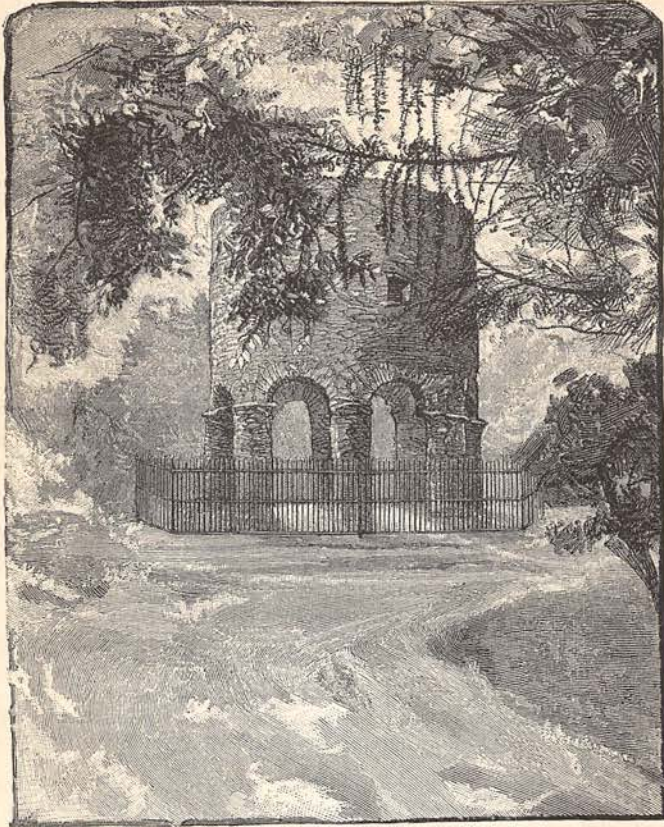


THE "OLD MILL" AT NEWPORT:

A NEW STUDY OF AN OLD PUZZLE.



THE "OLD MILL" AT NEWPORT.

STANDING amid the neat, picturesque cottages of to-day, this mysterious relic of antiquity, so rough and unsightly, seems a cumbrous thing. Its somber aspect is in striking contrast with all around it. Like a huge, bleak rock amid rushing, laughing waters, it remains, the dead among the living.

With those who frequent Newport,—that most delightful of all watering-places,—the origin of the "Old Mill" is the theme of endless discussion. Was it built by the English colonists? Did the Indians build it? Was it erected by the Northmen? For what purpose was it constructed? These are questions often asked. Can they be satisfactorily answered? It is the purpose of this paper to review the history of this building, so far as known, and show its probable origin and design.

The "Old Mill" is on elevated ground within the city of Newport, R. I., in an

ornamental inclosure called Touro Park, near the commencement of Bellevue avenue, a magnificent highway leading to the sea between miles of "cottages."

The structure is a ruin. It is simply a roofless, cylindrical stone-wall, elevated upon eight semicircular arches, sustained by a like number of stout round columns. The wall, arches and columns are built with small broken stones, laid in mortar in the manner technically termed "uncoursed rubble work." The cylindrical wall is twenty-three feet diameter outside, and eighteen feet and nine inches inside. The eight columns are each three feet and two inches diameter, and ten feet high. The arched openings are twelve feet six inches high from the ground. The entire height of the building is about twenty-four and a half feet. The columns have rough and irregular projections at top and bottom, indicating

the rudiments of capital and base. There are a few patches of hard white plastering still adhering to the walls and columns. From this it is evident that the rough surfaces were once covered with a coat of plastering, and were probably smooth and white. The masonry is crude and unsightly. It appears to have been laid by unskillful mechanics, or those at least who worked without proper mechanical implements. The plan, however, is regular and shapely. The curves of the wall, arches and columns are remarkably true for work executed with such rough materials. The building evidently had an intelligent architect.

There are beam-holes in the wall inside, just above the columns. Above these there are a fire-place and some small, irregularly shaped openings through the wall, and some which do not extend through. As these openings have no correspondence with the large arched openings below, it is apparent to the most careless observer that these openings, as also the beam-holes and the fire-place, are modifications of the original plan.

This is a remarkable building for a mill. Why is it called the "Old Mill?"

A Mr. Mumford, born in 1699, used to call it a powder-mill, but used it as a hay-mow. His son Joseph, who in 1834 was eighty years old, said he used to find powder in the crevices of the wall when he was a boy. By reference to the early records, we find that the building in 1678 belonged to Governor Benedict Arnold; for in his will of that date he refers to it as "my stone-built wind-mill." This was written just 200 years ago. It is a satisfactory reason for the popular name of "Old Mill."

