

Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 19, 1989, Designation List 223
LP-1562

THE FREE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY-THE-VIRGIN (Church, Clergy House, Mission House, Rectory and Lady Chapel), 133-145 West 46th Street and 136-144 West 47th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1894-95; architect Napoleon LeBrun & Sons (Pierre L. LeBrun).

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 999, Lot 12.

On November 12, 1985, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin and the proposed designation of the related Landmarks Site (Item 17). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At the public hearing the representatives of the Church, as well as one other speaker, took a position opposing designation. Subsequently the Church has expressed its support for designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin complex, including the church, Clergy House, Mission House, Rectory and Lady Chapel, was designed by Pierre L. LeBrun of Napoleon LeBrun & Sons in 1894. The church, long a center of Anglo-Catholic worship, is a physical realization of the tenets of the Oxford Movement which sought to better the lives of the urban poor through nursing care, inspirational activity and the ritual of the Pre-Reformation Church in England. Built in 1895 to make full use of an irregular site, St. Mary's was designed both to realize the programmatic goals of its trustees and to evoke, in the church and Lady Chapel, the 13th-century French Gothic Style. The Clergy and Mission Houses, and the Rectory were cast in the 14th-century French Gothic style. The result is one of the finest Gothic-inspired designs of New York's late 19th century. The steel frame construction of the church can be said to have made the building the first of its kind and size in the world, thus redefining the conventional methods of church construction. Among the building's several specific Anglo-Catholic characteristics are the subjects selected for the sculptures of J. Massey Rhind whose academic naturalism complements LeBrun's architecture.

The Society of the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin

The Society of the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin has its origins in the growth of Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of North America. In the third decade of the 19th century, a group of theologians - dons of Oxford's College House of Saint Mary-the-Virgin (Oriel College) - initiated a religious movement to enhance the lives of the disaffected of the Industrial Revolution.¹ Reasserting an identity with the Pre-Reformation Church of England, the founders of the Oxford Movement emphasized the importance of the sacraments, stressing the ideal of the priesthood and the authority of bishops but still rejecting the autocracy of the Pope. This Anglo-Catholicism was characterized by a reintroduction of ritual and its accompanying furnishings, a dedication to mission work, a revival of religious orders, and a development of church architecture and art.² Conceived in academe, Anglo-Catholicism, garbed in the mystery, color and richness of ceremonial worship, also manifested itself in the construction of new church buildings in slum neighborhoods.³

This reassertion of ancient ritual found a sympathetic audience within the Camden Society (1839), subsequently the Ecclesiological Society, which, through its publications, The Ecclesiologist and a variety of architectural tracts, advocated the restoration of ancient churches and the building of new ones strictly according to the principles which they believed guided the medieval English builders.⁴ In the 1860s the Ecclesiologists also had begun to accept certain French architectural elements -- apses, in place of the traditional English flat ended chancels, for example.⁵

By the 1860s Anglo-Catholicism had found a sympathetic audience among adherents of the American Episcopal Church. St. Mary's early history is inseparable from the life of the founder of the parish, the Reverend Thomas McKee Brown (1841-1898). Born in Philadelphia, the son of James Brown, he attended the Episcopal Academy (Philadelphia) for seven years and then matriculated at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, with the class of 1863. The Civil War interrupted his academic career and he went to work. But soon after he resumed his studies - by arrangement with Trinity College - at the General Theological Seminary in New York. He received his Bachelor's degree from Trinity in 1864 and his Masters from the General Theological Seminary the following year. Before his ordination by Horatio Potter, Bishop of New York, on February 25, 1866, he served as curate at the Church of the Annunciation (then on 14th Street, Manhattan) and at St. John's, in Brooklyn. Following his ordination he was Rector of Trinity Church, East New York, for a year before returning to Manhattan to become curate for the Reverend Ferdinand C. Ewer of Christ Church, New York.⁶ At both the Church of the Annunciation and Christ Church the exalted ritual characteristic of Anglo-Catholicism was practiced.

Concurrently, Brown and a group of interested lay people combined to establish a new parish on a thoroughly Anglo-Catholic foundation. Although at this time such ritual was contrary to canon law, Bishop Potter not only suggested how the group might incorporate, he pointed out the working class neighborhood where their church would be most effective.⁷ The Society of the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin was incorporated on December 5, 1868, under a provision of a New York State law. John Jacob Astor III, learning of the group's objective, gave the Society three lots on West 45th

Street (the site of the present Booth Theater).⁸ Within the month the corner stone of a new church building was laid by Bishop Potter.⁹ It is likely that the dedication of the church to Saint Mary-the-Virgin was inspired by the home church of the Oxford Movement.

The new church, built to the designs of William T. Hallett (1829-1908) was opened by the Rev. Ferdinand Ewer on December 8, 1870 -- the Feast of the Conception (one of the most significant days in the calendar of a church dedicated to the Virgin). From the beginning the liturgy was highly ritualistic; indeed, it was noted in the Parish Register of a sister church that the first High Mass with incense was celebrated at St. Mary's on Christmas Day, 1877.¹⁰ The building records reflect the dedication of St. Mary's clergy and sisters to the spiritual and physical well-being of this working class neighborhood: a new clergy and choir house to accommodate the men's guilds (the St. Alban's and the St. Joseph's Guilds) and the boys club, as well as the single clergymen, was finished in 1885; and within the next two years a house at 248 West 45th Street to shelter the women's guilds (the Guild of St. Mary of the Cross and the Guild of the Annunciation) and the dispensary run by the new female order founded by Father Brown -- the Sisters of the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary -- was given to serve as a Mission House.

The Society's trustees, burdened with mortgages, were continually faced with a lack of funds. The congregation included many of limited income, but several individuals were generous, among them, Miss Sara Louie Cooke.¹¹ On July 21, 1892, Miss Cooke died, leaving St. Mary's nearly \$500,000. At the November trustees' meeting there was a lengthy discussion about whether to enlarge the present church or to purchase property for a new church. Subsequently, at a special meeting of the trustees it was resolved that the Treasurer should receive all moneys and property of Miss Cooke's estate.

The treasurer of the Society was Haley Fiske (1852-1929), who had been elected to the board of trustees on March 23, 1892 and on motion elected treasurer. Fiske was vice-president (and in 1919 became the fourth president) of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. He was the assistant to both his predecessors at Metropolitan Life, Joseph Fairchild Knapp and John Rogers Hegeman, both great builders. It was Knapp who brought Metropolitan Life uptown to Madison Square and for whom Napoleon LeBrun & Sons designed the eleven-story office block at 1 Madison Avenue, (1890-91). It was Hegeman who expanded to the rest of the block and part of the block to the north (1894-1909, a campaign completed by Fiske), and it was Hegeman who commissioned the Metropolitan Life tower (a designated New York City Landmark, 1906-07), all of these built from plans prepared by the LeBrun firm. There can be little doubt that Fiske was involved in all these projects.

Fiske took the initiative immediately.¹² One month later an executive committee, consisting of the rector, the secretary and the treasurer, was created. The trustees had had a year to consider the alternatives: enlarging their existing edifice on West 45th Street or moving to a new site.¹³ Two months later it was reported that 143 feet along the north side of West 46th Street and possibly one adjacent lot on West 47th Street could be purchased. Accumulating lots for the new church site -- seven on West 46th Street (No. 133-No. 145) -- continued from January, 1894, until the

following August when title was taken to the last of the five lots on West 47th Street (No. 136-No. 144).¹⁴ Both these streets were lined with the narrow rowhouses of working class people and stables.

Concurrently, the Society's property on West 45th Street was sold and an architectural competition was announced. Father Brown had visited Europe in the summer of 1888; certainly he would have seen the great cathedrals as well as the new English churches built for Anglo-Catholic congregations.¹⁵ The trustees stipulated a program with the following: a church in the French Gothic style of the 13th century; able to seat 800 exclusive of the chancel; the chancel to be apsidal and at least fifty feet in depth with an ambulatory; the building to extend north from West 46th Street with the chancel at the north end; the interior to be lofty; the elaboration of ornamental detail to be confined to the front and to the interior; no towers or spires; at least two chapels and a baptistry; the Rectory and the Sacristy to be on West 47th Street; and the Mission House for the Sisters and the Clergy House to be on West 46th Street -- the Mission House on the east side of the site and the Clergy House on the West.¹⁶

Because of the unfavorable reception to the announced competition,¹⁷ the trustees withdrew it, and the commission was given to the LeBrun firm. Pierre LeBrun's plans were accepted on October 11, 1894.¹⁸ It should not be overlooked that Haley Fiske knew the firm well. Indeed, the LeBrun office was located in the new Home Office building they designed for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company at 1 Madison Avenue.

The Architect

Pierre Iajus LeBrun (1846-1924) has not received the attention that he is due. Because of the name of the firm, Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, both Pierre and his brother Michel have been all but anonymous. That it was Pierre LeBrun who designed St. Mary's is indicated in the Society's minutes. His father, Napoleon LeBrun, represented the firm at the initial stages of the project. Napoleon Eugene Charles LeBrun (1821-1901), was born to French emigrant parents in Philadelphia. At fifteen years of age he was placed in the office of Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887), where he remained for six years. LeBrun began his own practice in 1841 in Philadelphia but moved to New York in 1864 where the choice in 1870 of his Second Empire style Masonic Temple competition submission did much to establish his reputation. In the same year his son Pierre joined him and the firm became Napoleon LeBrun & Son. Father and sons were active members of the new American Institute of Architects.

The firm's work can be divided into two periods, an early one spanning the 1870s into the mid-80s and a later one from the later 1880s until the firm's dissolution in 1909. The earlier is robust -- the Church of Saint John-the-Baptist, 1872, West 30th Street and the Fire Department Headquarters, 1886, East 67th Street. The later work was significantly different. Building elevations became more planar; ornament, based on historic prototypes, was used more judiciously. The first Metropolitan Life building was an example of a new building type given stylistic character through the application of ornament, as is LeBrun's still-extant Home Insurance Company (1893-94) facade on Broadway above Murray Street.

