

Neoclassical influences in the Architectural Language of the Greek Church of the Annunciation, Manchester

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ABSTRACT: The Greek Church in Manchester stands as a unique sample of 19th-century Neoclassical architecture, created by the city's Greek community. This paper focuses on its design concept and features, the architectural expression, ornamentation, and finer details. While embracing the prevailing Neoclassical trend of its era, the building uniquely reinterpreted this style to capture the essence of its distinctive locale. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Neoclassical architecture was used widely, particularly across the UK, continental Europe and the USA and was associated with a renewed interest in the aesthetic qualities of Greek and Roman antiquities. Its use in public and governmental edifices across Continental Europe and the United States was associated with grandeur and societal stature. The study concludes with the reference to the cultural heritage and religious identity of the Greek diaspora and offers insights into how these elements have shaped the essence of the building's architecture.

Keywords: neoclassical style, Greek revival, Greek diaspora

ABSTRACT: Η Ελληνική Εκκλησία στο Μάντσεστερ αποτελεί ένα μοναδικό δείγμα νεοκλασικής αρχιτεκτονικής του 19ου αιώνα, και δημιουργήθηκε από την ελληνική κοινότητα της πόλης. Σκοπός της παρούσας μελέτης είναι η διερεύνηση των χαρακτηριστικών του κτιρίου: η σχεδιαστική ιδέα, τα χαρακτηριστικά της, η αρχιτεκτονική έκφραση, η διακόσμηση και οι λεπτομέρειες. Το κτίριο της Ελληνικής Εκκλησίας, ενώ ενστερνίζεται την κυρίαρχη τάση της εποχής του, ερμηνεύει και επανεγγράφει μοναδικά το Νεοκλασικισμό προσαρμόζοντάς τον στα τοπικά χαρακτηριστικά. Κατά τον 18ο και 19ο αιώνα, η νεοκλασική αρχιτεκτονική χρησιμοποιήθηκε ευρέως, ιδιαίτερα στο Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο, την ηπειρωτική Ευρώπη και τις ΗΠΑ και η αναβίωσή του συνδέεται με ένα ανανεωμένο ενδιαφέρον για τα χαρακτηριστικά των ελληνικών και ρωμαϊκών αρχαιοτήτων. Η χρήση του σε δημόσια και κυβερνητικά κτίρια σε όλη την Ευρώπη και τις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες συνδέθηκε με την αίγλη και κοινωνικό μεγαλείο της εποχής. Η μελέτη ολοκληρώνεται με αναφορά στην πολιτιστική κληρονομιά και τη θρησκευτική ταυτότητα της ελληνικής διασποράς και διερευνά το πώς αυτά τα στοιχεία έχουν διαμορφώσει την αισθητική της αρχιτεκτονικής του κτιρίου.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: νεοκλασικό στυλ, νεοκλασικισμός, ελληνική αναγέννηση, ελληνική διασπορά

I. INTRODUCTION

The Greek Community in Manchester was formally established in 1843 (Andreades, 2000:43). Manchester,

nicknamed 'cottonopolis', was a thriving industrial city at the time. It attracted traders and businessmen from across Europe. The Greeks were no exemption. The Greek Independence early 19th century, from the Ottoman rule, gave the opportunity to Greeks to expand their trade in Manchester. Very quickly the Greek Community established strong professional connections in Manchester, and beyond, and become an integral and well-respected part of the city. Their cultural identity was celebrated as the local high class opened their arms to the Greek philanthropists, who were known to have contributed to the local economy.

II. NEOCLASSICAL INFLUENCES AND THE ORIGINS OF THE GREEK CHURCH IN MANCHESTER

Neoclassicism, the prominent architectural and artistic movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, was associated with the design of public buildings, in the UK, Europe, the USA, but also the place of its origin, Athens in Greece. The Grand Tour in art, antiquity, and architecture, was very popular for British and European Architects and aristocrats throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Architects returned from their tours with admiration for the Greek classical civilisation, and enthusiastic to apply this knowledge on their design concepts.