The building undoubtedly was a wind-mill in 1678; but was it built for a wind-mill? The phrase of the will referring to it has been taken by some as conclusive that the building was built by Governor Arnold, and for a mill; but this by others is disputed. The phrase shows that he owned the mill, but not that he built it.

The colonial records have some facts bearing on this question. One of the early inhabitants, a Mr. Peter Easton, was in the habit of noting in his pocket-book the remarkable events occurring among the colonists. One of these entries reads: "1663. This year we erected the first wind-mill." Lossing, in his "Pictorial Field-book of the Revolution," says this mill was of wood, and describes its location. This wooden mill was esteemed of so much importance to the colony that the General Court, to

reward Mr. Easton for his enterprise, made to him a grant of land a mile in length, along what is still known as Easton's Beach.

This wooden mill of 1663 was erected fifteen years before 1678, the date of Governor Arnold's will. As it was the *first*, therefore, Governor Arnold's mill must have been erected subsequently, and within the interval of the fifteen years occurring between 1663 and 1678. But the early records contain no notice of its erection. This building being of stone, and of remarkable form, was, without doubt, the most important of all the buildings then standing in Newport. Its erection, therefore, must have been an object of unusual interest to every colonist. Is it not then at least a little singular that neither in the records of passing events, nor in the proceedings of the General Court, there should be the slightest allusion to the erection of so remarkable a building? This ominous silence covers the fifteen years interval as with a cloud, and renders exceedingly doubtful the erection of the old mill during that time.

Having exhausted the historical record, we now turn to the monument itself and ask: Why this form for a wind-mill?—a round building elevated on arches and round columns; the whole not much over one diameter in height. What possible purpose could have been served by these peculiar features in a wind-mill? What a strong contrast does this structure present with the accustomed form of a wind-mill, which when built of stone, is usually a round tower slightly conical, about two diameters in height, and having a door at the ground and a few small windows arranged for lighting the several stories of the tower, every feature having its evident purpose. But the most prominent features of this structure are wholly at variance with the requisites of a wind-mill. May we not with great propriety add, in the words of George G. Channing in his "Early Recollections of Newport,"—"The very style and grace of the structure preclude the idea that it could have been erected upon almost a barren waste merely to grind Indian corn."

The author of "Controversy Touching the Old Stone Mill," 1851, claims that this old building was erected for a wind-mill, and erected by the English colonists; and to show that it was not an uncommon thing to build wind-mills in this manner, refers to a stone wind-mill built in 1632, at Chester-ton, Warwickshire, England, which he thinks may have been the type of this stone struc-

ure at Newport. This seems a strong point, and if the character of the type were in accord with that of the antetype, would be a weighty argument in establishing the claim of the author.

On examination, however, the Chesterton mill (as shown by an engraving and description in "The Penny Magazine," 1836, p. 480; and a description in Smith's "History of Warwick," p. 92) shows such marked differences as to forbid the idea of relationship. For example,—the Newport building has eight arches and columns; the Chesterton building has only six arches and six square posts, or pilasters. The outer face of the columns of the Newport building is not in a vertical plane with the face of the wall above, but projects considerably; while in the Chesterton building there is no projection. The masonry of the Newport building is of rough undressed stone, laid as rubble-work; but the masonry of the Chesterton building is of good quality, of hewn stone laid in courses with close joints. But the most important difference consists in the style of the architecture. That of the Newport building, as will hereafter be shown, is of the tenth century, while that of the Chesterton building is evidently of the seventeenth century. The Chesterton mill therefore cannot, with any propriety, be cited as a type of the Newport tower, and hence is no proof that the English colonists erected it.

A relative of the author of "Controversy," etc., speaks of two round towers in the island of St. Thomas, which, from the description given, appear to be almost if not quite identical with the tower at Newport. So close is the likeness in material, style and size, that it is more than probable that they and the Newport tower were built contemporaneously, and for a like purpose. In regard to the origin of these round towers of St. Thomas, the author's relative, who gives the account of them, says, "It is unknown by the inhabitants when or by whom they were built,"—a statement equally applicable to the Newport tower. As these towers are not shown to be wind-mills they afford no proof that the Newport tower was intended originally for a wind-mill.

This investigation has shown thus far, first, that the Newport tower in 1678 was a wind-mill; but, second, that it is exceedingly doubtful that it was originally intended for a mill. Its architectural style, as well as its want of adaptation, forbids the idea of its having been erected in the seventeenth century,

and for a wind-mill. There is a strong probability, amounting almost to a certainty, that the English colonists found the tower here when they landed, and that Governor Arnold modified it to serve the purposes of a wind-mill.