If little is known of Pierre LeBrun's formal architectural education, his three trips abroad in the service of the Willard Architectural Commission are documented. Levi Hale Willard, a wealthy businessman, died in 1883 leaving to the newly founded Metropolitan Museum of Art \$100,000 toward the creation of a collection of models and casts illustrative of the art and science of architecture, to be made under the direction of a commission chosen by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In his will Willard nominated Napoleon LeBrun as president of this commission; Willard, a friend, had often discussed with LeBrun the need to cultivate a popular taste for architecture. Pierre LeBrun was appointed the commission's purchasing agent. The younger LeBrun visited the significant sites and met with the suppliers of casts in Paris, Munich and Rome. The historical accuracy characterizing the ornament of the Church of Saint-Mary-the-Virgin appears to have been informed by the 13th century French Gothic examples in the Willard Collection. This is true of the firm's other later buildings; regardless of whether they are fire stations or skyscrapers, style is determined by the integrity of the ornament.

The Sculptor

John Massey Rhind (1860-1936) was born in Edinburgh where both his father and grandfather were architectural sculptors, a profession that his brothers followed as well. He studied in London - with Jules-Aime Dalou - and in Paris. His style can be associated with the academic naturalism of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Rhind came to this country in 1889. Credited for his ability to make his sculpture an integral part of a larger design, Rhind's earliest work in this country was for ecclesiastical buildings.¹⁹

His first commission in this country was the bronze tympanum (1891) over the entrance to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at the General Theological Seminary (for which institution he further worked in bronze and marble). His bronze panel, "Flight to a City of Refuge," won the commission for one of the three pairs of doors (1892) given to Trinity Church in memory of John Jacob Astor III. In a letter to the Society's trustees, dated April 15, 1895, he offered to carve a statue of the Virgin and Child for the trumeau (Plate 1), the post between the doors within the main entrance. Two months later he was invited to submit a sketch for the tympanum, the design now over the door (Plate 2).²⁰ In addition to the trumeau and the tympanum, the following are from the hand of J. Massey Rhind: the two freestanding statues flanking the main entrance, Saints George and Michael (Plate 3); the three freestanding statues that make up the Calvary over the main entrance (Plate 4); the freestanding statue of a seated St. Cecilia in the niche above the Clergy House entrance (Plate 5); the tympanum (Plate 6) above the Lady Chapel entrance on West 47th Street and the impost heads supporting the drip molding over this entrance.

Design of the Saint Mary-the-Virgin Complex

As with the other buildings in the LeBrun firm's later period, the clue to historic style of St. Mary's is in the ornament concentrated around doorways and windows (Plate 3). The Willard casts included details from ecclesiastical and domestic Gothic buildings -- Chartres, Paris, and Rouen. Thirteenth-century French Gothic ornament defines the major features of the tall limestone facade of the church (Plate 7), the central of the three

buildings on West 46th Street. The keyed limestone door and window surrounds, the drip moldings and the tracery of the pierced terra cotta parapets of the flanking, orange brick Clergy and Mission Houses are characteristic of the 14th-century French Gothic style. The contemporary architectural critic, Montgomery Schuyler, found the historically appropriate ornament and the long thin, orange Tiffany bricks pleasing but thought that the treatment of the 46th Street facades lacked "bite."²¹ However, to the 20th century observer the functional economy of the flatness of this range and the irregular disposition of the fenestration are also pleasing. All of these elements, as well as the elegant naturalism of Rhind's sculpture are expressive of the late 19th century. The ornament of the Rectory on West 47th Street, confined to the keyed door and window surrounds and drip moldings (Plate 8), is characteristic of the 14th-century French Gothic style also. But the ornament of the Lady Chapel and its entrance reverts to the 13th-century French Gothic of the church facade. Although there is more depth to the range of St. Mary's buildings along West 47th Street, their planar aspect -- especially the tall apsidal end of the church itself, uncompromised by sham buttresses -- reveals their late 19th-century origin.

The cornerstone was laid on December 8, 1894. All of the newspaper accounts of the building, shortly before its opening exactly one year later, expressed amazement at the speed with which the church, "one of the purest examples of French Gothic of the 13th century in this country," was erected. But a reporter for the Evening Post explained that an elaborate structure like St. Mary's could not have been built in such a short time with conventional methods; the steel skeleton made St. Mary's "the first of its kind and size to be built in this or any other country." It is this use of a steel frame, a technique then associated only with the construction of tall buildings particularly in Chicago, that gave St. Mary's the nickname "the Chicago Church."²²

In plan (Plate 9) it is the central, block-through body of the church that dominates St. Mary's irregular site. This arrangement, with the Clergy House (lower left) and the Mission House (lower right) flanking the church's main entrance on West 46th Street and the Rectory (upper left) and the Lady Chapel (upper right) girdling the church's apsidal end on West 47th Street, was dictated by the trustees' program. The programmatic goals of spatial flexibility and a lofty interior with a vaulted ceiling would appear to be contradictory aims within such a confined area. LeBrun took advantage of the most advanced construction technique, calling in Purdy & Henderson, the construction engineers, to fabricate a steel frame to support his design (Plate 10). The foundation walls and the steel footings were carried down to rock (Plate 11). Large, diagonal compression braces at basement level anchor the bases of the vertical columns. To support the vaults steel transverse and diagonal ribs spring from the eighteen steel columns, nine on each side of the nave (plus the four in the apse), which support the braced saddle-back roof frame above. The upper members of this skeletal imitation of Gothic structure are progressively thinner. The side walls are of brick; the arches of the nave arcade, springing from steel corbels riveted to the columns, are of brick also, as are the walls above them.

St. Mary's had become famous all over the country for the extremely ritualistic character of its services.²³ The requirements of this liturgy

were foremost in the planning of St. Mary's: a long nave and lofty interior, side aisles and ambulatory, a deep chancel and ancillary chapels. But the building's Anglo-Catholic specificity was proclaimed in more subtle ways. The sculptural subjects Rhind was commissioned to carve, the trumeau figure and the tympanum program especially, are specific references to pre-Reformation Catholicism. The contrast between the limestone and the brick of the West 46th Street facade defines the ceremonial entrance. The 13th-century ornament identifies St. Mary's with the new Anglo-Catholic churches being built in England in the 1860s and later. (The 14th-century Gothic detail distinguishes the dependent buildings from the church.) The inspiration for St. Mary's architecture can be found in the tradition of the Oxford Movement itself -- the emphasis upon ritual requiring side aisles, deep chancels, ambulatories and lofty ceilings. It can be said that St. Mary's redefined the manner in which churches could be constructed.

Description

The Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin is a complex of five interconnected buildings (Plate 9): the church itself which runs north and south through this block between West 46th and 47th Streets; the Clergy House to the left (west) of the church and the Mission House to the right (east) of the church, both on West 46th Street; the Rectory to the right (west) of the church's apsidal end and the Lady Chapel to the left (east), both on West 47th Street. All of these buildings, except the church which is faced with limestone, are of an orange (Schuyler called the color "gamboge"), Tiffany brick. All have limestone bases.

Church

The tall, planar limestone facade (Plate 7), forty-six feet wide and 130 feet high from the curb to the cross on the gable, is framed by thin, faceted buttresses and articulated in three horizontal sections: the lowest containing the main entrance; the middle section with the rose window; and the top, a gable containing a smaller round window flanked by the buttress pinnacles.

A great deal of 13th-century Gothic ornament is concentrated within the pointed arch entrance (Plate 4) which contains paired doorways separated by the trumeau and Rhind's canopied statue of the Virgin Mary and Child. Two heavy oak doors with decorative foliated iron work (Plate 12) slide away from the trumeau into the walls to reveal paired, glazed-panel swinging doors with brass fittings below leaded stained-glass transoms. Pendant lamps of iron and glass are fixed to the doorways' lintel and outer posts. The subjects of Rhind's three-tiered tympanum above are familiar Anglo-Catholic subjects. (Plate 2). In niches across the lowest tier are ten worthies flanking a central niche containing a closed door, the five on the left appear to be Old Testament personifications and the five on the right may represent the fathers of the early Christian church. On the middle tier are a seated Virgin and Child attended by adoring shepherds and wise men. At the top the Virgin in an aura ascends between angels disposed upon clouds into the tympanum's foliate border.²⁴ The drip molding of the arch rests on imposts articulated as faces, the one on the left blindfolded to represent Heresy, the one on the right clear-eyed and crowned representing Faith. Flanking the entrance arch, two canopied niches, capped with crocketed and finialed pinnacles, shelter Rhind's statues of

Saint George on the left and Saint Michael on the right. Faces, representing differing physiognomies, project from the canopies' pendant tracery.

In the middle section a tall, blind pointed arch frames the slightly recessed rose window and Calvary with figures by Rhind below it (Plate 4). Gargoyle-adorned pinnacles mark the base of the blind arch; aedicular elements (Plate 13) facing the corner buttresses have crockets and finials, reliefs of rosettes and leaves, and gargoyles projecting from above their dossierets. The rose window (Plate 4) reverses the conventional direction of the arches and balusters within (except for the inner douzefoil); at Notre-Dame, Paris, and at Chartres the arches radiate out, not in as they do here. The window is filled with leaded stained glass in geometric patterns manufactured by Arnold and Locke. The middle section is capped by a foliated cornice from which two gargoyles project (just inside the bases of the corner buttress pinnacles).

The gable (Plate 14) is flanked by the pinnacles terminating the facade's corner buttresses. A round window containing a quatrefoil is in the center of the gable. The gable coping is crocketed. The cross surmounting the gable is of gilded, pressed copper.

Above the church's side aisles and ambulatory the exterior walls of the clerestory (Plate 15), partially visible from both West 46th and 47th Streets, are faced with limestone. On both sides of the clerestory (east and west) eight out of nine panelled bays, separated by minimal and token buttressing, contain the tall, two-light windows of plate tracery with drip moldings. The windows are filled with leaded glass in geometric patterns, manufactured by Arnold & Locke. The steep saddleback roof is slate-covered. A fleche of pressed copper (Plate 16) rises from the ridge line between bays eight and nine (containing the bell brought from West 45th Street). Though visible from West 46th Street, the fleche is seen best from West 47th Street where it is the terminal feature above the church's five apse windows and steep roof. Only the center three of these five windows contain the glass specifically projected for them and manufactured by C. F. Kempe & Co., Ltd., London.²⁵

The Clergy House

The Clergy House is four stories with a penthouse which is invisible from West 46th Street (Plate 7). Constructed of orange Tiffany brick with a granite base and limestone water table up to the first story sills, the keyed and ornamental door and window surrounds, string courses, sills, drip moldings, and lintels are of limestone and the cornice and pierced balustrade above are of terra cotta. The window and door grilles are iron; (the interior posts and beams are cast iron). There appear to be two entrances, but the more ornamented one on the right with the cross as its terminal feature is the entrance to the left side aisle of the church. One enters the Clergy House itself through the doorway on the left. The paneled-wood doors with wrought-iron grilles are set below transoms of leaded glass which are in a geometric pattern. Individual iron lanterns are suspended on short chains from the lintels of these two doorways. Above the Clergy house entrance is a canopied niche sheltering Rhind's statue of St. Cecilia (Plate 5), a memorial to an admired church organist, Dr. William Prentice.²⁶ Windows are capped by drip moldings with foliated

stops. Three second story window heads carry blind cinquefoil arches. The windows have one-over-one wood sash. The cornice is of richly molded terra cotta in a foliated pattern (Plate 15). Twenty alternating panels of flamboyant tracery make up the pierced terra-cotta parapet. The present coping is of sections of poured concrete slab.

