

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 19, 1998; Designation List 293
LP- 1981

**ST. MARY'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH (MANHATTANVILLE), PARISH HOUSE,
AND SUNDAY SCHOOL, 517-523 West 126th Street, Borough of Manhattan.**

Church: built 1908-09; architects Theodore E. Blake in association with Carrère & Hastings

Parish House (originally the rectory): built 1851; architect unknown.

Sunday School: built 1890; architect George Keister.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1983, Lot 11.

On December 9, 1997, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House and Sunday School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The church has expressed its support for this designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.¹

Summary



St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church in Manhattanville has been in continuous service for almost 175 years on its original site. In 1823, the village founders solicited the Rev. William Richmond, rector of St. Michael's in Bloomingdale, who had been conducting services in a mission school in Manhattanville for three years, to help them organize this parish and a free school. A white wood frame church building with a steeple was constructed in 1824-26 facing Lawrence Street (today West 126th Street). Several generations of Manhattanville's founding families have worshipped at St. Mary's including Jacob Schieffelin, who laid out the village's roads, and his wife Hanna Lawrence, whose surname marked the street on which they donated the land to erect the first church building. In 1831, in deference to the poor constituents of its parish, St. Mary's abolished pew rentals, becoming the first "free pew" Protestant Episcopal church in the city. The parish house, when erected as a parsonage in 1851, housed the village's first resident clergyman. In 1890, St. Mary's commissioned a Sunday school building, now located at the rear of the church, by architect George Keister. In 1908-09, the frame church was replaced by the present English Gothic-style brick church designed by Theodore E. Blake with the prestigious Carrère & Hastings firm. Despite the urbanization of the surrounding area, St. Mary's complex of church, Sunday school, and white frame parish house surrounding a garden evokes the early days of the village of Manhattanville.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of Manhattanville²

A dormant geological fault line,³ perhaps assisted by an ancient channel of the Hudson River, probably forged the ravine that came to contain the village of Manhattanville. The first non-native settlement began around the mid-seventeenth-century as some Dutch villagers of Nieuw Haerlem made their way west across the island to this outlying valley they called Moertje David's Fly. Probably first used as pasture lots, the meadows sloped between the rim of Joachim Pieter's Hills (at today's West 134th St.) to the north and the steeper southern cliffs, spliced by a rustic path (today's St. Nicholas Ave.) that branched northwest off the Indian trail to Spuyten Duyvil, past the Bloomingdale road toward the Harlem Cove. It was along these southern hills in 1712 (after the English capture of Manhattan in 1664) that seven lots among New Harlem's first division of lands were delineated as farm properties.⁴

During the Revolutionary War period, the valley facilitated George Washington's retreat from the British on Long Island towards his headquarters at the Roger Morris House (Morris-Jumel Mansion, 1775, a designated New York City Landmark, West 160th Street and Edgecombe Avenue). The general induced the British to advance into the "Hollow Way," as the valley was then known, whereupon his own American troops drove them back, defeating them in the bloody Battle of Harlem Heights in a nearby buckwheat field just to the south (where Barnard College now stands) on September 16, 1776.⁵ During the War of 1812, the anticipation of British attacks resulted in the construction of a series of fortifications that, in the Manhattanville area, included Block House No. 4, on the present-day southeasterly corner of West 123rd Street at Amsterdam Avenue, on the rocky outcrop of what is now Morningside Park's northern end, and the Manhattanville Pass (or Barrier Gate), a military checkpoint that straddled the Bloomingdale Road at present-day Broadway and West 123rd Street and which was commanded by Fort Lighthouse at present-day Broadway and West 124th Street.⁶

In approximately 1806 city surveyor Adolphus Loss surveyed parcels of land and laid out streets.⁷ Some local landowners described Manhattanville as a developing village in the New York City's Ninth Ward. Building lots were being advertised for sale "principally to tradesmen" in this enclave that already boasted a "handsome wharf," "convenient

Academy," and an "excellent school."⁸ At this time the Corporation of the Common Council was laying out "wide and open" streets from the East River to the Hudson, where 300-ton vessels might lie in safety in the Cove.⁹ Already underway were a two-story frame "house of entertainment,"¹⁰ a new marketplace, a daily inexpensive stage line as well as boat service commuting the eight miles between the city and village, and a ferry service to New Jersey. Most residents of Manhattanville were tenant farmers or factory workers, and the village bustled with the trade and traffic of several small industries that would eventually include the D.F. Tiemann color works, a worsted mill, and the Yuengling Brewery.