Lossing says: "There is now but little doubt that the old mill existed prior to the English immigration, and it is asserted that the Indians, when questioned on the subject by Mr. Coddington and other early settlers, could give no tradition as to the origin of the building."

From the fact that the American Indians, at the time of the English settlement, were in the lowest barbarism, and that there are no other proper architectural remains east of the Rocky Mountains, and that the ruins found west of the mountains and in Mexico and Central and South America are so totally dissimilar, we deem it beyond dispute that the Newport structure was not erected by the American Indians or their ancestors, or by any people whose architectural structures or ruins have been found elsewhere on this continent.

It is simply impossible that the "Old Mill" could have been the work of the mound-builders of the West, or of the builders of the Pueblos of the Colorado, or of the Aztecs or Incas, even if there were any proof or presumption that either of these had ever occupied what is now New England.

Professor Rafn, Secretary of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, claims that this "Old Mill" was erected by the Scandinavians or Northmen in the eleventh century.

Professor Rafn has shown—and his conclusions are now generally accepted as incontestable—that the portion of our country now known as Massachusetts and Rhode Island was discovered by the Scandinavians late in the tenth century, and that a colony of Northmen was established early in the eleventh century in the neighborhood of Rhode Island, and there remained some years.

Greenland was discovered in 981 or 983 by Gunbiörn, a Norwegian or Icelander, and soon after many families from Iceland emigrated there and settled mostly along the western coast. These colonists are known to have existed as a community for four centuries, when they numbered 300 villages and had twenty churches and convents. Whether from the excessive cold or by an epidemic or some other cause, it is not

known, but it is supposed that they all perished.

Extensive ruins of ancient buildings, especially of churches found along the western coast of Greenland, attest the previous existence of the colony. In 1824, a stone (now in the Museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen), inscribed with Runic characters and the date 1135, was found on Woman's Island in Baffin's Bay, north latitude $72^{\circ} 55'$.

The facts gathered in regard to the discovery of our coast are these:

In the summer of 986,—only three or four years after the discovery of Greenland,—a Norwegian by the name of Björn Herjulfson, voyaging from Iceland to Greenland, was driven out of his course by adverse winds. He sailed far to the south and west, and came in sight of our coasts, but did not land.

Sixteen years afterward an expedition was fitted out to colonize the newly discovered country. In the year 1002, Leif Erikson, at the head of a small colony, sailed from Greenland and settled somewhere in the neighborhood of Martha's Vineyard. A German, one of the colony, seeing the grapes growing wild on vines hanging from the trees, suggested the name, Vinland, as proper for the newly discovered country.

In the year 1003 came Leif Erikson's brother Thorvald. He remained two years, when, in an excursion made along the coast, he encountered the natives and was killed by them.

A colony of 160 persons from Greenland, headed by Thorfinn Karlsefni, an Icelander, settled in Vinland in 1007. Karlsefni remained three years; after which he made many voyages to Greenland, Norway, and Iceland, where he finally settled and died.

About the year 1030, a ship sailing from Iceland for Dublin, was blown out of its course far to the west and south. Coming to land, some of those who were on board went on shore and were captured by the natives, who carried them into the interior. Here they were met by an aged chieftain, who in the Icelandic tongue made inquiries concerning certain Northmen to whom he sent presents.

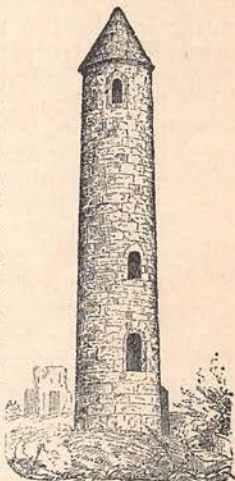
The incidents, thus briefly rehearsed, are gathered from the works of Professor Rafn and from Wheaton's "History of the Northmen." While some of the statements may not appear sufficiently authenticated to serve as a basis for historical conclusions, others present facts, such as the existence

of the ruins of churches, etc., on the coast of Greenland, and the finding of the stone with the Runic inscriptions, now in the museum of Copenhagen, that are indisputable. The statements that are not authenticated accord and harmonize so perfectly with the indisputable facts, that together they prove conclusively that the Northmen lived on the shores of Massachusetts and Rhode Island at least six hundred years before the *May-flower* reached Plymouth Rock.

