

CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, 980 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan.
Begun 1895, completed 1900; architects Schickel & Ditmars.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1495, Lot 33 in part,
consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On November 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 50). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Rector of the Church, Reverend Charles T. Taylor, S.J., has indicated to the Commission that the Church favors the proposed designation and is "most anxious to co-operate".

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Monumental in scale and impressive in appearance, the Park Avenue facade of this dignified Twentieth Century Church reflects the classical style of Seventeenth Century Rome. The symmetrical masonry exterior of limestone, severely austere in character, is generously enriched by carved decoration of the highest quality.

The use of rustication, which retains its precise clean-cut edges, creates a subtle play of light and shade over the surface of the wall, in contrast to the dark shadows cast by the windows, doors and cornices. The superimposition of orders on the facade appears in the early Renaissance in Rome. By placing pilaster above pilaster supporting entablatures, the horizontal and vertical elements of the building are beautifully integrated. The eye is directed upward, moving from simple to more complex forms, from small shadows below to the heavier ones cast by decorative carvings and the cornice above.

The lower portion of the Church is composed of three handsomely enframed doorways set between Doric pilasters. The center section of the wall, containing an imposing pedimented central doorway, projects slightly forward and is flanked by paired pilasters. The wall is terminated at its extremities by single pilasters. These six pilasters support a full entablature, and the frieze in the central section is decorated with triglyphs and circular medallions. The smaller doorways on either side of the center are surmounted by cornices supported on vertical consoles.

The upper part of the Church repeats the pattern of pilasters supporting an entablature but in the more ornate Corinthian order. Here the dominating feature of the center section is a Palladian window surmounted by the triangular pediment which rises above the cornice. To left and right of the center section are pedimented windows which have sills and pediments resting on consoles. Above the Corinthian cornice on either side of the central pediment are heavy low parapet walls set back from the plane of the building walls beneath them. These were intended as bases for towers that were never built but which were a part of the original design for the Church.

The north elevation on Eighty-fourth Street consists of a series of large bays, the upper part of each containing a lunette window and the lower part ashlar masonry walls. These bays, separated from one another by pilasters, form the side aisles and extend to a shallow gabled projection or transept. The side aisle has a pitched roof, and from it rises the clerestory wall pierced by eight arched windows.

The base of the wall at the north elevation shows that the present Church is built above a lower church having squat buttresses of uncut gray stone. This lower church, dedicated to St. Lawrence O'Toole, the titular saint of the parish when it was established in 1851, was built between 1884 and 1886 and was intended to be the foundation of a Gothic church. In 1866 the parish was given into the charge of the Jesuits, and it was they who petitioned Rome for permission to have St. Ignatius Loyola as titular patron for the church they were planning to build. Designed by Schickel & Ditmars, it was begun in 1895, dedicated in 1898, at which time Rome granted the request to change the name, and it was completed in 1900.

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. Ignatius Loyola 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. Ignatius Loyola is an outstanding example of the Seventeenth Century Italian Renaissance style in which the architects have successfully combined various stylistic elements, that the facade is well proportioned and beautifully designed, that the masonry as erected is of exceptional quality and that the carved decoration is outstanding.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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. Ignatius Loyola, 980 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1495, Lot 33 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.