Tim Rawle noted that 'it was a time when architects needed to be versatile in their training, able to design in both the style of old England, as well as the neo-classical inspired by antiquity via contemporary Italy, and now with a new focus on all things Greek'. Rawle emphasises that the Georgian Architect William Wilkin's, winning design for Downing College Cambridge in neo-classical style had 'established the Greek Revival as the dominant style of the period' (Rawle, 2015:24).

In 1807, when Lord Elgin brought the Parthenon marbles to London from Athens, and exhibited them, a sparking admiration for the Ancient Greek civilization prevailed, and a pivotal movement for the style started to flourish. In 1816, the marbles were acquired by the British Museum to be exhibited to the public. In 1832 the newly built British Museum, designed by Sir Robert Smirke, in a Greek Revival, neoclassical style, opened to

host the Parthenon marbles, among other ancient artifacts. This was the year of Greece's Independence. The Greek Revival style demonstrated respect to the three orders of the neoclassical style, Doric-Ionic-Corinthian, to the elegant proportions of the Greek classical elements, and the decorative details that have survived in the ancient temples. From the 1750's onwards, these had become the source of inspiration for British artists and architects, like Robert Adams, John Soane, John Nash, James Wyatt etc. Gradually this trend reached all the corners of the British Isles, and beyond.

Sir Charles Barry, notable figure of British Architecture, travelled to the Mediterranean and Middle East (1817-20) to study the Greek classical architecture, before he designed the Manchester Art Gallery in a neoclassical style using ionic capitals in the facade portico. Architects in Manchester inspired by their peers, experimented in their designs in the neoclassical style, in the late 18th and 19th centuries, on secular and public buildings, but not on religious buildings. Religious buildings were mainly designed in the neo-gothic style, English baroque, etc, with a few exceptions, such as the St Pancras New Church in London, built in 1819-22, designed by William and Henry William Inwood in the Greek Revival.

II. GREEK CHURCH MANCHESTER HISTORY

In 1859, The Greek community unanimously voted to construct a new church of the Annunciation in Broughton Salford, (Andreades, 2000:45) for the 200 congregation. At the time, the diaspora of Manchester consisted mainly of wealthy Greek families, living in the nearby area of Cheetham Hill. An architectural competition was held, (Besleey & DeFigueredo, 1988:80) and the selected design concept was Clegg and Knowles Architects'. The architects were well known for designing warehouses, commercial buildings in Manchester city centre, on Portland and Princess street. (Architects of Greater Manchester 1800-1940, 'Clegg and Knowles').

The events were recorded in the 'Manchester Guardian' 9th of May 1860 (Manchester Guardian) and details of the design were revealed in 'The Builder' Magazine, May 19th, 1860 (The Builder). Pevsner noted 'the size and elaboration of the architecture testifies to the wealth of the Greek colony' (Pevsner, 1969:93).

The winning design, a neoclassical and Greek Revival style, 'encapsulated' the cultural identity of the Greeks and, at the same time, demonstrated respect and loyalty to the ecclesiastical elements of the western denominations. The church layout is a three-aisled 'basilica'. As in Anglican and Catholic Churches, the side aisles, have a series of rows of oak pews. To the rear of the church, there is a portico, a narthex, and a gallery (Image 1).

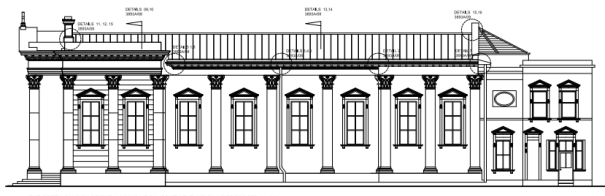
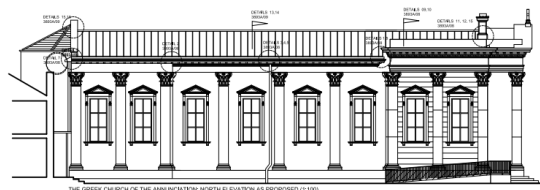
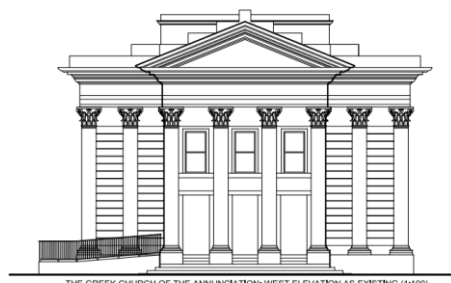
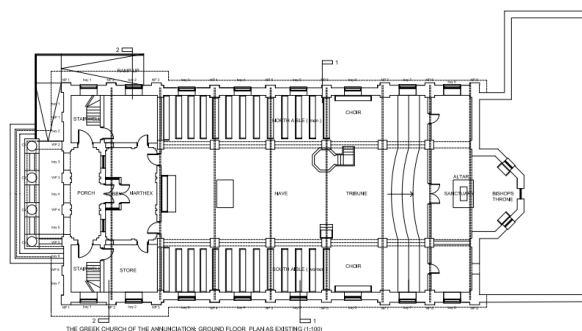