Throughout the 1800s, Manhattanville's population increased and changed demographically. In 1823, about fifteen dwellings dotted the valley, which was populated mostly by poor British- and Dutch-Americans and a few blacks.¹¹ An 1832 cholera epidemic diminished the small population. On October 27, 1834, New York City Mayor Cornelius Lawrence signed an ordinance to fill in a Manhattanville pond between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues (behind St. Mary's Church).¹² And on May 4, 1836, the legislature passed an act to alter the plan of certain city streets in Manhattanville that particularly involved the "old streets named Manhattan St. and Lawrence St."¹³

Foreigners became a substantial presence in the workforce of Manhattanville's new factories and in its social life. The city's immigration boom in the 1840s swelled the rural hamlet as scores escaping the famine in Ireland settled in Manhattanville's sparsely populated northern section, where they raised vegetables and kept yard animals. The Irish Catholic presence resulted in the establishment of such institutions as the Academy and Convent of the Sacred Heart in 1846, Manhattan College (founded in 1853 as the Academy of the Holy Infancy), and the Church of the Annunciation, dedicated in 1854. The mostly Catholic Southern Germans, who were laborers, artisans, or active in small trades, lived around Lawrence Street. They established St. Joseph's (R.C.) Church in 1860 and the Yuengling Brewery. Transportation changed the community's profile, too, when in the 1850s Manhattanville became the first station on the new Hudson River Railroad's northerly route, the Tenth (Amsterdam) Avenue Railroad was extended there, and the village's streets were partially paved.¹⁴

Between 1880 and 1891, the number of Manhattanville's dwellings trebled from 200 to 600, most of which were tenements just below Manhattan Street between Amsterdam and Broadway.¹⁵ By 1890, about 80 percent of the residents were living in five-story tenements that had two apartments per floor, and most were either foreign-born or of foreign-parentage. Irish, English and Scottish formed the majority with 2,465 new arrivals; 1,684 came from Germany; France and Italy's 361 combined arrivals were on a par with 378 from Eastern Europe; 93 were from Scandinavia; 13 and 14 from Greece and the Orient, respectively. About 1,000 African-Americans lived in Manhattanville. The Russians and Poles were mostly Jewish, as were some German and American-born residents.¹⁶

Diversions included three poolrooms, three bowling alleys, and a school gymnasium. Of Manhattanville's fifty saloons, Lawrence Street itself, where St. Mary's was located, boasted two that were frequented by Germans and two more by African-Americans. The large Yuengling Brewery was located around the corner.

The newly-installed Interborough Rapid Transit line along Broadway in 1904 encouraged the next building boom in Manhattanville. Squatters were swept from the rocks near Grant's Tomb as Claremont Avenue and Riverside Drive became the fashionably "improved" residential spines of the southeast quadrant of the Manhattan Street-Broadway junction. However, most of the rest of Manhattanville's cross streets north of 129th Street between Amsterdam and Riverside were already being built up with moderately priced apartment houses.¹⁷ In 1908, only 128 people in Manhattanville owned homes; the rest were either renters or lodgers.¹⁸ By 1909, Manhattanville's 1300 African-Americans (more than doubled since 1900) were living in "clearly defined" segregated sections; the poorest lived in the "Mixed Ale Row" old brick tenement blocks of 130th and 131st Streets; a better-off class lived on the south side of Lawrence Street (today's West 126th Street) and West 126th Street (today's Moylan Place, in the middle of the Grant Houses housing complex); and those of "excellent reputation" on West 126th Street's two newer blocks between Amsterdam and Claremont.¹⁹