The Mission House

Except for its width --it is narrower -- and certain details, the Mission House is identical to the Clergy House. The hanging lantern at the Mission House entrance has been replaced with a more modern fixture (Plate 17). Because the Mission House is narrower than the Clergy House there are fewer windows and only thirteen alternating terra cotta panels make up the parapet.²⁷

The Rectory

Like the Clergy and Mission Houses on West 46th Street, the Rectory at 144 West 47th Street (Plate 8) is of orange Tiffany brick on a granite base with a limestone water table. The keyed and ornamental door and window surrounds, sills, string courses, and drip moldings are limestone. The Rectory entrance (Plate 18) has its original bluestone stoop and basement areaway. The double doors with their brass fittings are of paneled oak, two over two, with a transom of plate glass above. The Rectory shelters the sacristy and vestry rooms, as well as the living quarters of the rector and his family. Windows containing one-over-one wood sash some with leaded glass in a geometric pattern, are capped by drip moldings with foliate stops. Of special interest is the bow window at the second story set within splayed reveals (Plate 19). The lintel is an iron "I" beam decorated with five iron rosettes, while the casing is of wood as are the two narrow shafts at the angles of the bow, and the drip molding carries an ornamental finial. The gable coping (Plate 20), chimney and chimney pots are terra cotta. The eastern end of the slate covered roof is broached (Plate 21), its hip adorned with a pressed copper finial.

The Lady Chapel

In a letter to his fellow trustees dated Dec. 15, 1894, Haley Fiske offered to build the Lady Chapel (Plate 22). He indicated that he would like to move the west windows from the West 45th Street church to this chapel. Like the Rectory, the Clergy and the Mission Houses, the chapel is built of the orange Tiffany brick; the water table, the chapel's elaborately carved entrance, the keyed window surrounds, string courses, drip moldings, imbricated pinnacles, keyed and crocketed gable coping and crowning cross are all of limestone. The entrance (Plate 6) screens the recessed area between the chapel and the Rectory. Rhind's tympanum, above the oak entrance doors, depicts the Annunciation and is framed by an archivolt, intricately carved as a rose vine, supported on colonnettes. The crocketed drip molding springs from two imposts, given the form of portrait heads carved by Rhind of Fiske's son and daughter, which resolves into an ogee that breaks through the top of the screening spandrel course to support a cross (Plate 23), now missing. Three lancets, the taller in the center, light the chapel; the drip moldings spring from foliated imposts. The round window in the gable contains a quatrefoil filled with leaded stained glass.

Exterior Changes²⁸

In the ninety-five years since the opening of St. Mary's on West 46th Street, little of the church's exterior aspect has changed. Drawings indicate that there was once a balustrade fronting the Calvary above the main entrance, and another across the facade at the foot of the gable. The Rectory gable is missing its crowning finial and the cross atop the Lady Chapel entrance is missing. Drawings indicate -- and coping fragments corroborate -- that there were basement areaways in front of the Clergy and Mission Houses. Only one basement areaway exists today, that of the Rectory. An unsympathetic composite material has been clumsily used to repair tracery and foliated ornament. In 1962 repair and repointing the church's stone facade was carried out.²⁷

Report prepared by
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Notes

1. These dons were John Keble (1792-1866), John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882) and Charles Marriott (1811-1858). July 14, 1833 -- the date of Keble's sermon, "National Apostasy," at the University Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, Oxford, to the High Church and Tory judges of the Assize Court -- is generally held as the beginning of the Oxford Movement.
2. The Anglo-Catholic mission priests took as their example St. Vincent de Paul, the 17th-century French priest and founder of the Lazarists and the Sisters of Charity. The male orders established were the Society of the Holy Cross and the Society of St. John the Baptist. Between 1841 and 1855 at least four female orders were established. Harriet Monsel's Community of St. John the Baptist worked with prostitutes and Ann Gream's Sisters of St. Margaret worked with the sick and poor. Nursing in England as we know it today, both in hospital and out, was founded on these early examples. The order of sisters founded by Father Brown at St. Mary's in 1885 was called the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These sisters ran a dispensary as well as nursed the sick in their homes.
3. Two of the new slum churches in London were: William Butterfield's St. Alban's, Holborn, 1861-62, and F. H. Pownal's St. Peter's, London Docks, 1865. Robert Radclyffe Dolling, one of the mission priests, wrote, "If there is one place which needs a magnificent and impressive church, it is a slum." W. J. Sparrow Simpson, 69.
4. A.W.N. Pugin initiated the interest in correct Gothic architecture. All Saints, Margaret St., 1839-54, the Ecclesiologists "model" church

in a London working class neighborhood, was designed by William Butterfield, contributor to the The Ecclesiologist.

5. More English architects were traveling on the continent. By 1850 Gilbert Scott, George Edmund Street and William Burges had traveled in France and used French Gothic of the 13th century in their work. St. Peter's, Kennington Park Road, Vauxhall, 1863-64, was designed by John Loughborough Pearson with shallow transepts, lower arcades and higher clerestories, a vaulted ceiling and an apsidal end.
6. Ferdinand E. Ewer (1826-1883), remembered for his "The Failure of Protestantism" sermons, became a leading proselytizer of Anglo-Catholicism in this country. Whether or not Brown was sympathetic to Anglo-Catholicism before he met Ewer is not known. It was Ewer who, with approval of Bishop Potter, subsequently founded the parish of St. Ignatius of Antioch (1871) in a vacant church on West 40th St.
7. N. F. Read, 16.
8. "An Act for the Incorporation of Societies to Establish Free Societies," April 13, 1854. This New York State law permitted non-conforming religious groups to incorporate.

St. Mary's was and is governed by a Board of six trustees, without the aid of wardens or vestrymen. The rector is president, there is a secretary and a treasurer.

The three lots were at 226-230 West 45th Street. Mr. Astor stipulated that the church be Anglo-Catholic in its observances. Should the lots be sold, the proceeds must be directed toward the erection of a new church, mission house, chapel, parsonage, or in purchasing land for same.

9. Not only was Brown ordained by Horatio Potter, he was married by him to Mary Elizabeth Scott at Trinity Chapel. Potter appears to have been supportive of Brown and all his efforts, including the founding of St. Mary's and mediating with J.J. Astor III, for the three lots on West 45th St. Mrs. Brown's father, William Scott, had been a Warden at Calvary Church. It was through his liberality that the first St. Mary's was built. He was the first president of the Trustees of the Soc. of the Free Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin.
10. Chorley, 358. This entry was in the Church Register, St. Ignatius of Antioch.
11. Sara Louie Cooke was a spinster with an adopted daughter. She was a resident of Brooklyn and had received inheritances both from her brother Lyman Cooke and her sister Mary Cooke. An incomplete list of Miss Cooke's beneficences to St. Mary's includes: the altar and the bell in the original church; the third story of the 1885 Clergy House - to accommodate a Sunday School; and a major gift to the "Deficiency Fund" in 1890, when the trustees had to appeal to the parishioners for money. Her estate paid off the mortgage on the first church in 1893.

12. Board meetings began to be held in Fiske's office at 1 Madison Ave. Among his earliest acts was to find funds for a soloist at weekday, 9:30 AM mass, as well as a competent organist. He remained treasurer until 1927.
13. It was resolved that Fiske consult with a realtor to secure a block-through site somewhere between West 46th and 47th Sts and Sixth and Seventh Aves.
14. These former lots make up the present Lot 12 of Block 999: 12, 13, 14, 14 1/2, 15, 16, 16 1/2, and 49, 50, 50 1/2, 51 and 52.
15. Father Brown traveled in the company of the Rev. Mr. Herman Griswold Batterson, Rector of St. Clement's, Philadelphia, an Anglo-Catholic parish founded only a year after St. Mary's.
16. "Secretary's Book, Free Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, New York, Dec. 11, 1882 - Nov. 14, 1910," April 27, 1894.
17. Of the architects invited to participate in the competition without compensation Robert W. Gibson asked for compensation, Thomas Hastings declined and Renwick, Aspinwall & Renwick asked for further particulars. No response was recorded from Thomas Nash, but (John) King James asked to submit specimens of his work.
18. The commission was awarded to the LeBrun firm on May 29. The trustees' minutes indicate that it was Pierre L. LeBrun who designed St. Mary's. Napoleon LeBrun, his father, represented the firm at the initial stages of the project. "Secretary's Book, Free Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, New York," Dec. 11, 1882 - Nov. 14, 1910, 143.
19. Among Rhind's subsequent architectural collaborations are: the six figures above the entrance to the American Surety Building on Broadway; in Chicago the "Progress Lighting the Way of Commerce" figure atop the Montgomery-Ward Building; the allegorical figures of "Law" and "Justice" at the entrance to the United States Courthouse and Post Office in Indianapolis; and in Pittsburgh the frieze on the Farmers' Deposit National Bank. Rhind executed numerous freestanding statues, among which are the equestrian Washington in Newark, N.J. and President William McKinley within the memorial designed by McKim, Mead & White in Niles, Ohio.
20. This is not the design that appeared in LeBrun's drawings for the church's West 46th Street elevation -- a depiction of the Annunciation, a design Pierre LeBrun, in a letter to the trustees dated April 11, 1909, offered to have realized in memory of his father. Rhind's design was first published in American Architect and Building News, 64, (May 1899), 47.
21. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Work of N. LeBrun & Sons," Architectural Record, 27,(April 1910), 371-72.
22. "...purest examples, New York Herald Tribune, Dec. 1, 1895; "first...built," New York Evening Post, Dec. 7, 1895. The soubriquet of "Chicago Church" is derived, of course, from St. Mary's being the

first steel-framed church. Who coined the phrase is unknown; Montgomery Schuyler, 371-72, used it in 1910

