

# CRYSTAL PALACE

By Isabella Lewry



# WHAT IS CRYSTAL PALACE?

The Crystal Palace was a landmark Victorian cast-iron and glass structure built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park, London. Designed by Joseph Paxton, it was a massive, revolutionary building. It was a feat of engineering, featuring a huge 990,000-square-foot, 128-foot-high structure built in only 39 weeks using prefabricated glass and iron.



# WHO WERE THE MAIN PEOPLE BEHIND THE CRYSTAL PALACE?

---

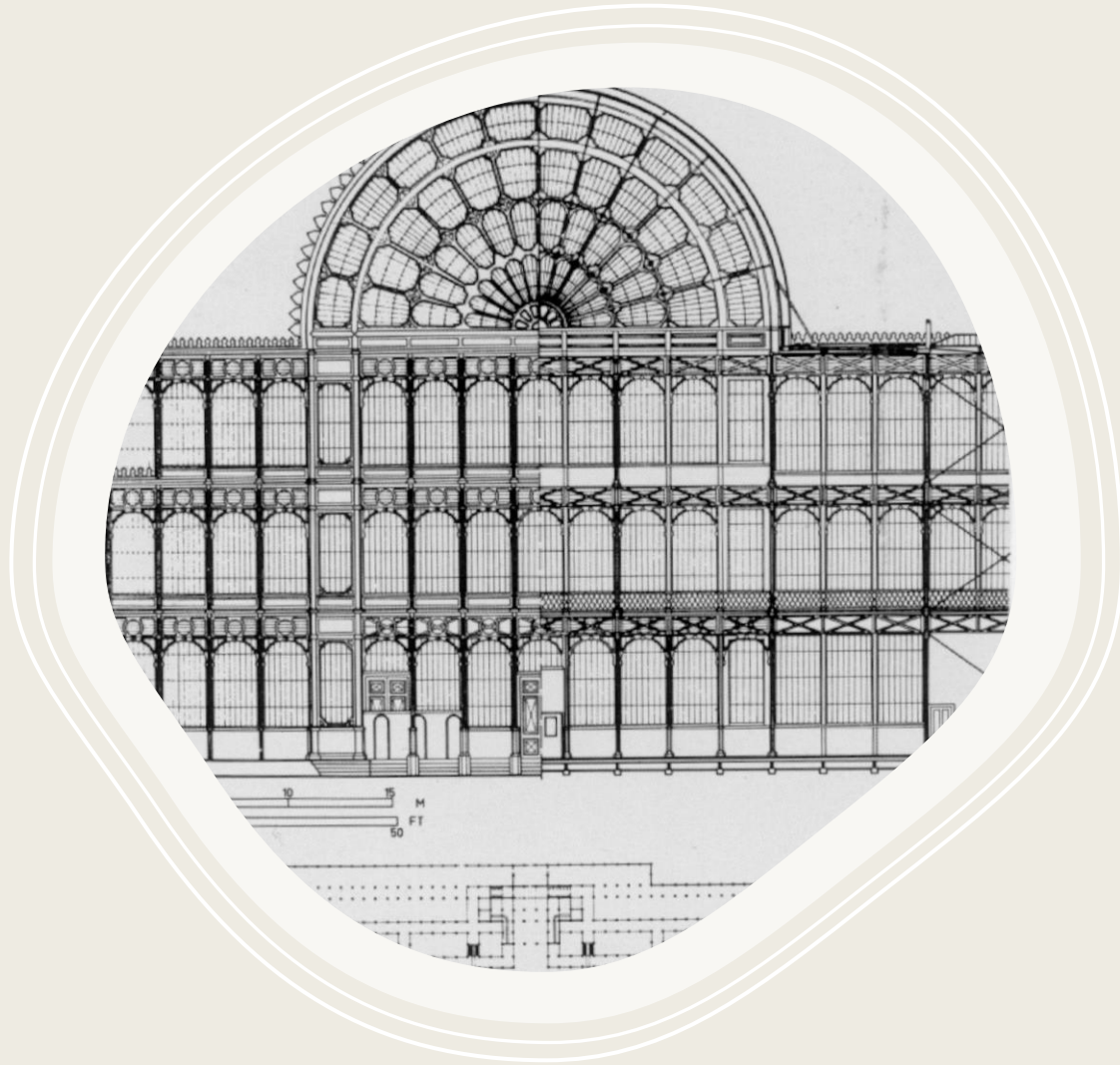
**Prince Albert (1819–1861):** The driving force behind the exhibition, he championed the project to show off Britain's industrial and imperial power.



**Henry Cole (1808–1882):** A civil servant who proposed the idea for the massive international exhibition after visiting Paris, he was a key organizer alongside Albert

**Joseph Paxton (1803–1865):** A landscape gardener and architect, his design for the building—a "Crystal Palace" of iron and glass—was accepted after conventional designs failed.





## WHY WAS IT BUILT?

The Crystal Palace was built in 1851 for the great exhibition. Prince Albert dreamed of creating an event that would bring all countries together to display their interventions, art, and technology. The enormous building showcased the industrial success of Britain with new machinery, scientific discoveries and the amazing engineering achievements of the people at the time and represented the progress of the Victorian age.

# WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT?

The Crystal Palace was one of the most important achievements of Victorian Britain because it represented progress, education, and international unity. It allowed people in Britain to learn about different cultures, traditions, and ideas. Prince Albert wanted the exhibition to encourage peace and cooperation between nations by showing how countries could share knowledge and achievements rather than compete through war. He also hoped it would inspire improvements in science, industry, and design while educating ordinary people about modern inventions and culture. The Crystal Palace became a symbol of Britain's industrial success, global influence, and belief in progress during the Victorian era.

# WHAT WAS DISPLAYED AT THE EXHIBITION?

At the exhibition over 100,000 items showcasing industrial, technological, and artistic marvels from Britain and around the world, including the Koh-i-Noor diamond, massive steam-powered engines, and innovative inventions like early fax machines and cameras. More than 6 million people visited the five-month event.



# WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

It was destroyed by a massive fire on November 30, 1936, which consumed the structure in hours. The cause was never officially established, though theories range from a faulty gas pipe to a cigarette. Despite 89 fire engines attending, the building's iron and glass structure collapsed. The Palace was already damaged by a fire in 1866 and suffered from high maintenance costs and financial issues, becoming bankrupt in 1911.





# CRYSTAL PALACE TODAY

The site is now a public park, Crystal Palace Park, managed by the Crystal Palace Park Trust, which took ownership in 2023. The most prominent surviving features are the massive Italian terraces, stone sphinxes, and steps designed by Edward Milner, which are being repaired and conserved and the life-sized dinosaur sculptures, unveiled in 1854, are still present and are a Grade I listed attraction.