



## Inside the \$175 Million Restoration of St. Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, September 30, 2014, by Hana R. Alberts



[Photos by Will Femia <<http://www.testofwill.blogspot.com>> ]

On an average day at St. Patrick's Cathedral, anywhere from **80 to 100 workers** clamber up ladders and across platforms that stretch into the heights of the **Neo-Gothic vaulted ceilings**. They painstakingly **rub masks** over marble and plaster surfaces to remove decades of dirt, restore wood detailing to its former luster, and brighten each tiny, luminous shard of the discolored **stained-glass windows**. It's all part of the ongoing \$175 million restoration

<[http://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/about\\_restore\\_faq.php](http://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/about_restore_faq.php)> of the iconic house of worship, which opened its doors in **1879** and last underwent a major fix-up in 1970s. The project started in 2012 and is slated finish up **next year**. Among the major achievements thus far

<<http://americamagazine.org/media/gallery/st-patricks-cathedral>> was to clean the 80-foot spires facing Fifth Avenue, which is why they're no longer shrouded in scaffolding. The ornmented **bronze front doors**, which weigh 9,200 pounds apiece, were restored at a Long Island City workshop between December 2012 and August 2013. Some pipes from the **massive main organ**, too, have been removed and shipped off to the Peragallo <<http://www.peragallo.com/pipe-organ-company.php>> pipe organ company in Paterson, N.J. for tune-ups, which are now complete. On the practical side, there will be a new fire-safety system. All this, and the church has closed for **nary a moment**, still hosting a minimum of seven masses a day.



**ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL**  
631 Fifth Avenue, New York NY  
[GIANT MAP](#)

- MIDTOWN EAST
- CURBED INSIDE
- PRESERVATION WATCH
- RESTORATIONS
- ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL
- ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL RESTORATION
- TOP



There are the already-restored spires, free of scaffolding.



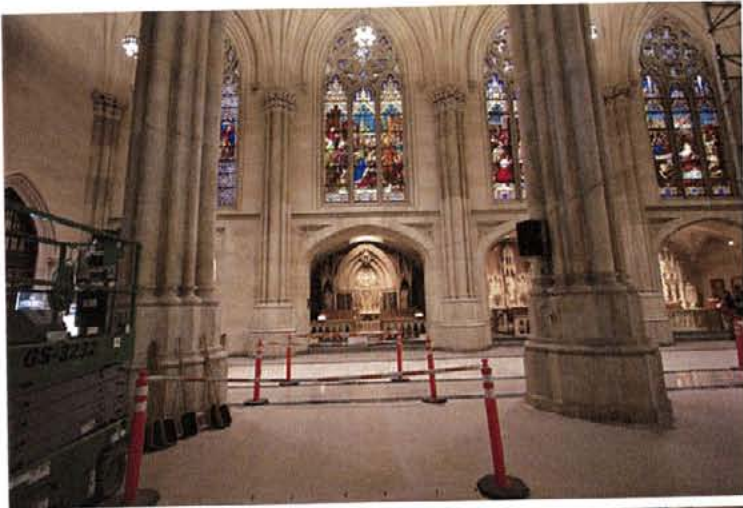
And the bronze doors, resplendent in their cleaned-up glory.





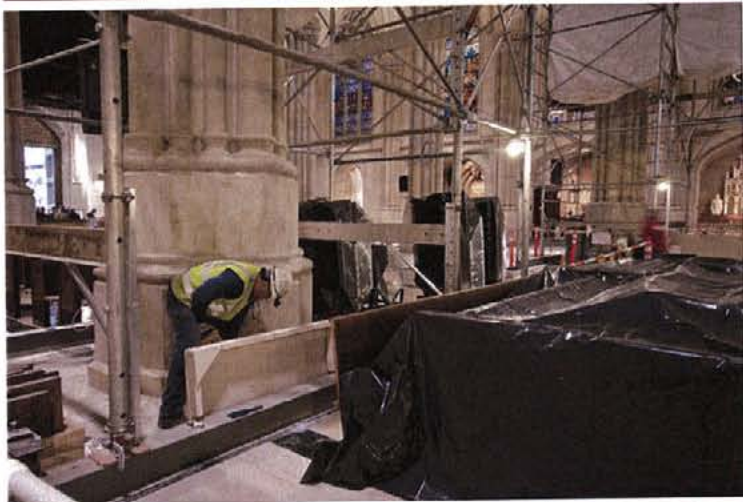
Even the pews are getting a facelift.



