

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0399

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, Old Mill Road and Arthur Kill Road, Staten Island.
Built 1872; architect William H. Mersereau.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 2515, Lot 10.

On October 11, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Church of St. Andrew and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 17). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the attorney representing The Church of St. Andrew said, "that The Church of St. Andrew property has been designated as a part of the Restoration of Richmondtown project."

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

As we see it today, the little stone Church of St. Andrew is reminiscent of an English Norman parish church. The asymmetrical massing of architectural elements, together with the immediate rolling and verdant churchyard setting, recalls to mind an era of pictorial romanticism. In composition the Church, with its picturesque outline and steeply pitched gable roofs, reflects the character of the austere and simple English parish churches of the Twelfth Century.

The original small stone Church with gambrel roof was built between the years 1709-1712. The site chosen is situated in Richmondtown (formerly called Coclestown), north of the brook which runs through the village and on a rise of land overlooking the Fresh Kill. In 1712, construction of the Church's exterior was finished, although the interior was apparently not completed until a later date. In 1743, and again in 1770, the building was enlarged in two stages to the present 80 ft. x 40 ft. dimensions. The east gallery which was reached by an exterior entranceway was added between 1807 and 1810. A high wind destroyed the steeple in 1822. This was the second steeple; an earlier one had been erected after the Revolutionary War.

On two separate occasions, in 1867 and 1872, this building was nearly destroyed by fire but each time the original walls remained standing. During the last rebuilding in 1872, the architect, William H. Mersereau, using the original stone walls, constructed the present edifice. Wall openings ranging in type, from the round-arched windows to the circular oculi (bulls-eye windows), are framed by keyed brick work and contrast interestingly in color and texture with the rough-cut random fieldstone of the walls. The steeple consists of a square tower, a belfry with paired louvred openings on each of the four sides, surmounted by a dignified but plain octagonal spire. The stone wall surrounding the churchyard was constructed in 1855. On the parish property many gravestones dating back to the Colonial period are scattered throughout the graveyard; the oldest is dated 1733.

Historical Significance

The Church of St. Andrew was established by the Reverend Aeneas MacKenzie in 1705, and services were held for seven years in the French Church nearby. The Charter was granted by Queen Anne in 1713. Subsequently, the Church of England congregation absorbed the Huguenot-Waloons of the old French parish, located a mile away. The Reverend Mr. MacKenzie was also responsible for establishing a school system. In the neighborhood he set up two schools which were well attended.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW

During the Revolutionary War, one of the principal British military camps was located in Richmondtown. The fort was situated about one thousand yards from the Church. Several skirmishes between the American and British troops occurred near the parish. On August 8, 1777, the Americans attacked the British who had barricaded themselves inside the building. During this period, the Church also functioned as a hospital for the British wounded.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that The Church of St. Andrew has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, The Church of St. Andrew is reminiscent of an English Norman parish church, that the Church had an important part in the Revolutionary War, that it played a pivotal role in the life process of the historic Richmondtown community, and that personages notable in the history of Staten Island have always worshipped there.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark The Church of St. Andrew, Old Mill Road and Arthur Kill Road, Staten Island and designates Tax Map Block 2515, Lot 10, Borough of Richmond, as its Landmark Site.