



Vaults at St. Etienne, Auxerre  
Phase 5: ca. 1300  
Bays 1N, 1NC  
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Vaults 1N and 1NC were vaulted together. The new west entry program, begun around mid-century, experienced a pause when the pier and wall surfaces south of the central doorway were completed to the top of the first level. Construction was continued following a new concept and using distinctive molded detailing north of the central doorway. This north side

program was completed to the top of the first level ca. 1300. The vaults likely date to that time. A temporary roof was installed to protect the completed portal level of the façade.

Vault 1N has the mirror situation discussed for 1S (phase 4), with the additional complications of a lateral chapel and a large opening in its center to facilitate lifting materials into the upper levels of the (eventual) tower above. As in 1S, vault adjustments differ in the north-south and east-west directions for the same reasons of surrounding height and spacing irregularities. A noteworthy feature of vault 1N is the range of sizes in its masonry. At the western piers the courses are wider than normal, and near the crowns the masonry is quite varied in size from larger rectangular to small square blocks. The vault's surface is lightly whitewashed. Its transverse rib was clearly conceived to complement the north longitudinal arch separating the bay from the chapel, while it merely abuts the (pre-existing) nave arcade arch. Also, there is a small trapezoidal, western vault that forms the covering over the north entryway. This last feature is not found on the south side of the building.

In vault 1NC, the chapel under the north tower, the east-west vaults are roughly symmetrical. In the north-south direction, the south vault is flattened and matches the height of the north web in the neighboring vault 1N. The outer, north vault curves down to the chapel's outer wall rib. These two units are laid up differently; the south vault is laid perpendicular to the wall rib, that is, in the normative fashion, while the north vault is laid perpendicular to the diagonal ribs. This coursing meets the outer wall arch irregularly; a triangular space near the keystone had to be filled with wedge-shaped masonry. The vaulting technique is consistent with the character of the masonry of the chapel; many custom-shaped blocks were pieced together.

In the west complex as it was erected in the 13<sup>th</sup> century we find related, but distinct solutions on each side of the central bay. Vault 1S is more regular, while the two north bays are more individualized and their masonry technique is less assured. It is worth noting that the Auxerre west complex presents a mirror image in plan when compared with the Sens Cathedral west complex. At Sens, the earlier, thickly buttressed solution is on its north side, and the lighter, more decorated aisle and chapel plan is on its south side. At Auxerre the west program was begun on the south side in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and construction progressed slowly down to ca. 1300 on the north. At Sens, the program of ca. 1200, surviving on the north, was damaged by a fire on its south side in the 1270s, so the newer design is found there.



Bay 1N, INC (left) and portal extension (bottom)