Image 1 – Greek Church of Annunciation drawings, plan and elevations (Lloyd Evans Prichard Architects, 2014).

III. ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE IN THE INTERIOR AND THE EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH

The internal decoration and structural elements, indicating honour and respect to the ancient classical architectural style. The interior was decorated in an elaborated neoclassical style with cylindrical columns with ionic capitals, four on each side of the central aisle, a vaulted ceiling above the central aisle with a central dome, and side aisles with panelled ceilings (Image 2).



Image 2-Greek Church of Annuncaition in 1900 (National Archives).



Image 3-Greek Church of Annuncaition in 2023 (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides)

Unfortunately, the internal roof of the aisles and the columns were removed in 1964, when dry rot was suspected and the whole roof was replaced, changing the interior of the church entirely (Image 3).

Fortunately, the ripped vaulted apse of the altar (Image 4,5) and the iconostasis have survived, providing us an insight of how the church's interior would have looked like. These elements resemble more the Victorian and Georgian Greek revival style decorative schemes, and less the Byzantine or Eastern Orthodox characteristics of Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Greek isles. The rounded lintels of the altar windows and those of the icons in the iconostasis are the only elements that resemble byzantine influences.

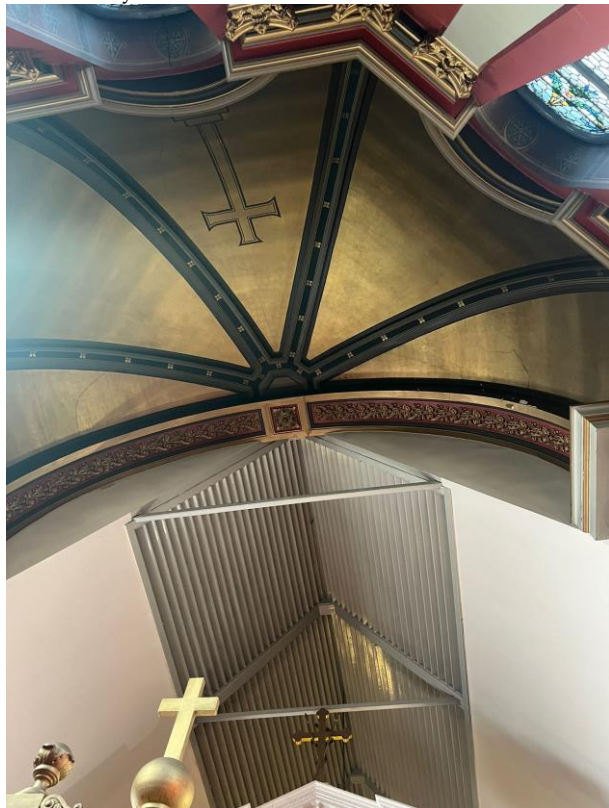


Image 4-The altar apse Greek Church of Annuncaition in 2023 (Photo: A. Moustaka-Kampouris)



Image 5- The altar apse Greek Church of Annuncaition in 2023 (Photo: A. Moustaka-Kampouris)

The icons, on the iconostasis, painted by Theodoros Vryzakis, between 1861-3 (National Gallery), do not conform to byzantine iconography, but reflect the neo-renaissance style that was popular in central Europe at the time. The artist was commissioned by the Greek merchants, and these icons are his only ecclesiastical work.