The residence of the Northmen in Rhode Island in the eleventh century is not of itself conclusive evidence, but is an important part of the proof, that the Newport tower was built by them. Other colonists may have resided here after the extinction of the Northmen, and these may have built the tower.

The incident related above, of a ship sailing to Dublin, being blown out of her course and to these shores, suggests the possibility of an Irish colony having located here. This possibility has suggested the inquiry whether the builders of the round towers of Ireland were not the builders of the Newport tower? The character of the work, however, in the two cases is so dissimilar that a decided negative to this question must be unhesitatingly given.

The accompanying sketch is a fair specimen of the Irish towers. They are tall and slender, tapering conically to the top. They are generally from 80 to 100 feet high, and about one-fifth or one-sixth of their height in diameter. The stones of which they are built are carefully shaped to the proper form and generally put together with small joints. A small window lights each story. Four or more just beneath the roof appear to have served for convenience of observation. Access to the tower was gained by its single door, placed at a point ten or fifteen feet above the ground. The part of the tower below the door was generally filled in with solid masonry.



ROUND TOWER AT DEVENISH, IRELAND.

How different the Newport tower! It is

cylindrical, not conical. It is short,—only about one diameter high,—not tall and slender. It is quite open at the bottom, set on stone posts,—not closed and solid. It is built of broken fragmentary stone,—not of hewn stone. It has columns and arches,—not a plain walled surface at the ground. These marked differences are conclusive against the supposition that the builders of the round towers of Ireland erected the Newport tower. Neither could these towers have been erected for the same purpose.

Professor Rafn's claim that the Newport tower was built by the Northmen, is based upon a similarity of style with what he terms the "ante-Gothic, common in the north and west of Europe from the eighth to the twelfth centuries." "The circular form, low columns * * * and entire want of ornament, all point to this epoch." He might have added, that this manner of building was *originated* by the Northmen, as this will now be shown.

The Scandinavians,—a branch of the great German family,—in the early centuries, were a migratory race. Either by land or sea, it was their delight to rove at will anywhere, everywhere. Germany, Italy, France and England, each suffered by their incursions. Attracted by the more genial climate, some of them remained in the countries they conquered. Like the Arab, and other migratory peoples, the Northmen, in the early centuries at home, had no architecture of their own. Their huts of wood, rudely constructed, had no permanence. But such of them as settled in southern countries developed in time some taste for architecture. The classic temples, which they in their wars had destroyed, lay in fragments all about them. These monuments, beautiful in their ruin, must have had an influence in turning their attention to architecture. Their first attempts, however, only manifested their ignorance and want of taste. They formed colonnades with columns of differing styles and sizes, gathered from the ruins they had made. Some of this work still remains; such, for example, as that which is seen at Rome, in the church of Sta. Maria di Ara Coeli of the sixth century,—where the columns are taken from various ancient temples; the shorter ones are pieced out by being elevated on pedestals of varying heights; the bases and capitals are very dissimilar,—the whole forming a strange contrast with the order and harmony characteristic of classic architecture.

By degrees, however, the Northmen came to construct buildings with more order and system, and evolved a style wholly different from those the fragments of which at first formed their only materials of construction.

In this manner through the incursion of barbarians, so called, and by a development of their own, there was originated at Constantinople, the Byzantine style; in Northern Italy, the Lombard style; in France, the Norman style; and in England, the Saxon style. From the fall of the Roman empire to the revival of the arts, these styles of building prevailed. They were originated by the migratory hordes from the north, not all of them from Scandinavia, but from this and other parts of northern and north-eastern Europe. The Norman style, however, was wholly the creation of the Northmen. Their incursions into France in the ninth century were terribly devastating. The people of France became disheartened and hopeless. Unable to conquer peace, they were glad to purchase it at any sacrifice. Tired of contending with their daring and resolute enemies, they concluded a treaty with them in the tenth century by which they ceded to them 1,100 square miles of territory which then came to be known as Normandy, and the Northmen who settled there were known as Normans.

