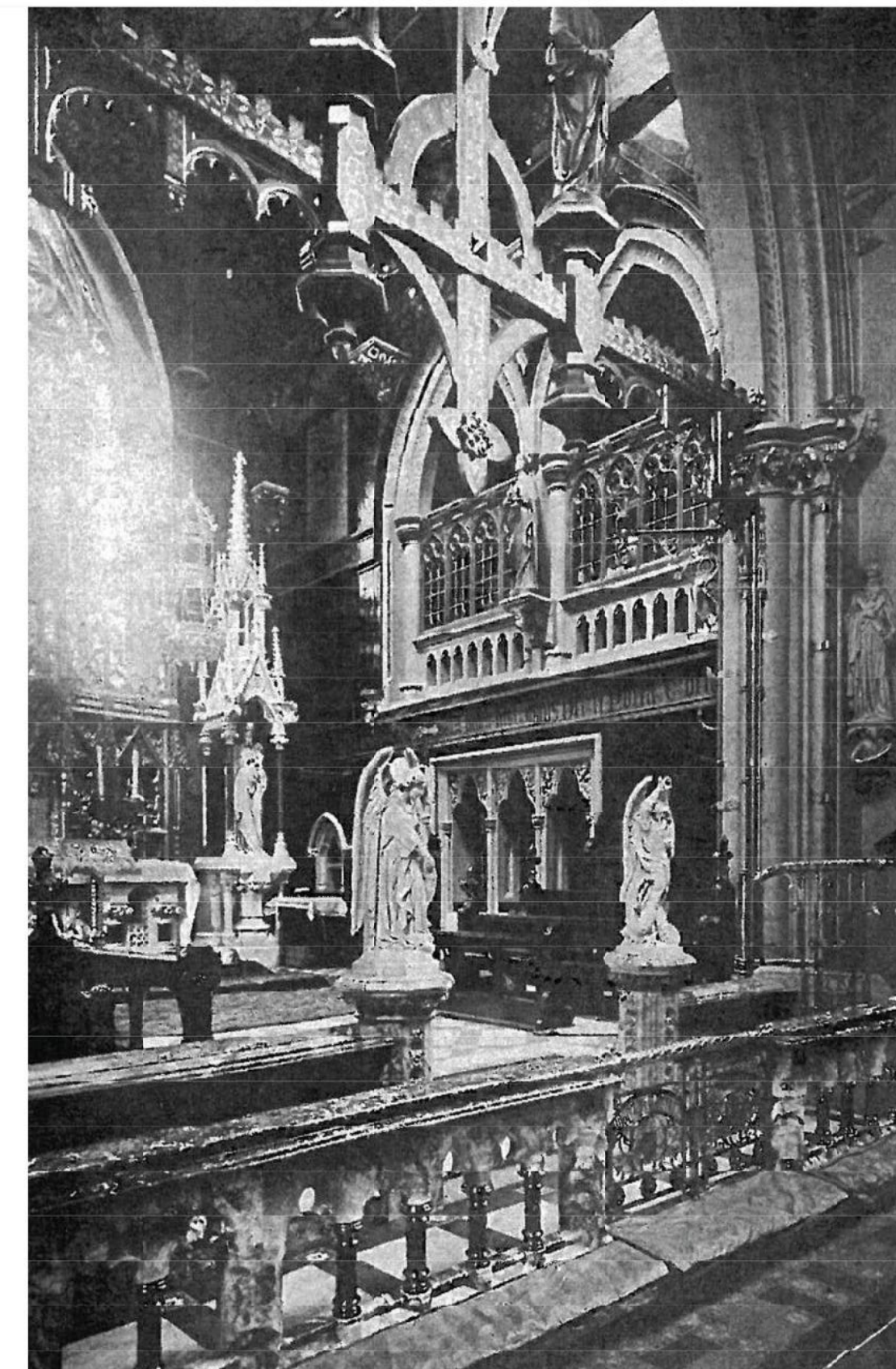
CANON WILLIAM SCRUTON 1863 - 1887



CANON JOHN EARNSHAW 1887 - 1929



THE NAVE AND SANCTUARY



THE SANCTUARY



THE EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH AND PRESBYTERY CIRCA 1903



THE WEST END OF THE CHURCH SHOWING THE GALLERY AND THE FATTORINI WINDOW



THE BAPTISTRY AND THE FOUNDERS PLAQUE



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