



ARCHITECTURE

EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

FOURTH QUARTER 2017



Ehlinger & Associates extends Seasons Greetings to all of our friends who receive the newsletter. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year.

Cathédrale de Saint-Pierre

The Cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Saintes is a very architecturally unusual French Gothic church with an equally varied history. The building was originally a Roman Catholic building, but is now owned by the government and functions as a national historic monument. It is located in the City of Saintes in the Charante-Maritime Region, between Bordeaux and La Rochelle.

This cathedral is almost unique among French Gothic cathedrals in that it has a single central bell tower / porch / entry as most French Gothic cathedrals have two towers, though many of these are asymmetrical in that the two towers don't match, as at Chartres. Many English Gothic cathedrals have only a single bell tower, though.

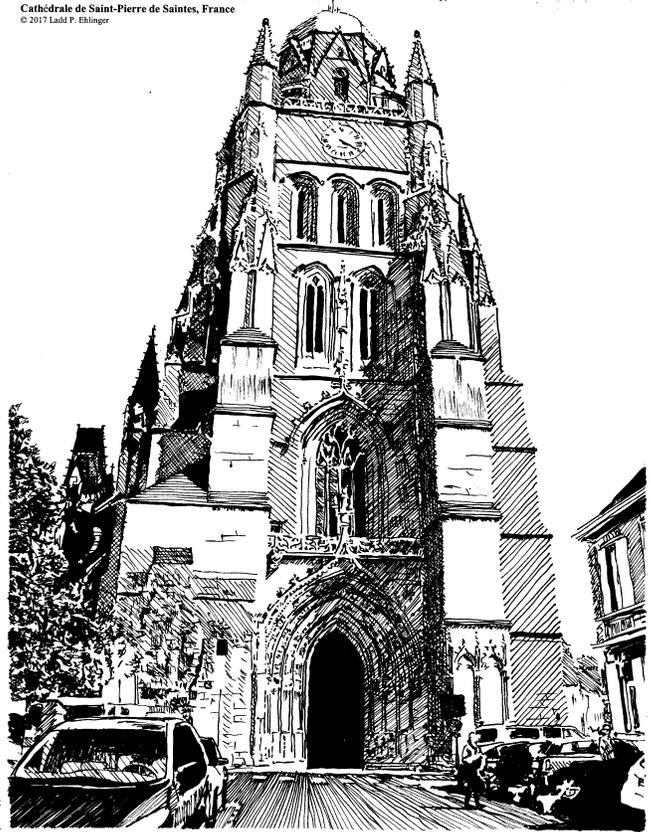
Saint-Pierre was built over an original church from the sixth century. The cathedral was developed over many centuries and styles, beginning in Romanesque, then Gothic, and finally Flamboyant Gothic. In the late twelfth century it was burned down during a siege by Henry Plantagenet in 1174. The Hundred years war later followed with even more



disastrous impact on the building. Construction began around 1450 to rebuild the church in the Flamboyant Gothic style. This is when the bell tower porch was begun. The bell tower is shown in this edition's print of a sketch by Ladd P. Ehlinger, and depicts a vertical triangular mass striving for the heavens, yet capped off by a silly little dome instead of the fleche (literally "arrow", a spire) it was intended to have. The Transamerica Tower in San Francisco has a similar triangular massing, and would look just as incomplete if the upper stories above the main elevators were lopped off also.

Money was the issue - there simply wasn't enough to build out the cathedral completely. The Diocese was not especially wealthy, so indulgences were sold to raise money - a major scandal ultimately. However, a little over a hundred years later in 1568, Protestants in their revolution, ransacked the church and destroyed most of the nave and the aisles along with the choir in the chevet: the vaults collapsed. So in the reconstruction that followed in the Seventeenth Century, the original wall height of the nave was not restored, nor were the ribbed

Cathédrale de Saint-Pierre de Saintes, France
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Cathédrale de Saint-Pierre de Saintes

groin vaults restored in the nave or the choir. The nave was roofed over with wood trusses and planking, and the choir was roofed over with a wooden ribbed barrel vault with planking - all pretty but inauthentic architecturally, yet they met the budget.

The portal of the bell tower is reputed to be the finest example of late (Flamboyant) Gothic in western France. The parallel arches contain magnificent sculptures, though many are damaged from vandals. The other sculptures of the cathedral are extraordinary also, the gargoyles (decorated rain-spouts) and the marmosets (similar to gargoyles, without drainage function, used to accent).

In the total ensemble, there are multiple chapels about the aisles and off the ambulatory. There is a cloister with other Diocesan buildings fronting on it, such as the Chapter House and Library.

Ladd P. Ehlinger, AIA

The Future Is Here. Do we even know it?

R. Perrin Ehlinger

The Electrical Outlet

Invented by Harvey Hubbell II, 1903, the 'separable electrical attachment-plug' has become more than a mainstay in every structure - it's a codified requirement. You can't build a house without electrical outlets every so many feet.