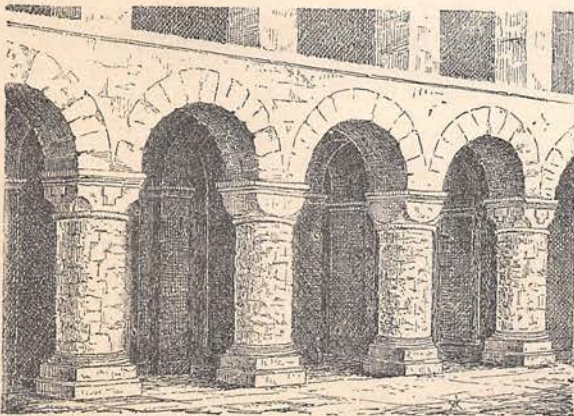
This was nearly a century before the discovery of Vinland. During this century they erected some buildings which still remain. One of the most remarkable of these is the church at Léry, a small place on the river Eure, between Louviers and Pont de l'Arche, Normandy. The columns shown in the cut at top of next page are those which sustain the wall which separates the nave and aisle. The absence of a base indicates that possibly a part of the height of the column is hidden beneath the floor, but it is said that there are no indications in other parts of the church that the floor has been raised. The height of these columns is only about two diameters. This example is probably one of the earliest of early Norman architecture. The prominent thought symbolized here in these short, round columns, heavy walls and round arches, is strength,—the controlling feature in the character of the Northmen. As the natural harshness of these Vulcans of human nature was softened and smoothed by the influences of the sunshine and flowers of the new lands in which they were living, the character of their architecture improved. The column gradually assumed more grace-

ful proportions, and correspondingly, the wall and arch became lighter, and in time ornamental. The Normans conquered England in 1066. William the Conqueror, in 1081, added to the Tower of London what is known as the White Tower. The chapel of this tower, the columns of which are seen in the cut given below, is esteemed one of the most remarkable examples of early Norman architecture in England. These columns are about three and a half diameters high; they are built of small stones.

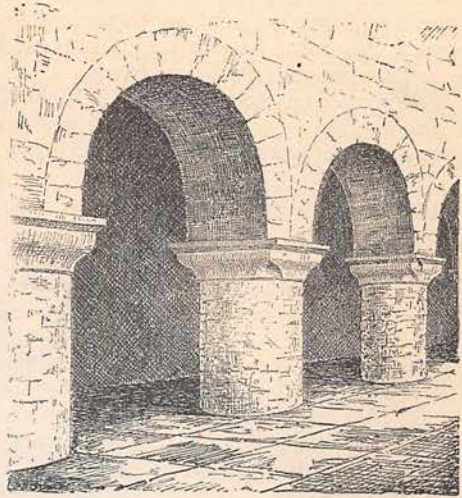
In many places in England, as at Gloucester, Chester, Rochester, Cambridge, Waltham, Great Malvern and Durham, remarkable examples of early Norman architecture occur, and in these are found stout round columns of from three to four diameters high, sustaining plain, semicircular arches. The columns and arches are generally built with small stones, and treated with great simplicity.

These are the characteristics of the style originated by the Normans. They correspond precisely and in every particular with the characteristics of the Newport tower. Hence the conviction is irresistible that the Northmen in Vinland, near relatives of the Normans, of the same people and country and language, must have built the Newport tower. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact already shown that the Northmen colonized Vinland early in the eleventh century, just about the time in which the early Norman style flourished in France and England.

The most probable origin of the building at Newport having been indicated, it remains to show the purpose for which it was built.



COLUMNS FROM CHAPEL OF THE WHITE TOWER, LONDON.



EARLY NORMAN COLUMNS FROM CHURCH AT LÉRY, NORMANDY.

It has been suggested by Professor Rafn that the Newport building was erected for sacred use; that it was the property of some Christian monastery or other ecclesiastical establishment. This appears reasonable, for we will find that the Northmen in Vinland were Christianized. The Scandinavians were pagans until after the eighth century. During the ninth century, Christian missionaries were sent among them, and met with marked success. In the year 822, Ebbo, the Saxon archbishop of Rheims, with the monk Halitgar, went to the Northmen. Attracted by the pomp and splendor of the Roman ceremonies, many received baptism and thus became nominally Christians.

In the year 827, the monks Anschar and Aubert visited these heathen of the north, and devoted themselves to their work with such ardor that Anschar is justly regarded as the apostle to the Scandinavians. Anschar received the approbation and protection of Eric, King of Denmark, in 850, and of Olaf, King of Sweden, in 854. During the latter half of the ninth century, the mission was greatly prospered. A century later, in the year 999, Leif Ericson was baptized and accompanied a missionary to Greenland, who preached to the people there and baptized them. This Leif Ericson is the man who, three years afterward, was at the head of the first colony which, in 1002, settled in Vinland. He and those with him must, therefore, have

gone as Christians; and as they went to remain, they must have been accompanied by a Christian minister or ministers.