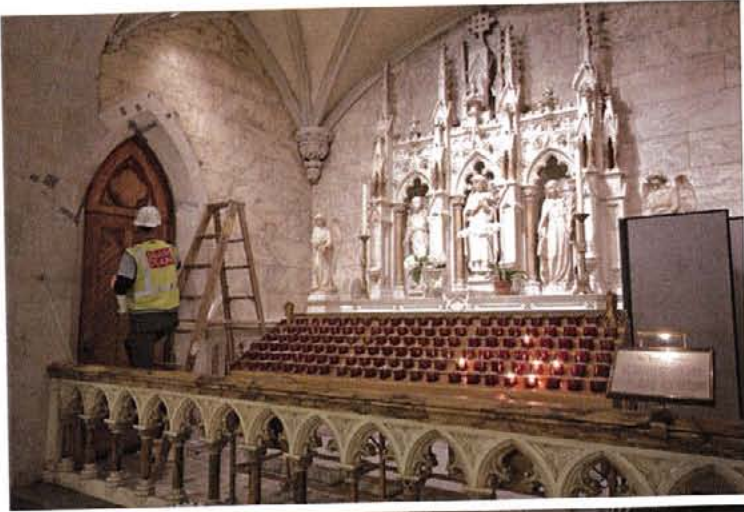


Workers cluster around a column.





And one works on a little side altar off of the main transept.

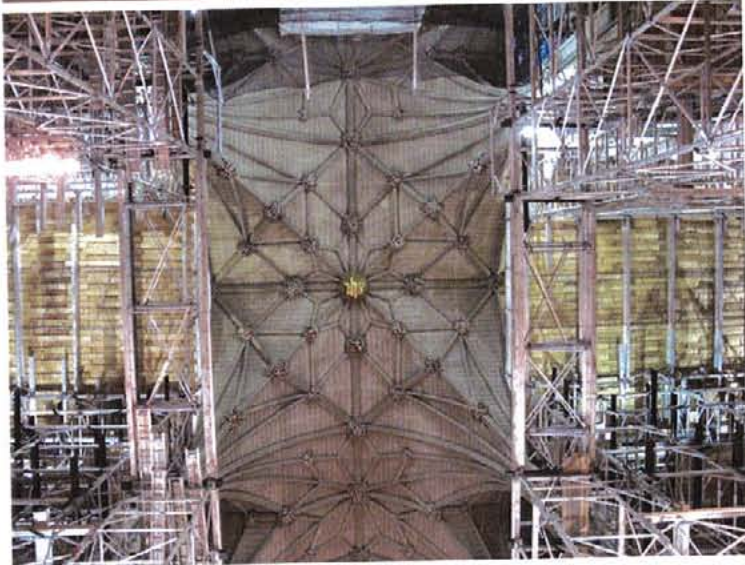




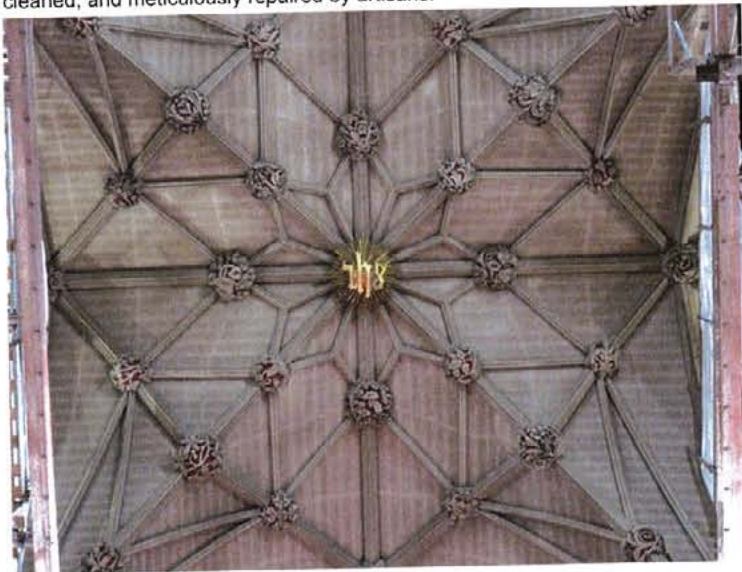


That's the main organ, in the midst of its own restoration. There's another organ in the front that is played during services.