23. New York Herald Tribune, Dec. 1, 1895.
24. The closed door symbolizes Ezekiel's Vision of the New Temple (Ezekiel, 44:1-3), ".. because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered by it, therefore it shall be shut." Jacob, Moses (Michelangelo's was the prototype), Jesse, David and Solomon are represented on the left side. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zachariah and Malachi are on the right. These figures are similar (repetition in the case of Moses and David) to other figures in Rhind's work. The contemporary sculptural program on the south elevation of William A. Potter's Alexander Hall at Princeton University is an example. The seated Virgin and Child in the tympanum's second tier may be Rhind's version of Saint Mary of Walsingham, a revered 11th-century image located within a popular pilgrimage site in Norfolk which was destroyed during the Dissolution. This representation approximates the one on the Walsingham Priory Privy Seal, discovered in the British Museum, c.1856, which is the one upon which the effigy used in procession at St. Mary's is based. This statue can be seen in the Lady Chapel.
25. The program included the "Five Joys of St. Mary." The subjects were: the Fall, the Crucifixion, the Expulsion; the Visitation, the Nativity with adoring angels, the Presentation in the Temple; the Marriage of the Virgin, the Angel appearing to the Shepherds, the Kings seeing the Star in the East. The Fall-Visitation-Marriage window was given to commemorate Haley Fiske's thirtieth wedding anniversary in 1917.
26. Originally, a statue of St. Joseph was to have been placed in this niche.
27. The Mission House parapet end pieces are seven inches wide; the Clergy House parapet end pieces are seven and one half inches wide.
28. Exterior changes, especially missing portions of the original fabric of St. Mary's buildings, are clearly seen when the buildings' present state is compared to the photographs of LeBrun's drawings in the Research File.
29. Repairs, BN 2270/1962. The facade may have been sandblasted at this time.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of these buildings, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin 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 Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin complex, designed by Pierre L. LeBrun of the well-known firm Napoleon LeBrun & Sons in 1894, has a significant place in the architectural and cultural history of New York City; that the church, long a center of Anglo-Catholic worship, is a physical realization of the tenets of the Oxford Movement which sought to better the lives of the urban poor through nursing care, inspirational activity, and the ritual of the Pre-Reformation Church in England; that St Mary's, built in 1895, makes full use of an irregular site, thus realizing the programmatic goals of its trustees; that St. Mary's was designed to evoke, in the church and Lady Chapel, the 13th-century French Gothic style and, in the Rectory, Clergy and Mission Houses, the 14th-century French Gothic style; that the result is one of the finest Gothic-inspired designs of New York's late 19th-century; that the steel frame construction of the church can be said to have made the building the first of its kind and size in the world, thus redefining the conventional methods of ecclesiastical building construction; that among the building's several specific Anglo-Catholic characteristics are the subjects selected for the sculptures of J. Massey Rhind; and that the academic naturalism of the Rhind's sculptures complements LeBrun's architecture.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534 of Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Free Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin (Church, Rectory, Clergy House, Mission House, Rectory and Lady Chapel), 133-145 West 46th Street and 136-144 West 47th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 999, Lot 12, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark site.

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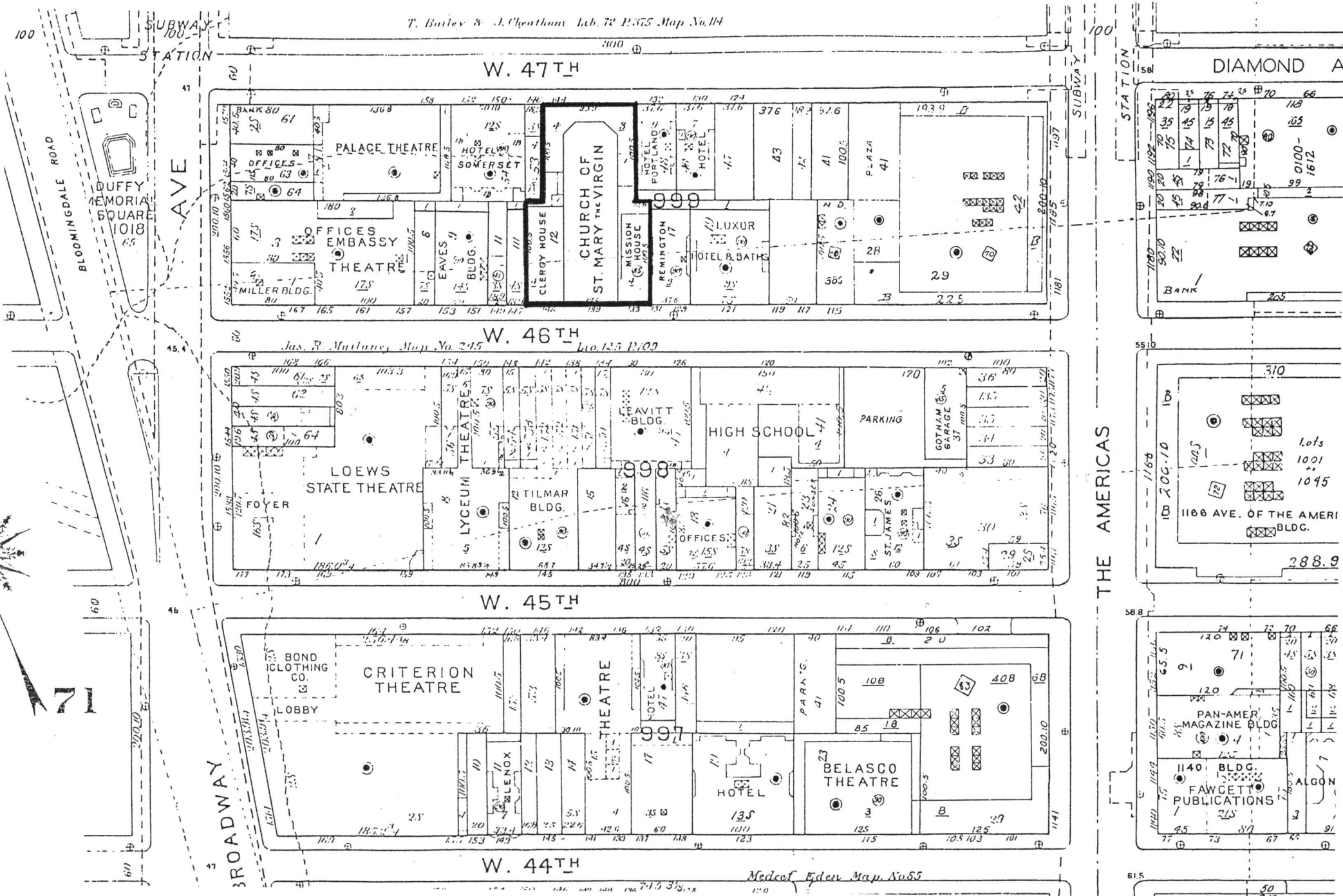
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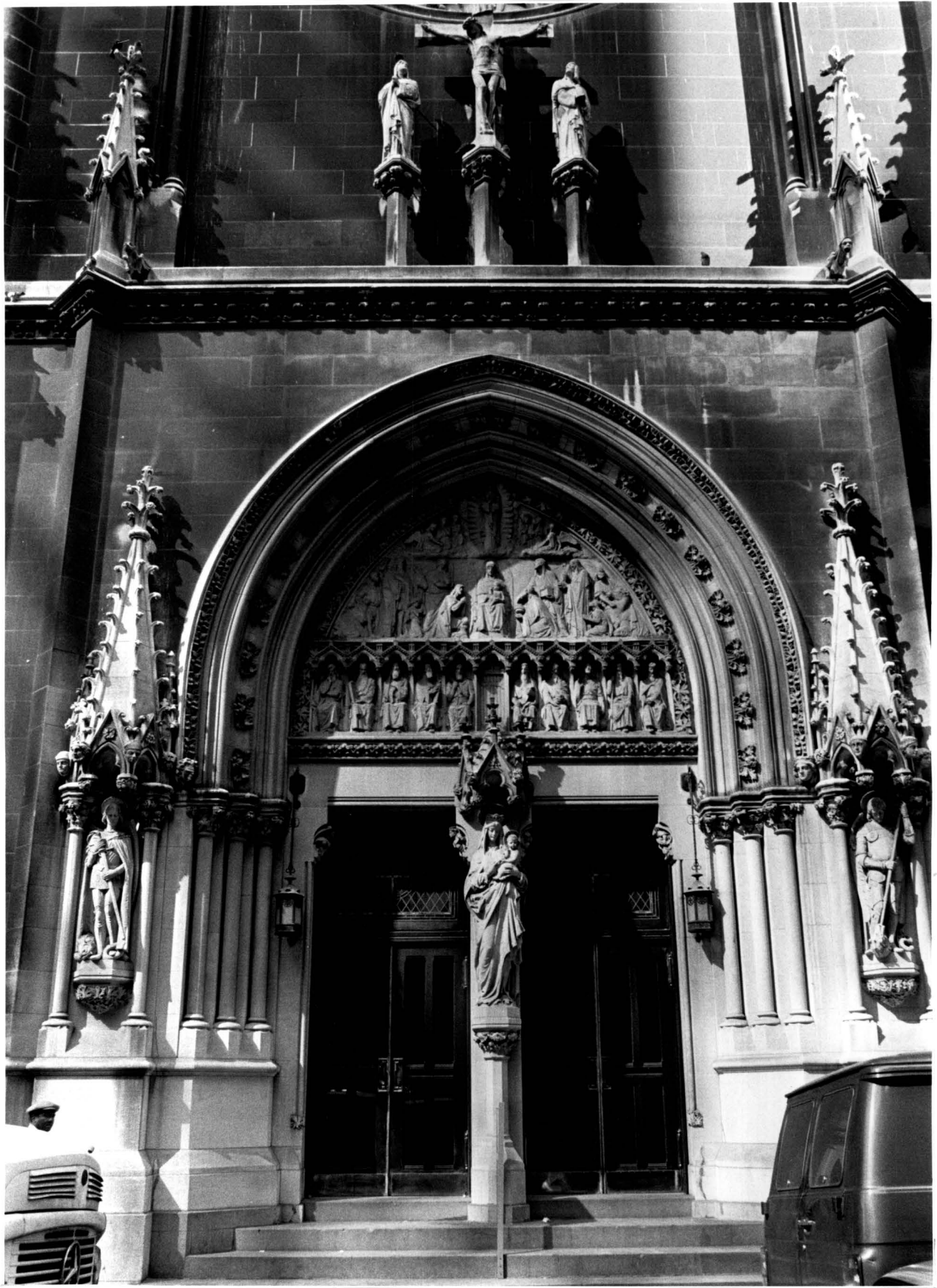


(Carl Forster)

Plate 1. J. Massey Rhind, The Blessed Virgin Mary, 1895.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin, main entrance,
West 46th Street.