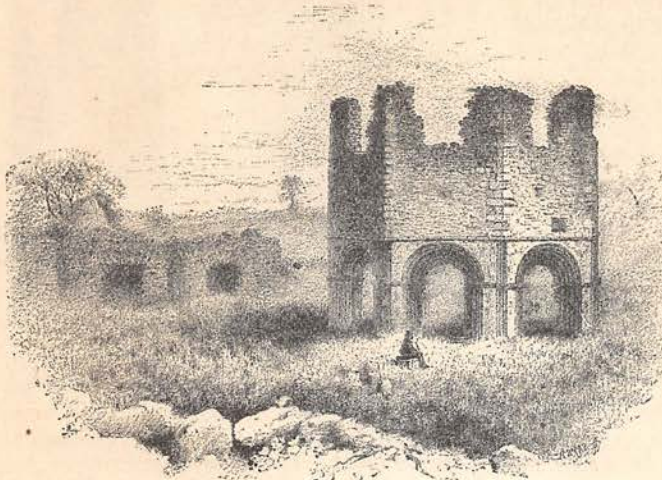
The missionary from Iceland to Vinland in 1059, a Saxon or Irish priest, is said to have met a violent death. In the next cent-

round buildings, twenty-six feet in diameter, as being within 300 feet of the great church of Igalikko; another, forty-four feet diameter, within 440 feet of the church in Kakortok. He speaks also of others, but not enough of any of them is known to

show their style of architecture, except that they were circular in plan.

Professor Rafn refers to the octagonal baptistery at Melifont, Ireland, as being similar to the Newport building, and infers therefrom that the latter was intended for a similar Christian use.

The Melifont building (a representation of which, taken from a photograph, is herewith given) resembles the Newport tower to this extent, that it is sustained upon eight supports, between which there are eight openings by which to gain access to the interior. Beyond this there



BAPTISTERY AT MELIFONT, IRELAND.

ury, in 1121, Erik, a bishop of Greenland, visited Vinland for missionary purposes.

These incidents are sufficient to show that the people of Vinland had received the Christian faith. The remains of several churches among the ruins of the ancient villages of Greenland, before referred to, may be taken as strongly corroborative of the Christian character of the people there, and inferentially, also, of those of Vinland.

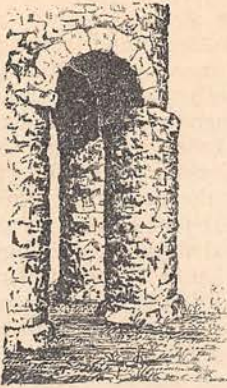
We therefore conclude that the people of Vinland were Christian; and if Christian, then the building at Newport erected by them may have been for some sacred use of the Christian religion. Professor Rafn suggests that the "Old Mill" was in fact a Christian baptistery.* He refers to the remains of several round buildings found near the ruins of churches in Greenland as also baptisteries. These ruins were so overgrown and covered with the accumulations of centuries as to present but few recognizable features. He speaks of one of these

are marked differences. Instead of stout round columns, the supports are plane-surfaced piers, formed by so much of the wall of the building as remained after cutting through the eight door-ways; and these are ornamented with neat colonnettes and moldings, while the arches are richly decorated. Beside this, the Melifont baptistery is built of squared stones. It is undoubtedly a work of the twelfth century, built at least 150 years after the Newport tower.

About forty years ago, Mr. Catherwood, the architect, at the request of Dr. Thomas H. Webb of Providence, made a survey of the Newport structure, which was sent to Professor Rafn, and published in the proceedings of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen. In a description of this survey, attention is called to a peculiar and notable feature of the structure, but without referring to its importance as an indication of the destination of the building. This feature is, the position of the columns relatively to the wall they sustain. Ordinarily, the axis of a column is in a line passing vertically through the center of the wall supported by the column. In the columns of the Newport tower, however, the axis is not in this line, but deviates from it considerably, as is shown in the next sketch. This

* "The northern antiquaries are backed by the opinion of such authorities in matters of art and archæology as Boisserée, Klenze, Thiersch and Kaltenbach, who, judging from drawings of the old stone mill sent from America, have all declared in favor of the ruin being the remains of a baptismal chapel in the early style of the Middle Ages." ("Pre-Columbian Discovery of America," p. 29, vol. vi. Chambers's Papers for the People).

is no mere accident, for each column has this peculiar divergence. This eccentricity in construction is a key to the original plan of the building.