For over a century, we've welcomed them and used them, sometimes wishing we had more. We've put up with the non-aesthetic interruption of our wall space, and the difficulty of getting the outlets plumb and flush against the wall - an even more difficult task these days, with the cheap plastic boxes and flimsy plate covers. We've put up with it because we can move all of our electrical items around, limited only by cord length and how many outlets we had available.

What if we didn't need any of that? With battery technology advancing rapidly, and most electrical devices being designed to run using less power and with lower voltages, it's entirely feasible to do away with most wall outlets - replaced instead with a battery recharging bank.

Household appliances will first need to become commonly battery operated, but if lawnmowers, leaf-blowers, and tillers can run fine on batteries - so can vacuum cleaners, stand-up lamps, toasters and coffee makers. Why be limited by where a box is wired? Why scar our walls with hideous holes we're forced to ornament every 4 to 8 feet? Why drag cords and wires all over the place, interrupting the serenity of your household?

In a world where the only thing we plug in daily is our phone (and all we need for that is a usb outlet - not a 120v 20amp powerhouse), do we really need so many outlets?

The Flat Panel Television

Lighter, thinner, and cheaper than ever, the flat panel television has already revolutionized the interior design of houses, especially compared to its predecessor, the CRT. Instead of a bulky, immovable object, hogging floor space and demanding attention - the flat panel TV can float on a wall, allowing all the wiring to be hidden behind it. With wireless technology, even the wiring can now be minimized to just a power outlet. Most houses don't have power out-

lets 5' up the wall, but that's where we need them now.

With a little extra work to frame them, they can become a decorative element of the house, replacing artwork and even mirrors (if camera enabled). There's the added flexibility of rotating use. Your wall mirror can switch to a painting from the Louvre, or air your football game. While these are certainly not 'new' TV ideas - they're now tangible for anyone, when 50" TVs are less than \$400, about the same cost of a similar sized framed artwork or wall mirror.

LED Lighting

While LED lighting has been around for a bit now, and most of us are slowly switching our bulbs over time as the horrible fluorescents die out and the nice incandescents become harder to find - there's been little imaginative use of LED in home design so far. Items available at the stores work or replace existing fixtures, and they look just like the existing fixtures. But there's so much more possible...

Say you have a nice ceiling over your dining room, framed with some crown molding, but there's a chandelier you hate. It hangs too low, uses intermediate size bulbs (that you can hardly find now), and just doesn't fit. Take it out, and just re-do the whole ceiling as a coffer panel LED system. Frosted, decorated glass, and the lighting on a dimmer. The whole ceiling lights up, emphasizing whatever pattern you've chosen with the frosted coffers.

One could also have illuminated baseboards, set on a motion detector, that light your way with a comforting dim red light so you don't wake anyone else up, and you can get back to sleep easily once done.

Induction Cooking

A new arrival in the kitchen, induction cooking uses magnetism to heat pots rapidly, but the surface of the cooktop stays cool. This means the cooktop itself doesn't need to be built in to the countertop, or part of a slide-in stove. They're so flat, one could even be hidden away in the wall like a murphy bed. A murphy stove. Depending on your use of the kitchen, you could simply move your stovetop to where it's most convenient, and have more counterspace available when not cooking.

Wireless Switches

With the rise of smart computers and home devices, are we yet willing to place all of our trust in a centralized device for the convenience of removing even more wall interruptions that are no longer necessary?

If so, then we could do away with all of our wall switches, as well. Add microphones and motion detectors around the house, and you can just walk around and have the lights adjust automatically, or you speak to and scold your home AI when it gets it wrong.

Assuming no blue screens of death or hacking, would one even need wall switches anymore? Why bother, when bluetooth can be built right into the fixture? Will one ever lose the habit of reaching for the lightswitch around a doorway?

Dynamic Glass

The curtain and shades are a staple in interior design - but what if they were completely unnecessary? What if you could just change your glass from clear to solid with a command to your home's AI?

While the technology has been around for a good decade or longer, its price is soon coming into the reach for general household use, and they can now do more than just solid/clear - they can tint in between, or even become your televisions / artwork displays.

Curtains and shades might stick around, just as a familiar design element to take advantage of, but they won't be necessary to control the lighting. They'll be about as useful as a boot scraper in the city.

These all might seem like small conveniences, unless you've repainted your walls and had to remove all the plates and put them back (straight), unless you slide your stove out regularly to clean, unless you wash and iron your curtains occasionally, unless you've spent hours tying wires up and trying to hide them around your television, computer and sound system. Small improvements, perhaps - but still long term conveniences provided by smart design with new technology, that we can all take advantage of.

Not long ago, these were all elements of science fiction, but most are now such everyday devices that we may not even realize the full capabilities and conveniences of what's been created. Maybe it's time we do.