Distributors, processing plants, garages, gas storage facilities, railway services, and dockside coal barges located in Manhattanville.²⁰ Streets were reconfigured in 1920 when the name of "Manhattan Street" (which the natural topography configured

diagonally to the street grid) was jettisoned to make the route the oblique continuation of West 125th Street (renamed once again in 1969 as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard). West of Morningside Avenue, old West 125th Street became LaSalle Street. West 126th Street became Moylan Place, and West 127th Street became Tiemann Place.²¹ Lawrence Street was renamed West 126th Street in the 1930s.²²

The Depression and the years of World War II exacted a toll on Manhattanville's tenement buildings, which suffered neglect, disrepair, and eventually demolition.²³ As many returning veterans moved elsewhere, the influx of newly-arriving Puerto Ricans and blacks from the south shifted the area's ethnic demography. Around 1947, Columbia University and a dozen neighboring institutions founded the non-profit Morningside Heights, Inc. (David Rockefeller, President), ostensibly for the civic improvement of the whole Morningside-Manhattanville area, although the focus was south of West 125th Street.²⁴ Teachers College deployed student volunteers to canvas a third of Manhattanville's 45,000 residents. Although the survey results showed Manhattanville as having a higher rate of accidents, tuberculosis, pneumonia and infant mortality than the whole city, it also revealed a stable community of multi-religious whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians living harmoniously.²⁵ The community (along with Chinatown and the Lower East Side) became the target of the major 1950s "improvement" campaign of the City Slum Clearance Commission chaired by Robert Moses which forced the relocation of tens of thousands of residents for the creation of the Morningside Gardens co-operative apartments and the lower-income Grant Houses. As many whites moved out of the area, both the Grant and Manhattanville "projects" became virtually black- and Latino-segregated. However, today as a whole, Manhattanville retains a rich characteristic ethnic diversity.

Early History of St. Mary's P.E. Church 1823-1909

St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church had its beginnings in the mission services that the Rev. William Richmond, rector of the affluent St. Michael's in Bloomingdale, had been holding since the autumn of 1820 in a school house, located near the present-day southeast corner of Broadway and West 125th Street.²⁶ Worshippers were invited to a meeting in the school house on Thanksgiving Day, December 18, 1823, to organize a church.²⁷ Rev.

Richmond arrived at the close of the service, read by a lay reader, to launch the infant church as an independent parish, rather than as a "chapel" of St. Michael's, with authority vested in "the Rector, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville, Ninth Ward of the City of New York." The Free School of St. Mary's also was established.²⁸

Rev. Richmond was also chosen shortly thereafter to be rector of the new St. Mary's Parish. Congregation and voting membership was initially given to any male of full age who made an annual contribution of fifty cents; the next year the parish records stated that "white male persons of full age, who shall for one year last, preceding the election, have worshipped according to the rites of the Protestant Episcopal Church and shall have contributed the sum of not less than fifty cents" were eligible for membership. It was also re-stated that the "Free School of St. Mary's Church shall be open equally to all denominations."²⁹

Jacob Schieffelin, who had helped to plot the village along six streets, donated a 60 x 100 foot lot on Lawrence Street on which the vestry contracted to build St. Mary's Church; the cornerstone was laid on June 15, 1824. The frame church, while still incomplete, was consecrated on October 23, 1826.³⁰ Manhattanville's founding families, many of whom were related by marriage, were the core of St. Mary's early congregation, which also included the widow and sons of Alexander Hamilton, and Daniel F. Tiemann, mayor of New York in 1858-60.

In 1831, St. Mary's became the first free-pew church in the city. Pews had originally been authorized for rental after the church was opened in 1826. The vestry resolved that those who rented pews would thereby also be considered as church members entitled "to vote at all elections of officers" with such membership extending to their families as well, without the voting qualification. A collector of pew rents was appointed in 1829 to "retain a commission of five per cent on all monies collected" that would be paid over to the treasurer. But meager returns from this poor parish resulted in the decision to abolish pew-rents altogether.³¹

Rev. William Richmond resigned his rectorship on August 3, 1825.³² In 1828, William Richmond was induced to resume his rectorship of St. Mary's -- although he was now also the rector of St. Michael's -- this time with the Rev. George L. Hinton as assistant.³³

