

THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL: THE CHANGES in the FRONT ELEVATION after hurricane DAVID 1979.

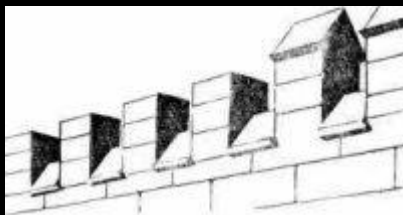
By Bernard Lauwyck



Many of us do not remember how the Cathedral front elevation looked like before the damage done by hurricane DAVID on August 29, 1979 and it might be interesting for them to describe the changes.

As we mentioned before the eastern spire fell on and through the roof of the side aisle. The two round stained glass windows in the front elevation were damaged. The statues in the front elevation are gone.

1. The eight tall MERLONS on top of the stone tower.



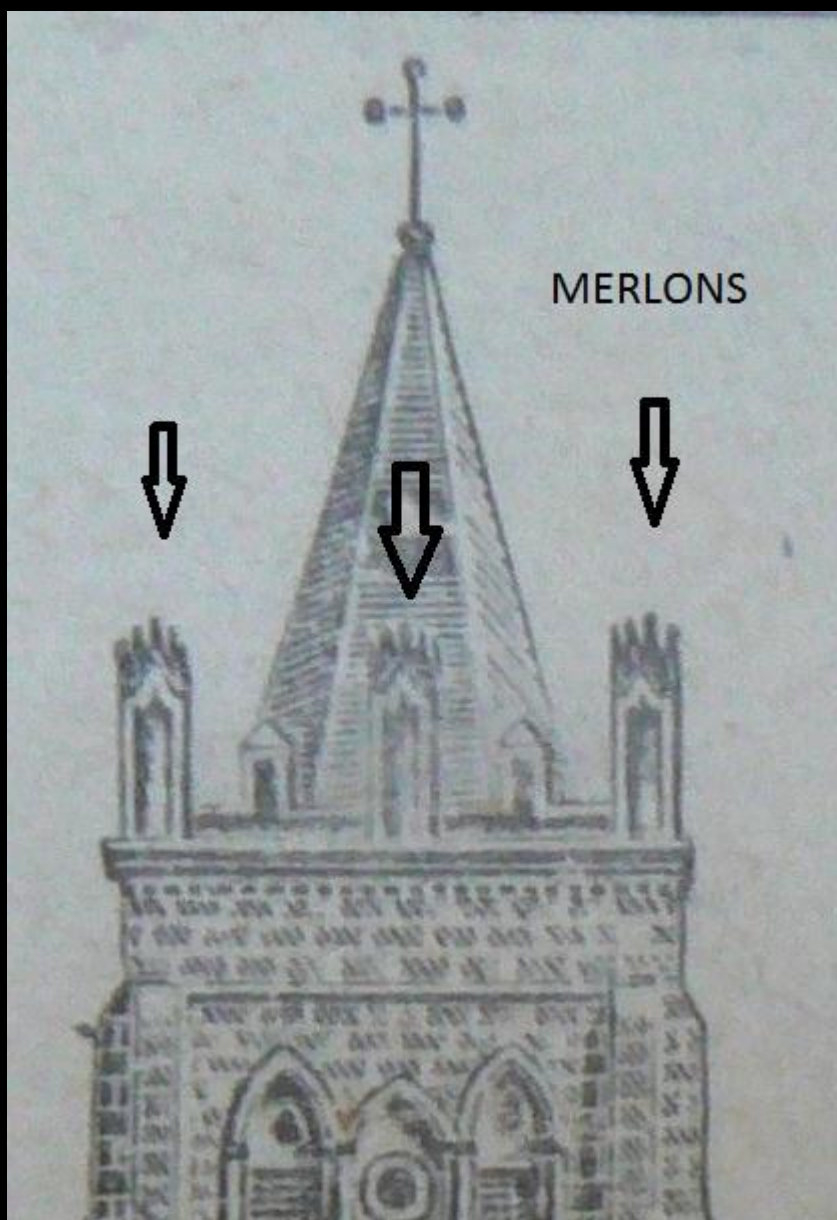
In architecture, a battlement is a notched or embattled parapet wall consisting of alternating merlons (solid uprights) and embrasures (the gaps). While a battlement was originally used on fortified castles, towers and defensive town walls, long after losing their defensive purpose, they became a decorative feature or ornament for churches and other buildings, especially in the English styles of neo-gothic architecture. The merlons and coping were often richly panelled, or pierced with circles, trefoils, quatrefoils.

The embattled parapet of the tower of Roseau used to have 8 merlons , three on each face as can be seen on the photograph.