Plate 2. J. Massey Rhind, Tympanum, c.1896. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin, over the main entrance, West 46th Street. (Carl Forster)



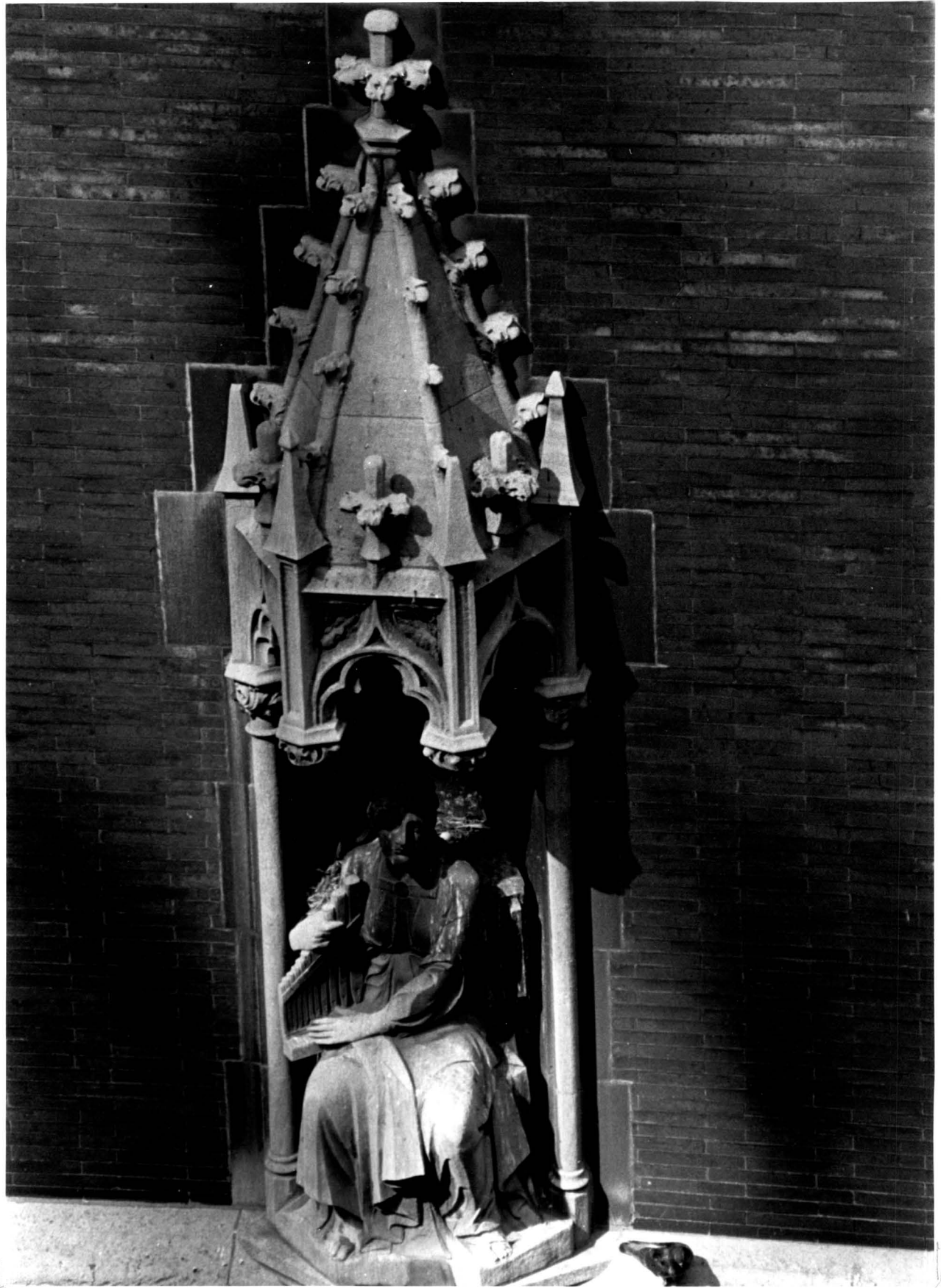
(Carl Forster)

Plate 3. Main Entrance, Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.
Flanking statues -- St. George (left) and St.
Michael (right) -- by J. Massey Rhind. The Calvary
above also by Rhind.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 4. Calvary and Rose Window. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin, church facade, West 46th Street.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 5. J. Massey Rhind, Saint Cecilia, c.1905. The Clergy House, Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin, West 46th Street.

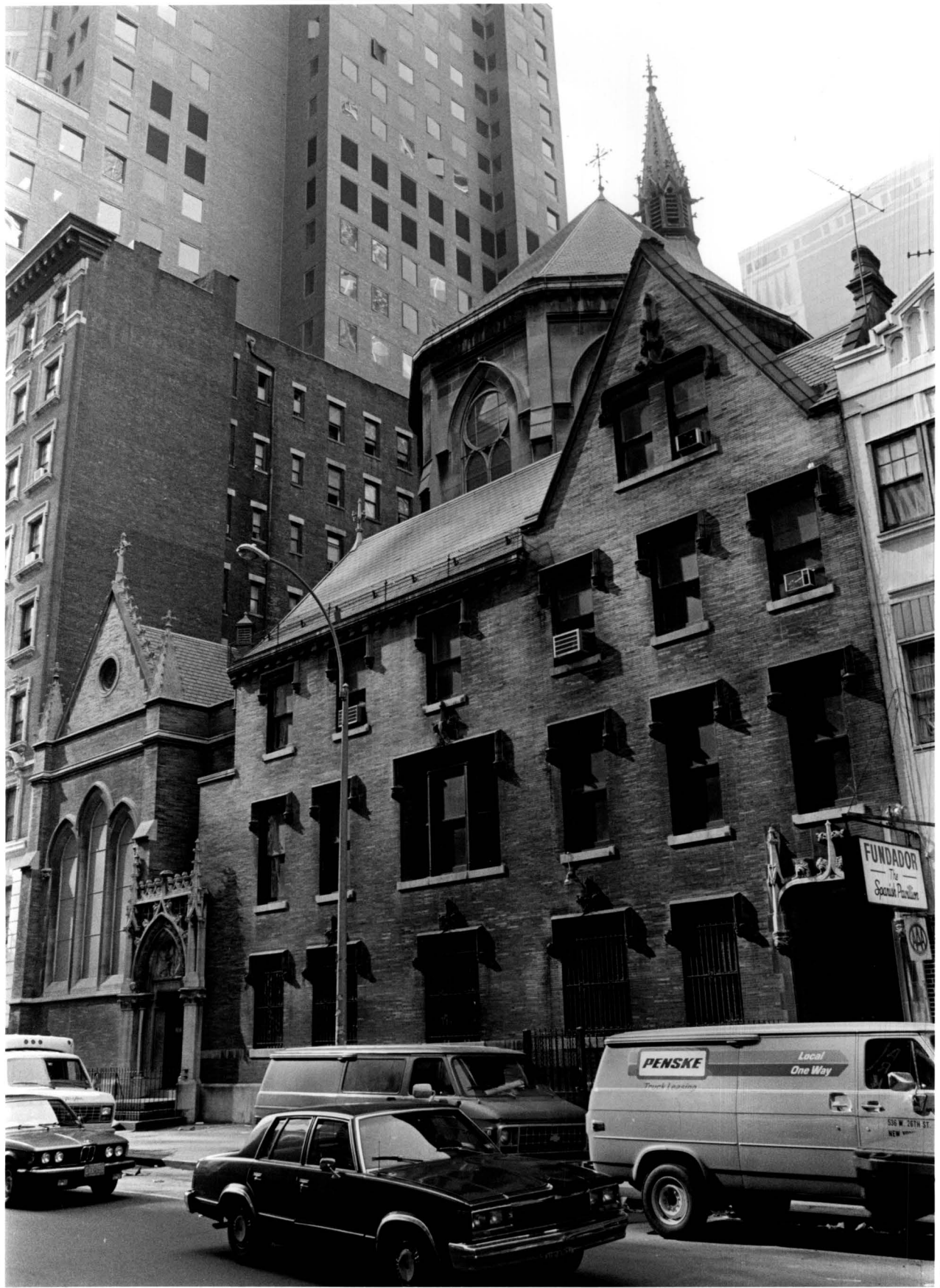


(Carl Forster)
Plate 6. Lady Chapel Entrance, Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin,
West 47th Street. The tympanum above the doors --
The Annunciation -- was executed by J. Massey Rhind,
c. 1898.