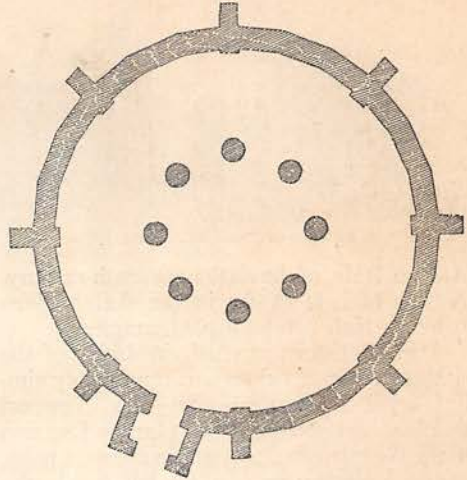
COLUMNS FROM THE "OLD MILL," NEWPORT.

These columns were thus set projecting from the face of the wall, to receive and support part of the roof of what is termed a lean-to building, which once surrounded the present structure. These projections prove that originally the building was something like what is shown in the plan and section (see next page for latter). Technically speaking, the present tower is only the circular nave of the building, while the parts which have been removed were the circular aisles. The eight stout, round posts which originally occupied the middle of the general area, were what are termed clere-story columns.

The patches of stucco still adhering to the columns show that they were once fully covered with it. In all probability, the columns were furnished with properly formed bases and capitals, molded in stucco, similar,

perhaps, to what is shown in the restoration (see next page).

In Europe there are extant many similar structures. In Germany there is one at Fulda, of the ninth or tenth century. There was also one of the eighth century, at Bonn, on the Rhine. This was removed about half a century since. The accompanying



PLAN OF "OLD MILL" RESTORED.

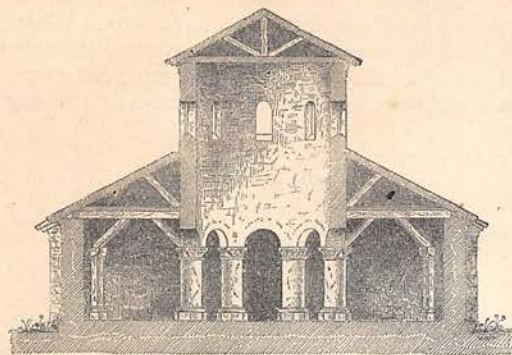
sketch of it is from Ferguson's "Hand-Book of Architecture."

In Holland there is one at Nymegen, a polygon of sixteen sides, which was conse-



BAPTISTERY AT BONN.

crated by Pope Leo III., in 799. There are a few of these buildings in France. In Italy there are many of them. There is one at



SECTION OF "OLD MILL" RESTORED.

Arsago, Italy, of the sixth or seventh century. A view of it is shown in the sketch given below, which is from a photograph.

The baptistery at Asti, in Italy, of the sixth or seventh century, is remarkably similar—almost identical with the Newport building, as restored. The plan and section of the Asti structure, shown on the next page, are from surveys made of the building by the writer of this paper, and from drawings published by Frederick Osten. Sketches of this building may also be seen in Chambers's "Cyclopædia," article, "Baptistery."

In the early centuries it was considered indispensable that every cathedral, or church of a bishop, should have its baptistery,—a separate building located in the vicinity of the cathedral, where the ordinance of Christian baptism could be administered to the

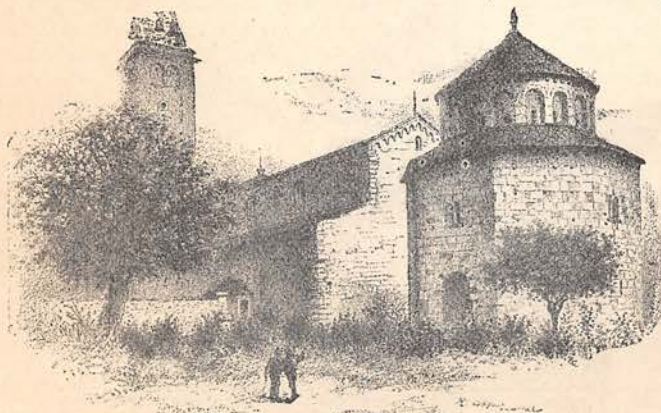
extant. Some of them are in ruins, as at Canosa, in Apulia, and at Castel-Septio; others are desecrated to secular use, as at

Como; others still have had the font removed, and as chapels made to serve for worship, as that of Sta. Costanza, at Rome, that of Bologna, and that of Rovigno, in Istria; many are still used as baptisteries, and in some, the original font, of ample dimensions, yet remains, as in Rome, at the Lateran baptistery, the font of which is twenty-seven feet in diameter; that of the beautiful circular baptistery of Pisa, the font in which is ten feet in diameter and three and one-third feet deep; as also that of Nocera, the font in which is seventeen feet in diameter and four feet deep. The font of the baptistery of Florence was destroyed three hundred years since; it occupied an octagonal space twenty-seven feet in diameter, now paved with marble differing from the other pavement, and surrounded by a white marble coping, on which, plainly visible, is an inscription designating the inclosed area as the place of the original font. Dante, in his immortal poem, refers to this font, a part of which he broke in his efforts to save a child from drowning. These facts afford incontestable proof, in addition to the historical traditions concerning them, of the use for which these buildings were originally constructed. If these were baptisteries,—and it cannot be questioned,—then the Newport structure also was one.