Mr. Augustus Parker, a local stone mason, described to me that these 8 merlons were almost 6 feet tall. He further added that most of them were damaged or pushed backwards by the heavy winds of hurricane DAVID.

As Mr. Parker was one of Rev Fr. Charles Vermeulen C.ss.R , Dean of Roseau, trusted workmen, he had the job to salvage the merlons.

This meant that the damaged ones had to be removed and only the corner ones remained.



As their base was damaged, the 4 merlons ,we see today, are at least 3 feet shorter than the original ones.

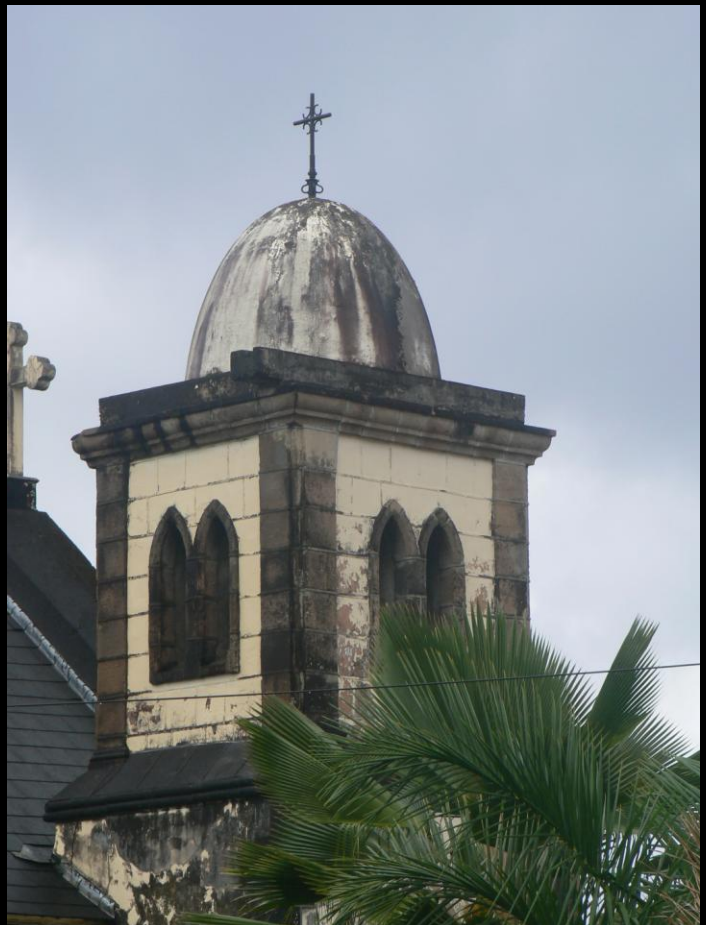


2. the east and west spires became domes.

The collapse of the East spire, created a discussion between rev. Fr. Charles Vermeulen and visiting Brother Jacob C.S.s.R. about the advisability to reconstruct a spire. Also the west spire showed signs of weakness. Mr. Guy Steenput, Belgian architect assisting Fr. Charles with his reconstruction efforts from May 1980 till 1982, designed a dome for the two side towers. This was accepted by Fr. Charles but was constructed, in reinforced concrete, to smaller scale by Brother Jacob and Mr. Augustus Parker. The concrete was covered by Brother Jacob with a blue polyester coating. Two ornate steel crosses were placed at the apex of the two domes.

This foreign element, the dome, was not to everybody's taste and created quite some talk.

However as the years went on, we have grown accustomed to the domes. In the Project Management Committee of the Roseau Renovation Project, voices were raised to restore the two small spires during the renovation project and this hope might become a reality, if funds are available.



3. The two statues above the side entrances

According to my information there was one statue of St. George, the patron of the civil parish of St. George above the western side of the facade. And one statue on the eastern side, now also disappeared. If anyone can help me with this?



The Roseau Cathedral has been built over many centuries and of course styles changes as time goes on. Based on the pointed arched windows and door openings, repeating itself into the high altar motives and ornamentation and the stained glass windows designs, one could call it a Gothic revival. Gothic revivals started in England in mid 18th England and spread over the world.

In history, Gothic architecture originated in 12th century France and became the style of many of the great cathedrals and churches in Europe. The most characteristic feature is the pointed arch, as we have in our Roseau cathedral. Real Gothic cathedral soar into the sky, an element that we do not have in our cathedral. In fact the interior of the Roseau Cathedral is quite low, compared to neighboring cathedrals.

The dome is not an architectural element that is compatible with Gothic architecture, but it is in the neo-classical during the Renaissance, which followed the Gothic style.

The roundish shape of the ceiling and the round arches inside the cathedral are Romanesque, which goes back to a style preceding the Gothic style.

So, as one can see, styles got mixed up in our Roseau Cathedral.