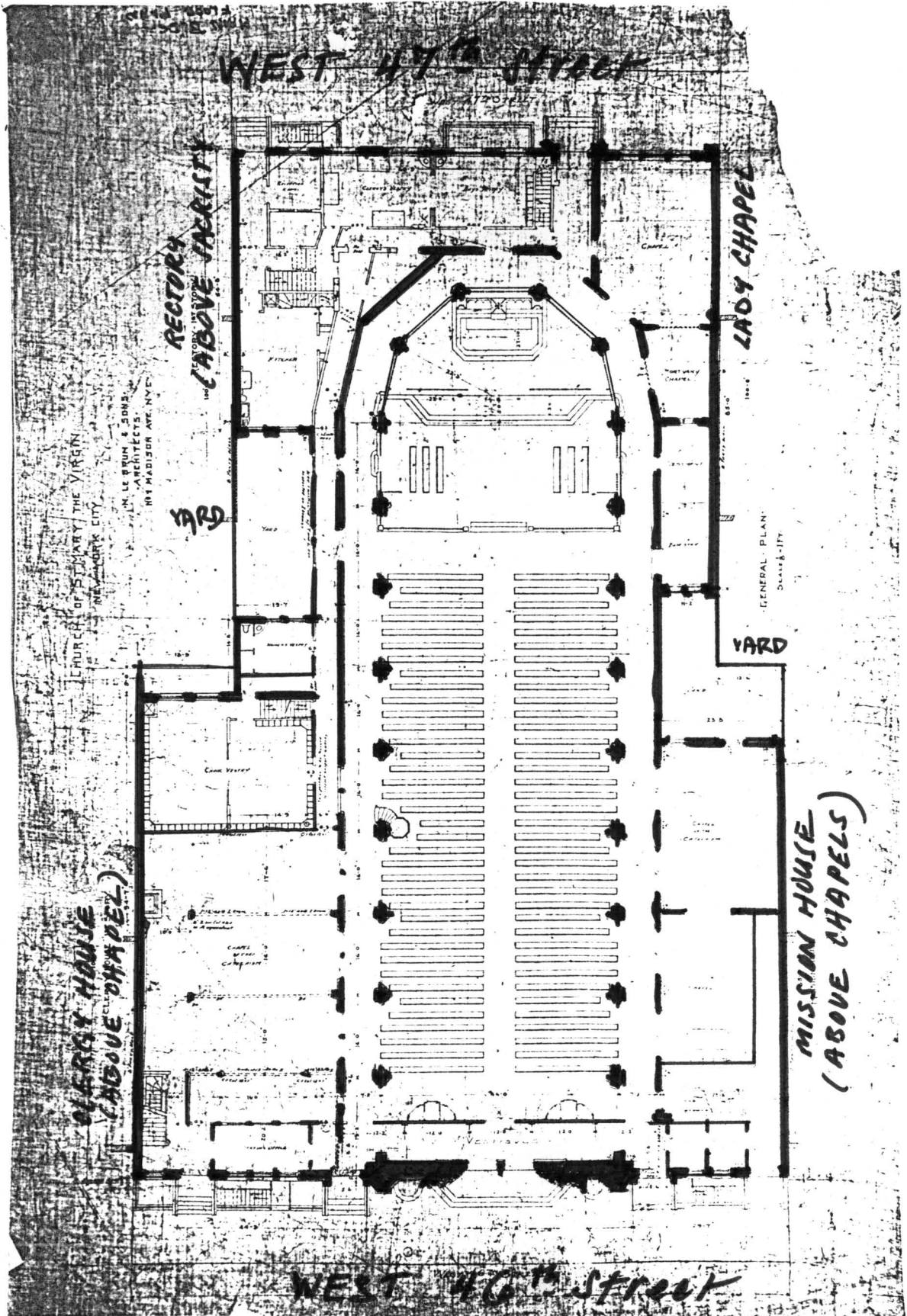


(Carl Forster)

Plate 7. The West 46th Street range -- Clergy House, Church and Mission House, Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

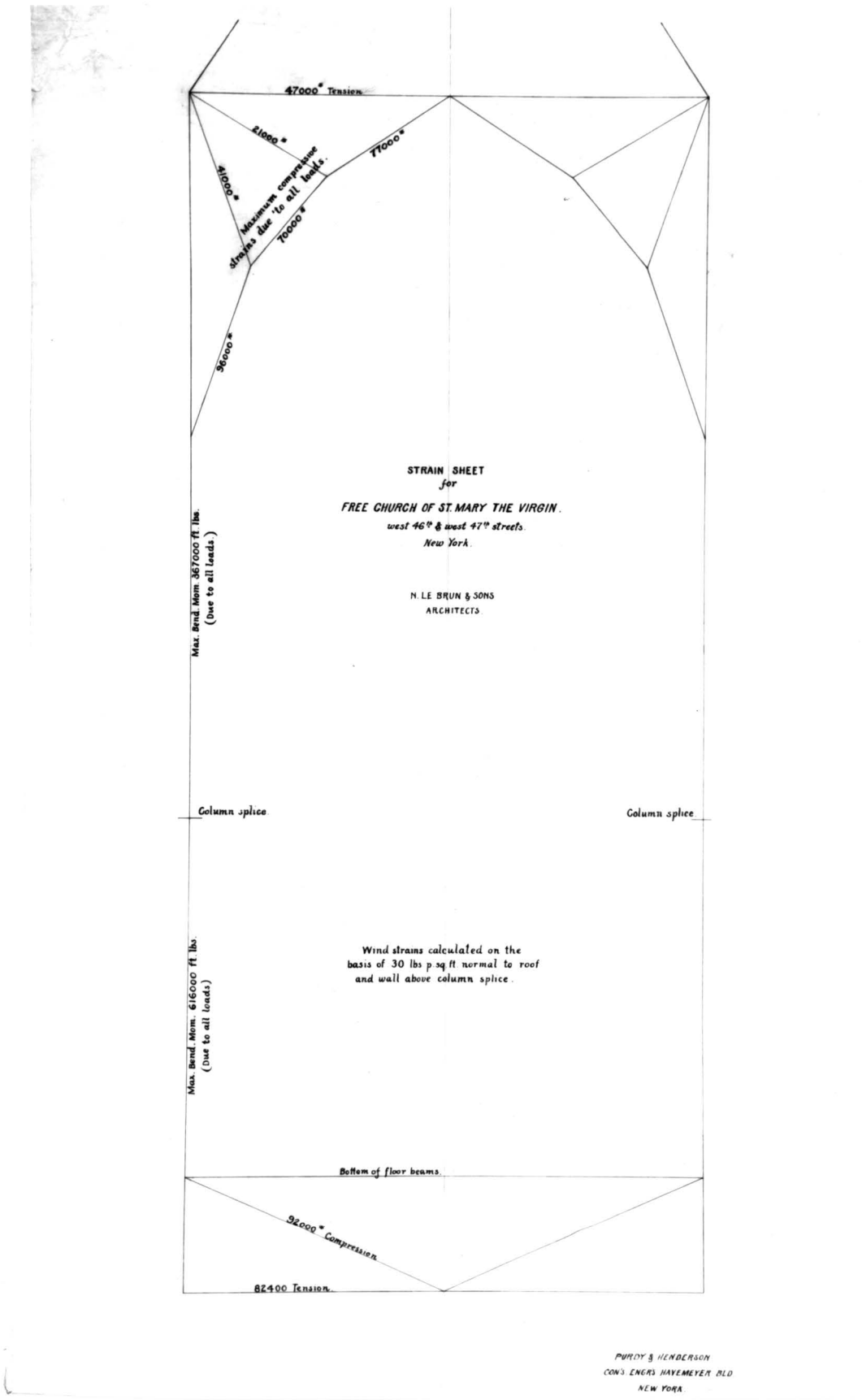


(Carl Forster)
Plate 8. The West 47th Street range -- Rectory, Lady Chapel entrance and Lady Chapel, Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

