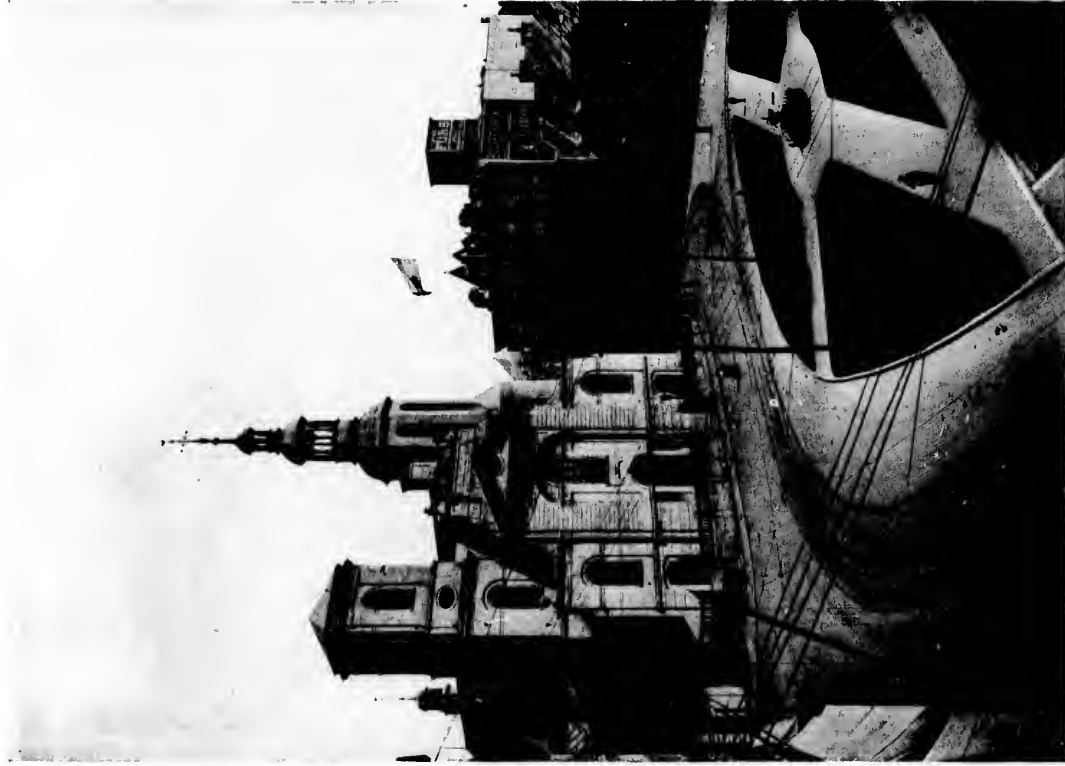




The Basilica or French Cathedral

A wonderful medieval edifice, ancient in its construction, the form of its towers, its cupolas and the peculiar shape of the dome, it has been preserved in its original form. The interior is all brightness, its walls and gold ornaments lend a cheerfulness to its appearance, but the exterior has been decorated with many of the old masters' best works of art. Work was commenced on the construction in 1472. The first mass was celebrated in 1603 and the church was consecrated in 1606. It was badly damaged in 1759 by the British bombardment. In 1871 it was raised to the rank of Basilica. Its chancel is a copy of St. Peter at Rome. Its length is 216 feet and width 108 feet, with a seating capacity of 4,000 people.