The Greeks also commissioned six stained glass windows to the Manchester firm 'William Sunderland', in a pre-Raphaelite style. Similar windows are seen in churches all around Manchester, built at the same time, as the Greek church.

The paintings of the four evangelists, by artists Charles Allen Duval, resemble Victorian portraits rather than ecclesiastical icons (Image 6). Duval also decorated the central dome of the church with the icon of 'Christ Pantocrator'. Unfortunately, this was removed in 1964, when the roof was replaced (Andreades, 2000:46)



Image 6. Evangelist painting by Charles Allen Duval (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)

The interior of the church was re-decorated, between 1910-2, with a neoclassical coloured scheme by the Architect Paul Ogden (Architects of Greater Manchester 1800-1940, 'Paul Ogden'), who was the President of the Manchester Society of Architects at the time (Images 7,8). The colour palette, resembles Athenian Neoclassical buildings, and derives from the colours used in Ancient classical temples.



Image 7 – Paul Ogden colour scheme of the side aisles. Archives of the Greek Church of Annunciation, Manchester (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)

In the altar pillars, a few Ionic and Corinthian capitals (Image 9), elaborated decorated have survived the 1964 intervention/destruction. These Corinthian and Ionic capitals have a 'Lancashire Rose' carved in the centre, which replaced the 'anthemion' found in classical Corinthian and Ionic capitals. This 'Mancunian twist or Manchester/Lancashire reference' has been observed in the Ionic capitals in the extension of Manchester Art Gallery, as well, and in other buildings in Manchester.



Image 7 – Paul Ogden colour scheme of the iconostasis. Archives of the Greek Church of Annunciation, Manchester (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)



Image 9 – Ionic and Corinthian capitals in the altar with reference to the characteristic Lancashire rose of the area (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)

Exterior

The Church exterior follows an eclectic neoclassical style (Image 1, 10,11); a portico with four columns featuring Corinthian style capitals, panelled ceilings, and three pilasters on either side. In the side elevations the neoclassical theme continuous. The façade is divided into eight bays of pilasters of the same style. The portico and narthex are built of stone and the remaining side elevations with white brick.

The Presbytery, a later addition, early 20th century, continuous the neoclassical theme. However, the window proportions differ; are more oblong, and Georgian baroque style features are added, such as the oval blind window (Image 12).

The Corinthian capitals of the elevations also ‘carry’ the ‘trade mark’ of Manchester, the Lancashire Rose. The decorative window frames-pilasters capitals, dental decoration, and frieze-continuous along the facades even though different materials were used for their construction; stucco instead of stone. During the roof renovations, in 2015, dental decorations in the friezes were replaced with a timber frieze below the gutters of the side elevations.

The Church was awarded is Grade II Listed status in 1980 (Historic England), and has been used continuously as a place of worship for the Greek Diaspora in Manchester and the surrounding area.



Image 10 – Greek Church of Annunciation Manchester; southwest façade. (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)



Image 11 – Greek Church of Annunciation Manchester; portico. (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)



Image 12 – Greek Church of Annunciation Manchester; presbytery building. (Photo: M. Yioutani-Iacovides, 2023)

IV. CONCLUSION

The establishment and development of the Greek community in Manchester in the 19th century marks a significant chapter of the city’s history and is a testament to the thriving industrial environment and economic growth of the diaspora. Their cultural identity is evidenced in the construction of the Greek Church in Salford, built in 1861, which marks a significant architectural achievement. The church captures both the cultural identity of the Greek community with its adapted Neoclassical style, while keeping in line with its contemporary trends in the UK, Europe, and USA at the time.

Despite the alterations that the church has undergone over the course of its life, the Greek Church in Manchester remains a testament to the enduring influence of neoclassicism. The unique blend of Neoclassical features, merged with local elements, serve as a reminder of the historical ties between Manchester and the Greek community and the cultural exchanges that have shaped Manchester into the diverse and vibrant city it is today.

The winning neoclassical design of Clegg and Knowles ‘stood the test of time’ and had inspired the continuous use of the Church by many generations of Greeks of the diaspora who worshiped, with strong faith and endless hope in the church for over 160 years.

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