In 1836, the Rev. James C. Richmond became assistant rector to his brother William and,

succeeding the latter who again resigned, became rector himself until about 1843.³⁴ In addition to St. Mary's and St. Michael's, the brothers served also St. James in Yorkville. William Richmond was renowned for his missionary excursions, from the Five Points in downtown Manhattan to the Far West, and he was reputed to have been the first to minister at worship services for the insane. James Richmond was said to have spoken thirteen languages, and he preached eloquently in several; during his tenure, St. Mary's boasted more children attending its Sunday school than either St. Michael's or St. James.³⁵

St. Mary's received invaluable help from Thomas McClure Peters, a seminary student who began working as a lay reader in 1841. Peters was ordained in 1847; he married William Richmond's daughter and became his assistant "technically at St. Mary's" but actually in all the work of St. Michael's parish. He officially became St. Mary's rector in 1853.³⁶

In 1851, a rectory was erected at the rear of the church's lot for the resident clergyman. During William Richmond's absence on an Oregon mission in 1851-52, his assistant Thomas McClure Peters was left in charge of St. Mary's, St. Michael's, All Angels in Seneca Village (later incorporated into Central Park), as well as the chaplaincy of the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. The additional clerical aid was provided for St. Mary's and All Angels by the Rev. George L. Neidle who moved with his family into the new rectory and became Manhattanville's first resident clergyman.³⁷ When William Richmond resigned his rectorship for the final time on February 24, 1853, Peters was elected and served through March 1, 1859. Neidle, who was appointed assistant rector, occupied the rectory until summer of 1854 (when he resigned to accept the rectorship of Trinity Church, Rockaway). In 1855, the rectory was enlarged and occupied by Peters and his family. As the foreign-born population of Manhattanville increased, Peters engaged the Rev. Thomas Cook to conduct Sunday services in German. It was also Peters who, in 1864, during his rectorship of St. Michael's, founded the Sheltering Arms asylum "for the relief of orphans, half-orphans, the aged, sick, and blind" which occupied most of the triangular block surrounding St. Mary's from 1870 until the 1930s.³⁸

The Sunday School and its Architect

In 1890, St. Mary's built a Sunday school building at the rear, northeast corner of the 1824-26

church. It was designed by George Keister, an architect active in New York City between 1887 and 1936.³⁹ According to plans filed with the Buildings Department, the Sunday school building was a one-story brick structure above a high basement with a peaked roof which terminated in a stepped gable at the rear and had the peak concealed behind a parapet at the front. The building was entered through a wooden porch with turned wood elements.⁴⁰

In 1924, Rev. Charles Breck Ackley noted the Parish Council's action of adopting the name Church School in place of the former Sunday school in order to "broaden and enlarge the idea of religious education." The school continued to assemble on Sunday mornings at around 9:30, lasting for about one hour.⁴¹ Since St. Mary's was the only Protestant parish in Manhattanville, and because of affiliation to the Sheltering Arms orphanage, the school attracted students who were not necessarily connected to St. Mary's Church. In 1924, 335 children were enrolled (142 came from the Sheltering Arms) in the school which was divided in grades of Kindergarten (42), Primary (89), Intermediate (100), Junior Department (80) and Senior Department (24).⁴²

The New Church Building and its Architects

The present English Gothic-style brick church replaced the original wood frame church in 1908-09. The rector, the Rev. Hiram R. Hulse, had requested a new building nearly ten years earlier. A paltry building fund, however, forced consideration of a "merger," or even relocation before the vestry agreed just to have the church "enlarge[d]."⁴³ In 1907, the vestry retained the nationally prominent firm of Carrère & Hastings. The design is credited to the firm's associate T.E. Blake.⁴⁴

The partnership of John Mervin Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) was at its pinnacle at the time St. Mary's was designed. Carrère, who was born in Rio de Janeiro to American parents of French descent, was schooled in Switzerland. Hastings was born in New York and attended Columbia University. The two met as students at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where both earned their diplomas -- Carrère in 1882; Hastings in 1884 -- and worked together in New York at the firm of McKim, Mead & White. They formed their partnership in 1885. Among the firm's numerous works are the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1899-1903), 1 West 96th Street, New York Public Library Main Building (1889-1911) at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, and Staten Island

Borough Hall (1904-06) on Richmond Terrace. (All are designated New York City Landmarks.)