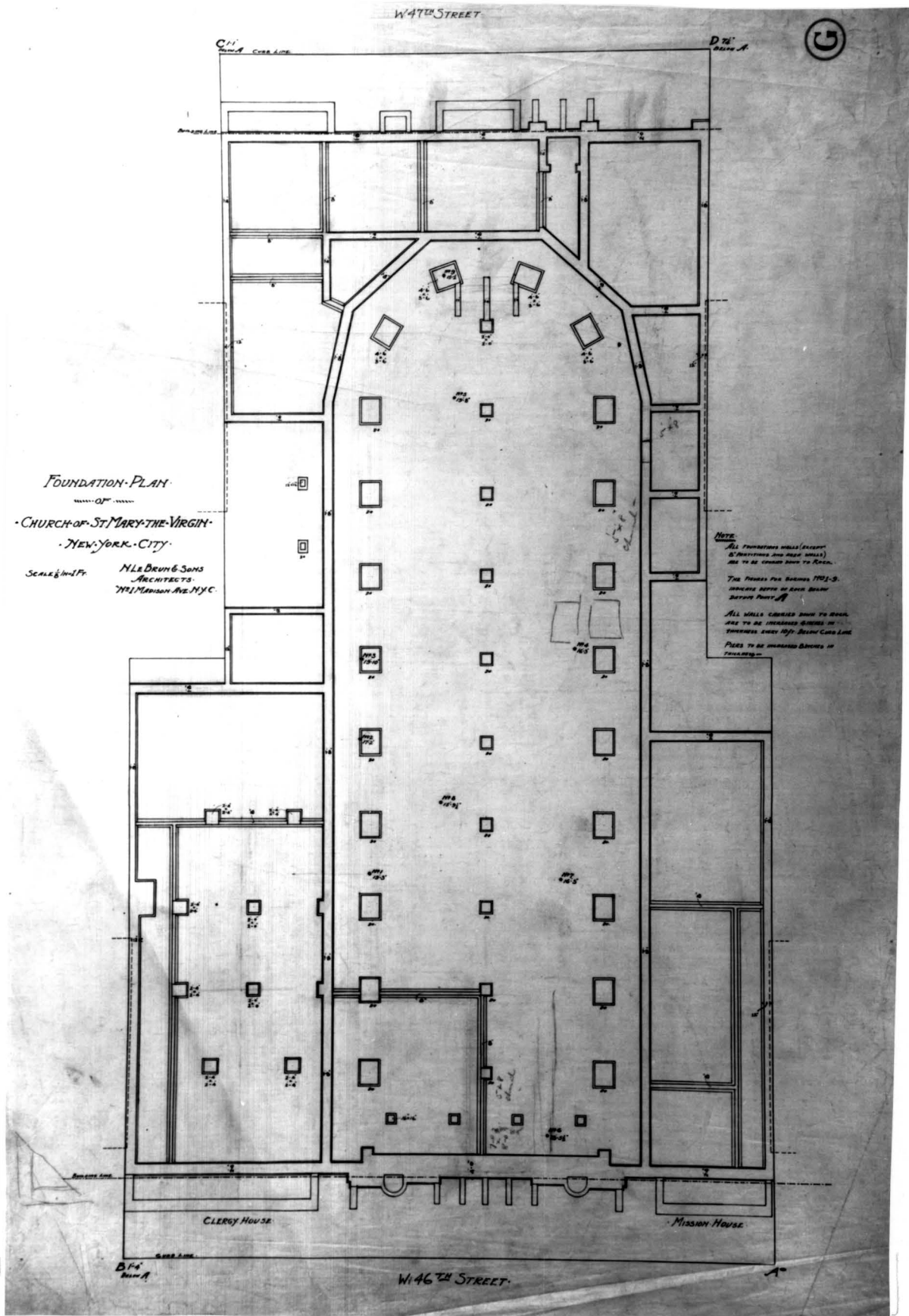


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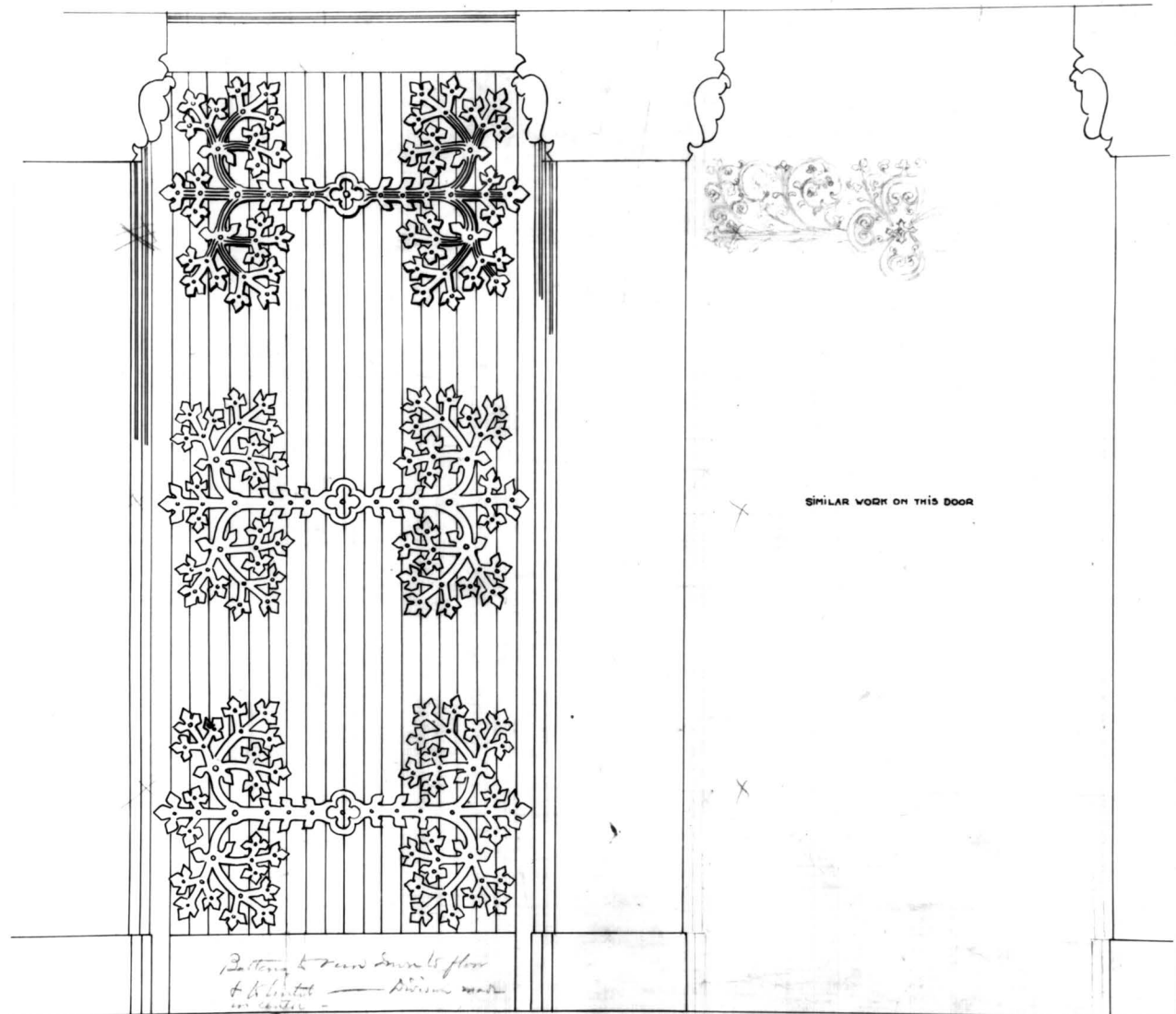
Plate 9. Plan, first story. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



(Carl Forster)
 Plate 10. Purdy & Henderson's Wind-Strain schematic elevation of the major steel columns, braces and girders of St. Mary's frame, including the basement diagonal braces.



(Carl Forster)
Plate 11. Foundations and Column footings. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



MAIN ENTRANCE SLIDING DOORS

CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

46TH ST. N.Y.

M. LE BRUN & SONS
ARCHITECTS

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0" DOOR

313.

(Carl Forster)

Plate 12. Drawing, sliding doors, main entrance on West 46th Street, with iron work pattern. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 13. Aedicular element facing the buttress on the left side of the church's West 46th Street facade. The Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



Plate 14. Gable, the church's West 46th Street facade. The Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin. (Carl Forster)

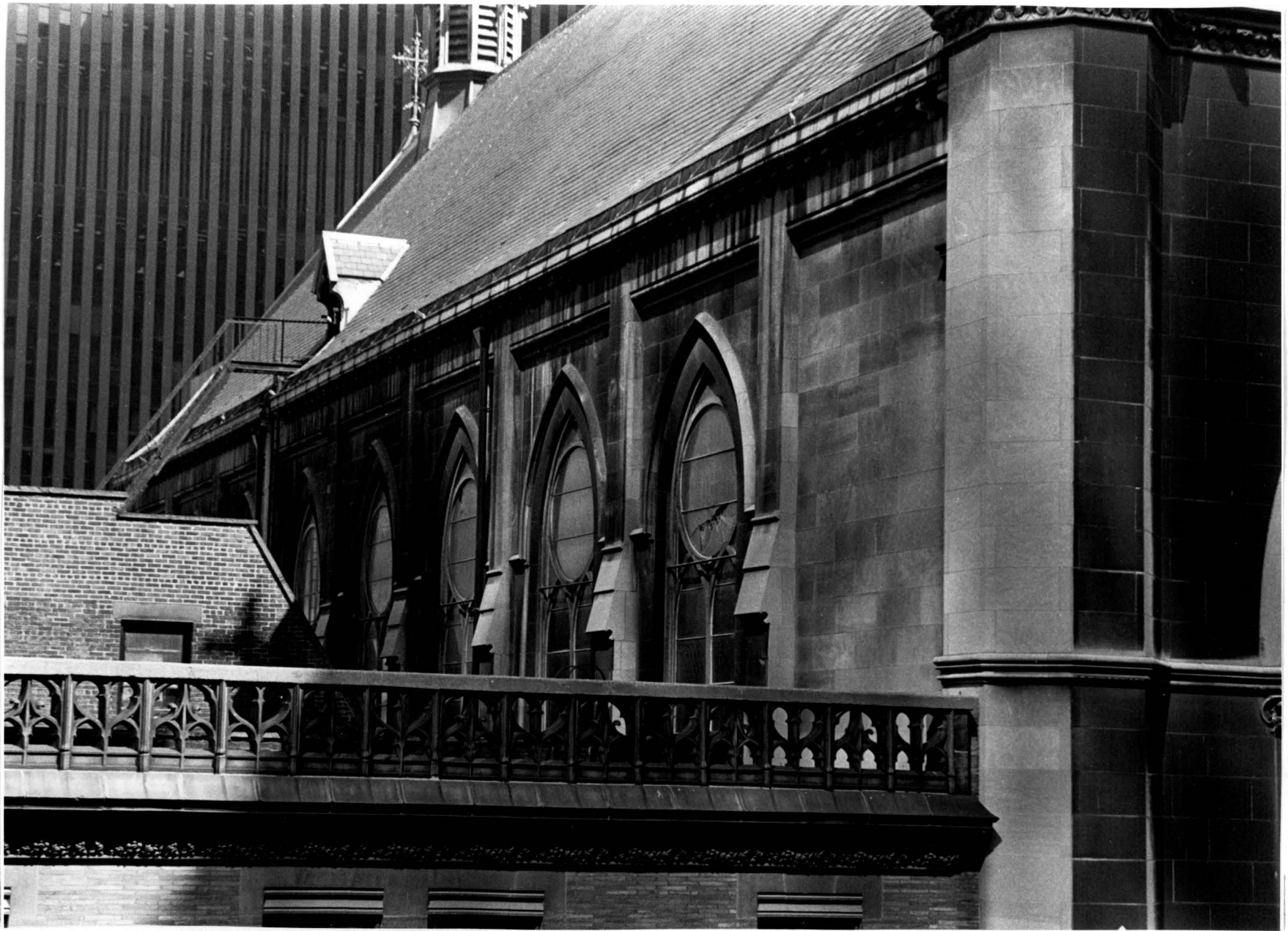


Plate 15. Clergy House parapet and the west clerestory of the church.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

(Carl Forster)



Plate 16. Spire. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin. (Carl Forster)



(Carl Forster)

Plate 17. Mission House entrance, West 46th Street.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 18. Rectory entrance, West 47th Street.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 19. Bow window, second story, Rectory.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

