

Susan North who inherited Wroxton, was able to get the Barony revived in her name, and in 1835 married John Doyle who changed his name to North in 1841. John North lived at Wroxton until his death in 1894, and he and Lady Susan effectively gave it its present appearance. In essentials, although one thinks of Wroxton as a house of around 1600, what we see today is perhaps best understood as the house of a romantically-minded Victorian landowner, conscious of his family background, and conscientiously believing that in improving his house he was doing what his ancestors would have done if they had been fortunate enough to live in the nineteenth century.

The gothic revival had been in its infancy in the eighteenth century, at the time of the 1st Earl's work, and Sanderson Miller, who designed some of the revival's earliest works at Wroxton, Stowe, Hagley and elsewhere, had been among its earliest practitioners. Horace Walpole, whose gothick house at Strawberry Hill did more than any other single building to popularise the style, has been quoted already as approving of the chapel at Wroxton. But by the early nineteenth century, far more was known about the authentic styles of earlier centuries than had been the case a century before, and while there were by then numbers of erudite architects ready to design revivalist buildings with a high degree of stylistic accuracy, another way of recreating the past was to make use of genuine antique pieces. Such pieces were to be had from old buildings that were being demolished; they were also to be had in considerable quantities from abroad, where great numbers of ancient buildings had suffered during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.

By the 1830s there was a large trade in such relics. In their original settings, which had often been ecclesiastical, these fragments had usually served quite different purposes from those that were needed to embellish the houses of the early Victorian rich. But choir stalls could be adapted for chairs or library book-cases, fragments of ancient beds rearranged as chimneypieces, panels from pulpits could be made into doors, and wall panelling could be moved to new settings and enhanced with other ancient mouldings if it was not decorative enough. In spite of the fact that so much of this ancient woodwork came from abroad, the intention was none the less to give an impression of English antiquity: to evoke Old England. And having come into possession both of the family's ancient title and of the old house which Lady Susan's ancestors had already occupied for well over two hundred years, the Norths had a strong incentive to try and restore its ancient glories.