Brooklyn-born Theodore E. Blake (1869-1949) was a draftsman with Carrère & Hastings from 1888 to 1892, when he left for three years to attend the Ecole himself. Returning to the firm in 1895, he became an associate in about 1907.⁴⁵ Between 1927 and 1947 he practiced actively under his own name. Blake worked closely with Thomas Hastings in preparing the plans for the New York Public Library, which opened in 1911, the same year Carrère was killed in a traffic accident. Blake won a Gold Medal for his design of the Mount Hope Bridge in Providence, Rhode Island. He died on July 3, 1949 at age 79.⁴⁶

While Manhattanville was not a fashionable district, and was quite built up by this time with mills, service shops and tenements, it may well have been a testament to the community's charm that such prominent architects were drawn to a comparatively small commission.⁴⁷ When the new brick church was constructed it was built directly in front of the 1890 Sunday school building and linked to it, requiring the removal of the wooden entrance porch, among other changes. The white frame rectory (1851) was also enlarged and converted to a parish house at that time.⁴⁸ All three buildings are arranged around a garden.

The Role of St. Mary's P.E. Church 1908-1998

With the opening of the Interborough Rapid Transit line in 1904 that ignited Manhattanville's building boom, the Rev. Hiram R. Hulse undertook an ardent correspondence to the Episcopal Bishop Coadjutor David H. Greer about "the importance of keeping up aggressive work" in Manhattanville, to counteract the Roman Catholic presence of the parishes of Annunciation and St. Joseph's with their related schools. He bolstered his claims that there was "no section that begins to compare . . . in its population or in its paucity of Church resources" with census reports that showed Manhattanville as having "a larger proportion of native born population than any other district in the city."⁴⁹

By 1908, of those Catholic parishes' combined 12,000 communicants, about 5,000 actually lived in Manhattanville.⁵⁰ St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal parish, with its new church building underway, now numbered 396 members in its congregation and 406 members in the Sunday school, and was described as a congregation of "poor, self respecting working men and women." Attendance came from the neighborhood and included "a few British settlers,

and . . . the German Protestants who do not regularly attend the Lutheran churches in this region."⁵¹

In 1919, the Rev. Charles Breck Ackley commenced a thirty-five year tenure as St. Mary's rector. Although the congregation drew some educators and professionals from Morningside Heights to the south, membership nevertheless declined.⁵²

In 1964, during Richard E. Gary's rectorship, St. Mary's bought a building across the street which it named the Ackley Community Center. The building, constructed as the Speyer School, a training school for Teacher's College, later became the Manhattanville Neighborhood Center. St. Mary's utilized it for its church school and after-school programs, and offered its use as well to other community organizations like Youth Employment Services. The Harlem Parents Committee used most of the building on Saturdays when its Freedom School taught African-American history to about one hundred children and adults and discussed public school improvement issues.⁵³ In 1967, boycotting black and white parents who were demanding a say in the operations of P.S. 125 (and of P.S. 36, then underway) ushered their children to the Ackley Center, set up as an ad hoc venue of the West Harlem Liberation School.⁵⁴

In 1973, St. Mary's social program, included Headstart, day care, a nursery, a youth recreation center, Alcoholics Anonymous, and a college counseling program that "had gotten over a million dollars in scholarships" for local youngsters.⁵⁵

Today, West 126th Street, between Old Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, is also known as "St. Mary's Place." The church describes itself as "a neighborhood parish of African Americans, Hispanics, and European Americans; it conducts additional Sunday services in Spanish and in Haitian French Creole."⁵⁶

The rectorship of the Rev. Robert Castle that began in 1986 has recalled the work of his renowned predecessors, the brothers William and James Richmond and Thomas McClure Peters.⁵⁷ Reverend Castle has enjoyed the active inter-faith support of other Harlem clergy during campaigns that ranged from remedying potholes and installing traffic signals to combating drugs and preserving the pediatric ward at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital. St. Mary's runs a soup kitchen, and is host to the Center for Urban Community Services for homeless persons, and the Harlem Youth Marine Cadets. Programs instituted during Rev. Castle's tenure

include the St. Mary's Episcopal Center which is a 40-bed HIV/AIDS nursing home, and an adult day treatment center.