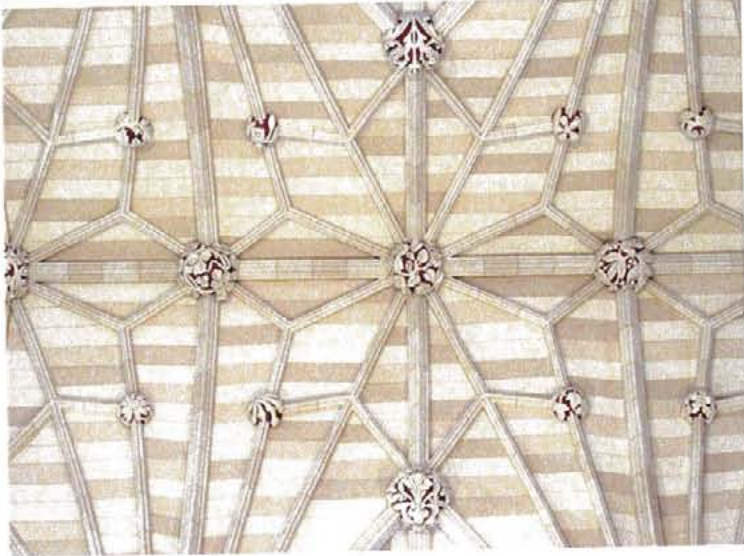
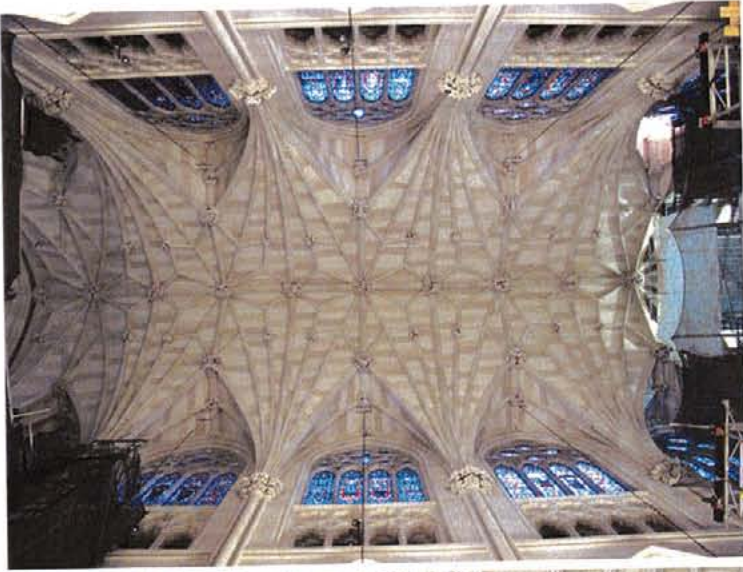




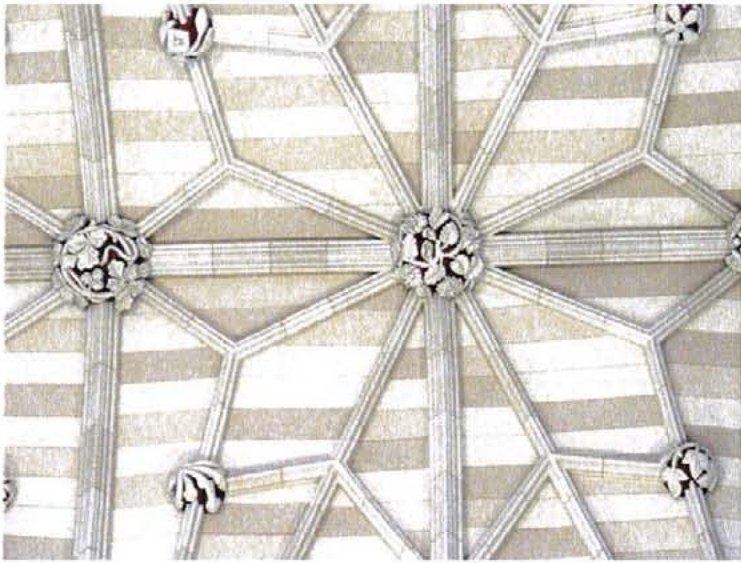
The ceiling is important. As per the official St. Pat's site [http://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/about\\_restore\\_faq.php](http://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/about_restore_faq.php) : "Darkened by soot, pollution and years of heavy traffic, the ceiling had turned black in some places and the plaster had cracked. The first section of the ceiling has now been cleaned, and meticulously repaired by artisans."