The round buildings of Greenland, referred to by Professor Rafn, were also baptisteries. There was one, doubtless, for each bishopric. Only one is found in Vinland, because the colony was small, and was all comprised, no doubt, in one bishopric.

It need not be thought strange that, if the Newport structure be a baptistery, there are no remains of the church near which it must have stood. In a country like Vinland, abounding in timber at that early time, the first structures of the colonists were undoubtedly of wood, and not until they came to feel that their residence there was likely to

prove permanent, would they resolve to build with more durable material. Then, after having constructed the baptistery of stone,



BAPTISTERY AT ARSAGO, ITALY.

candidates, preparatory to admitting them to the assemblies of the faithful. In Italy alone about sixty of these buildings are still

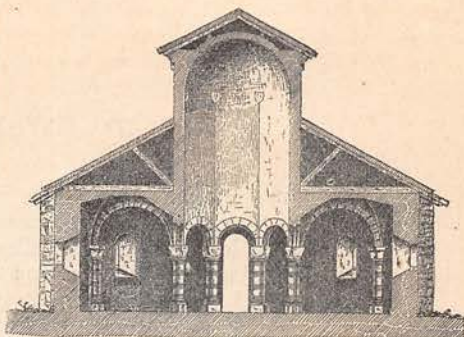
prove permanent, would they resolve to build with more durable material. Then, after having constructed the baptistery of stone,

they may have intended to follow this up by the more important work of building the cathedral of the same material; but failed to realize these intentions through apprehension of trouble with the Indians, or by actual war, which may have ended in the extermination of the colonists.

It may be claimed by some objector that, because in certain excavations made beneath the Newport tower some years since, no remains of a baptismal font were found, therefore the structure could not have been a baptistery.

This point is not well taken, for it is well known that the *piscina*, or depressed baptismal basin, was common only to baptisteries of the early centuries; those erected after the ninth century were generally provided with a baptismal basin, which, like a piece of furniture, was a distinct construction, placed *upon* the floor. Among many examples of this which might be referred to, it will suffice to name the fonts of those two splendid baptisteries of Pisa and Parma, which were erected at this period. The Newport baptistery, without doubt, had its font placed *upon* the floor, and for the want of proper stone-masons, capable of cutting stone, as is conspicuously evident in the character of the stone-work of the building, the font was probably made of wood, and has long since perished.

There can be no further doubt of the origin and purpose of the "Old Mill." It should henceforth be designated by its proper

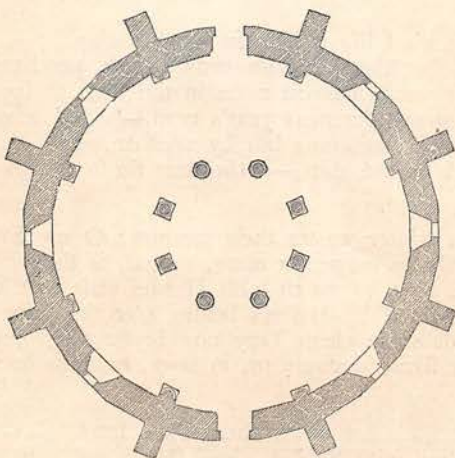


SECTION OF THE BAPTISTERY AT ASTI, NORTHERN ITALY.

name, and be known only as the Vinland Baptistery.

This antiquerelic, the most ancient Christian building in the United States, is eight centuries old. It deserves the care due to a most valuable historic monument. The vines, which annually furnish the old walls with a clothing of verdure, are its most insidious enemies.* The tendrils, if allowed to push their way into every crevice for support, would soon wedge apart and dislocate the well-cemented stones, and crumble the antique pile in hopeless ruin. This precious relic of the past deserves a better fate. Let the building be properly restored, and used as a museum of American antiquities.

* It is gratifying to know that the vines covering the tower at the writing of this paper in January, 1878, have since been removed.



PLAN OF THE BAPTISTERY AT ASTI, NORTHERN ITALY.