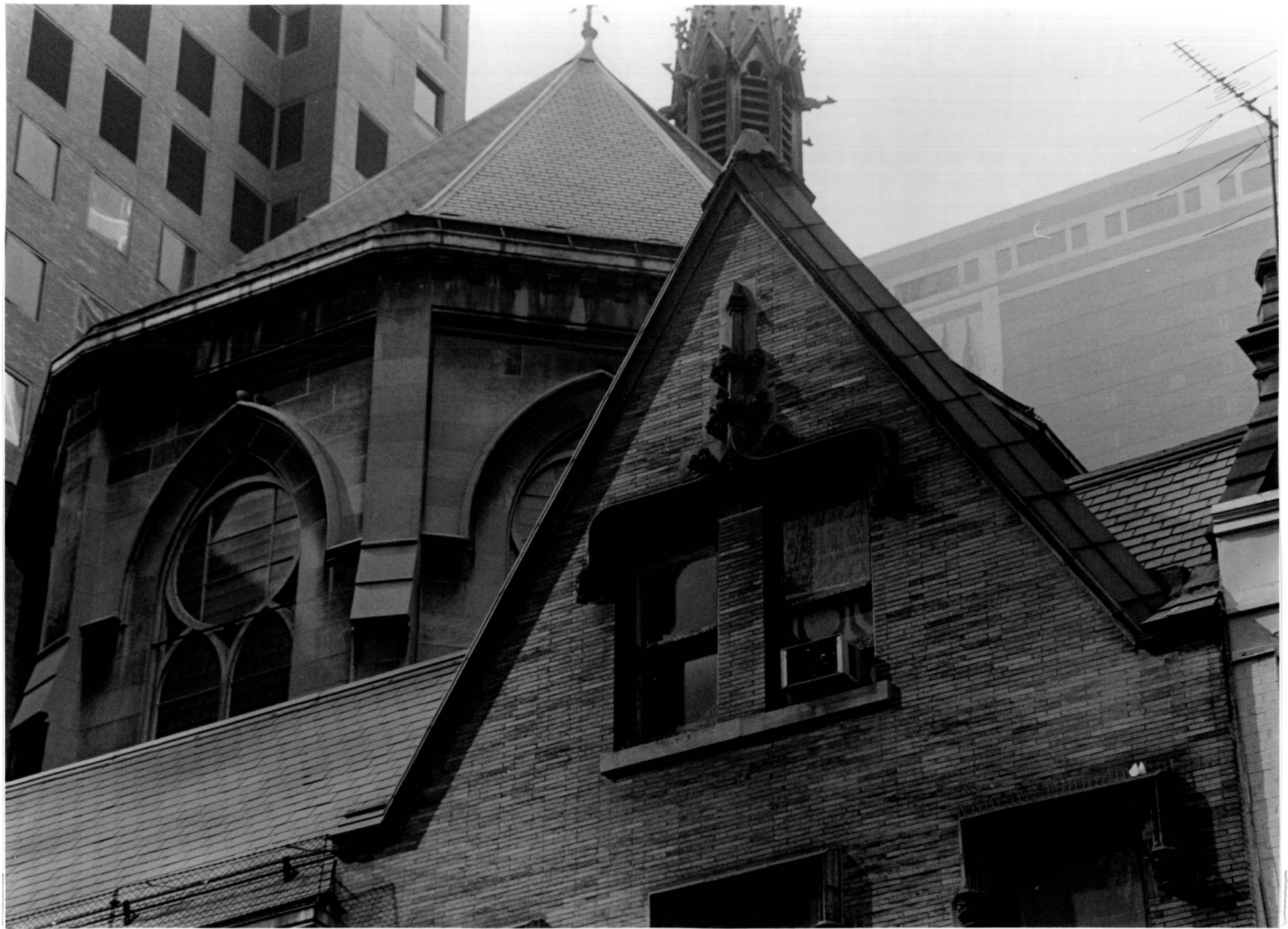
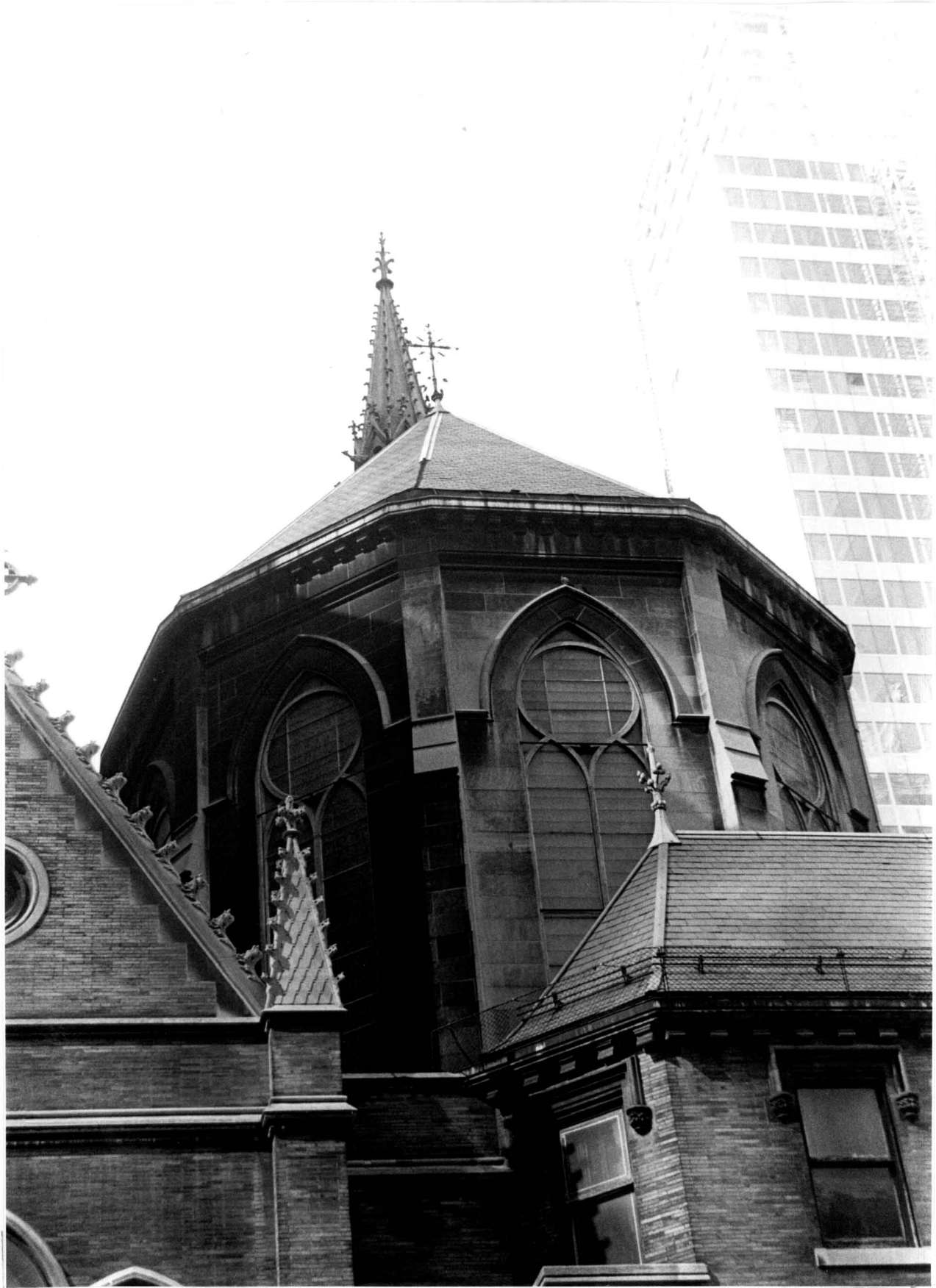


Plate 20. Rectory gable. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

(Carl Forster)



(Carl Forster)
Plate 21. Broached gable, Rectory and the apse of the church.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.



(Carl Forster)
Plate 22. Lady Chapel and Rectory, West 47th Street.
Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin.

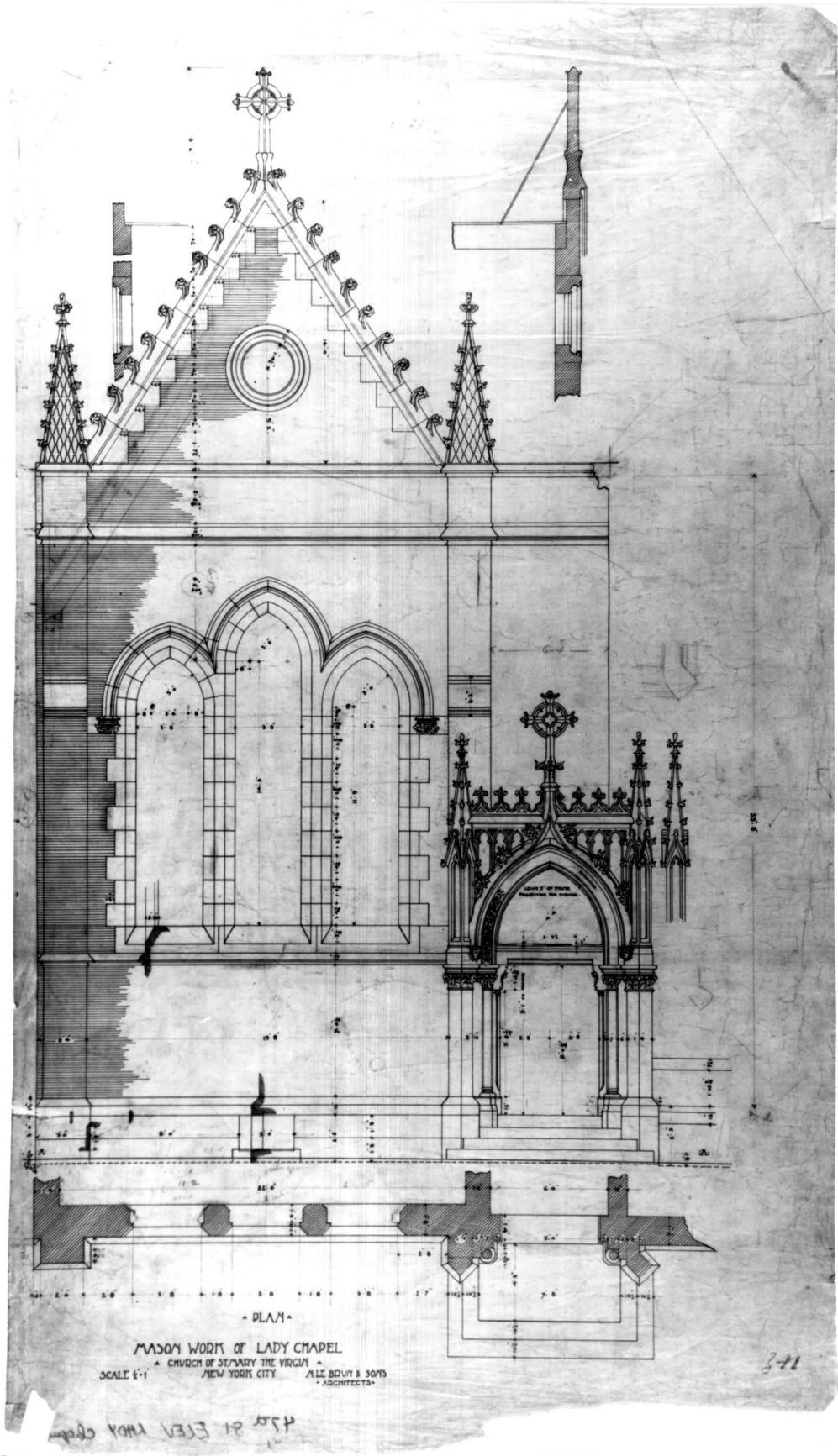


Plate 23. Drawing - elevation, plan and section, Lady Chapel. Church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin. (Carl Forster)