Here's a closeup of an already-restored bit of ceiling; workers are progressing from the back to the front of the church. The woodwork and stone is given a mud mask, to make the marble white and bright. But most of the ceiling is plaster which needs to be vacuumed.



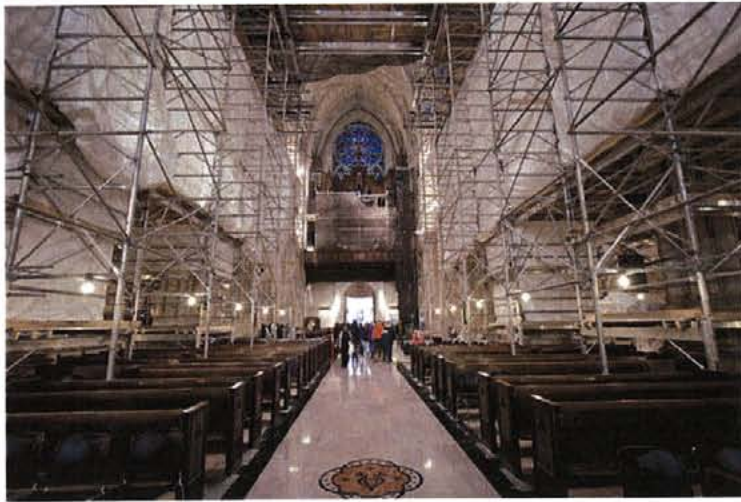
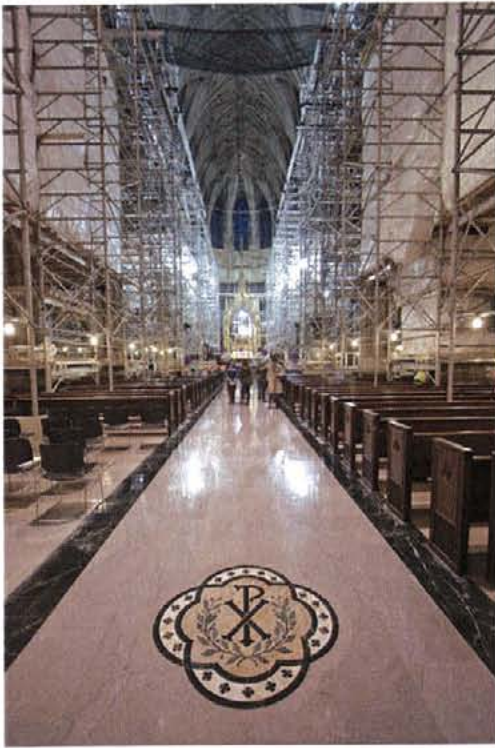
Says St. Pat's PR rep: "The guys up here are artists. The plaster was made to look like marble," and so they have to paint it carefully to reflect its original shading. "It's not paint by numbers or stripey, but appears to be marble."







The cathedral does a great job keeping folks up to date on the restoration via their Twitter handle <<https://twitter.com/SIPatsNYC>> .

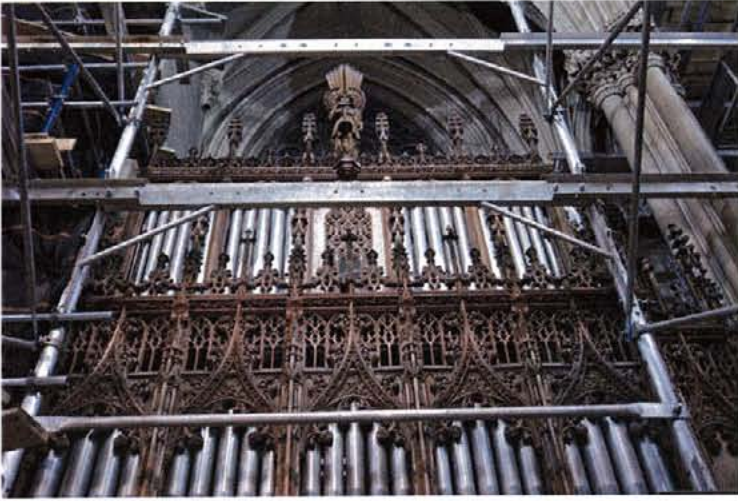


The blue-hued Rose Window above the bronze doors and the main organ has been totally restored.





The front organ is in use while the main one is fixed up.



Curbed got the chance to climb up a ladder and see where some of the more detailed work is done.







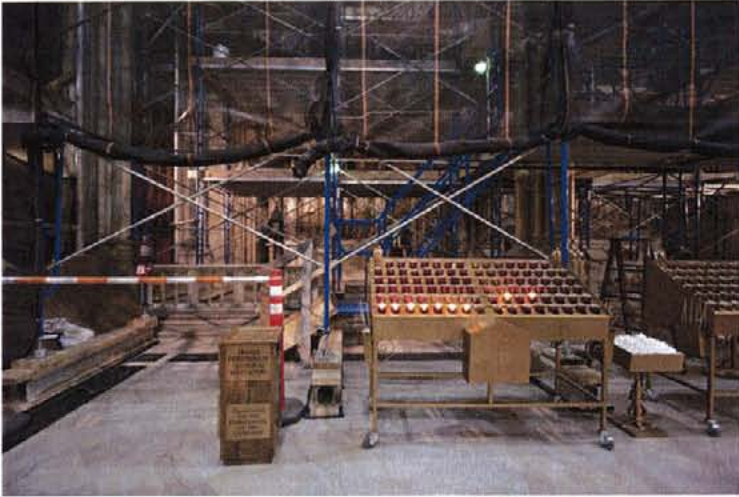
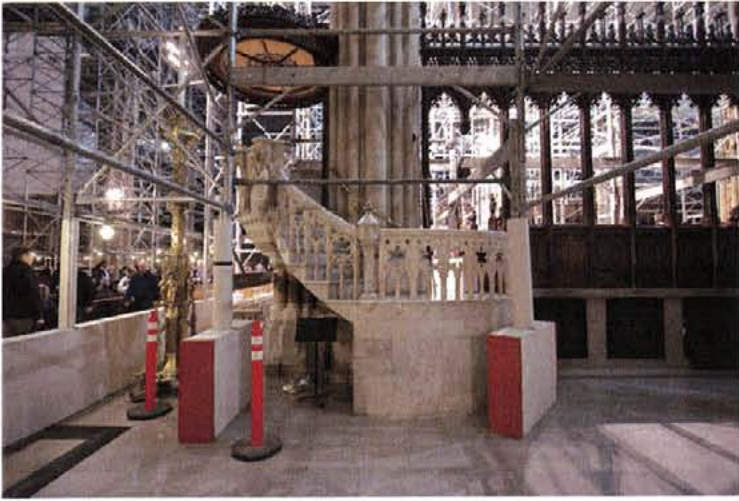
Restored on the left, but not on the right.









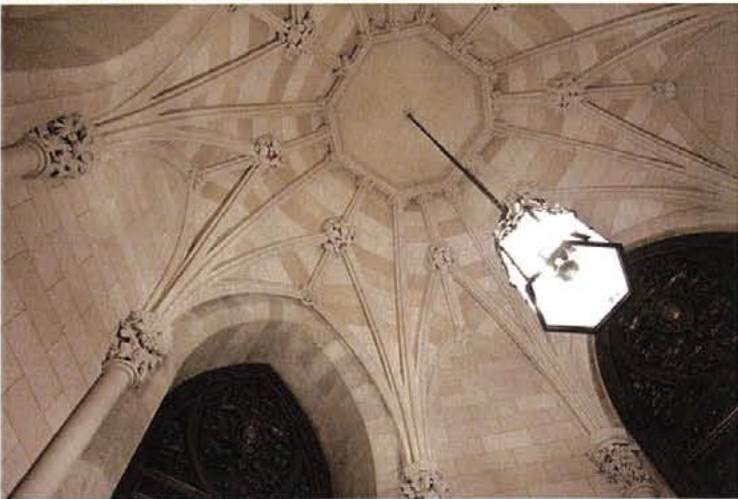








There are interactive kiosks and signage around the cathedral so that visitors can find out more about the restoration project, and donate.



Some details and close-up shots from the day.