The St. Mary's Legacy in Today's Church

One has only to approach the complex of St. Mary's church, parish house and Sunday school to experience its 175-year history. In an urban world that long ago abandoned wood for stone, the clapboard frame parish house, built as a rectory, greets passersby as an irresistible anomaly.⁵⁸ An abundance of memorials and gifts exhibited in the interior of the church commemorate its nineteenth-century past.⁵⁹ Three marble tablets from the old church are memorials to the Rev. William Richmond, St. Mary's first rector; to his brother James Cook Richmond, who succeeded him for a time; and to Mr. Thomas T. Groshen, a lay reader who enjoyed the praise of the vestry for his industry in raising funds to erect the original church building. Brass tablets memorialize the church's founder, Jacob Schieffelin, and his son Richard Lawrence Schieffelin, the first clerk of the vestry, and George Richard Schieffelin, vestryman and Diocesan Convention delegate for forty years. Jacob Schieffelin donated the old bell, now installed in the archway of the Choir, purported to be the same one used on the Academy which had stood nearby in Manhattanville's nascent years. Uninscribed and of unknown origin, the bell is believed to have been brought from the West Indies by a sea captain and now commemorates the memory of all sea-farers. The most enduring gift, however, is perhaps St. Mary's church seal: the ecclesiastical symbol of the Agnus Dei is taken from the centuries-old Schieffelin crest. Jacob Schieffelin's family burial vault, which he had built in 1828, is still located under the porch of the church.

Building Descriptions

Church. St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church is of English Gothic design. Constructed of red brick with cast-stone detail, it is oriented with its broad gable end facing West 126th Street. The front is dominated by a large pointed-arch window opening with traceried infill holding leaded glass. The cast-stone sill below the window carries the inscription "1823 St. Mary's Church Manhattanville 1908" in Old English letters. The gable rises to a small open bell tower. Bands of brick laid in a herringbone pattern accent the facade at the springing of the arch and at the base of the bell tower. The cast-stone gable coping terminates in bosses adorned with

carved figures. The bell tower with stone-trimmed pointed-arch opening contains a bell which was re-installed from the first church building. The bell tower finial takes the form of a Celtic cross.

The main entrance to the church is through the open gable-roofed porch at the western side. It has three pointed-arch openings, two of which are approached by stone steps, while the third has a quatrefoil parapet at its base. The porch floor is paved with slate. The openwork beams of the porch roof are visible on the porch ceiling. A quatrefoil motif adorns the gable end beneath the roof. Shallow steps within the porch lead to a pointed-arch opening containing wood double doors with arched panels. (The security grille protecting the porch entrance from the street is a non-historic addition.) A small secondary entrance to the church is located near the eastern end of the main facade.

The eastern and western side elevations of the church are punctuated by broad pointed-arch window openings with tracery containing leaded glass. (Non-historic protective panels have been placed over the window openings on the west side.) The window openings are flanked by stepped buttresses with cast-stone coping. Small gable-roofed transepts project from the north end of these two elevations. That on the western elevation contains another entrance. (It is partially obscured by the expansion of the parish house.) A low wrought-iron fence with Gothic motifs links the buttresses and encloses the basement areaways. The broad slopes of the slate-covered roof rise from the east and west elevations. The roof is accented by two peaked roof dormers on each side.

Sunday School Building. The two-story Sunday school building, sited to the north of the church, is visible on its eastern, western, and northern elevations. The brick walls are punctuated by segmental-arched window openings but are otherwise unornamented and terminate in a coped

parapet. It is likely that the second story was added at the time the church was constructed.

Parish House. The white frame clapboard-covered parish house, originally the rectory, has been modified and enlarged several times since its original construction in 1851. A two-and-one-half story gabled central section is flanked by two-story wings. The main entrance is through a flat-roofed enclosed projecting entryway with a wood and glass door set below a transom. The sloping roof of this central section is intersected by a broad dormer with paired windows. The west wing with a sloping roof is dominated by a two-story gabled projecting window bay with four full-length windows below transoms. The east wing with a shallow sloping roof has a secondary entrance through a small projecting porch with turned wood detail. (Some of these elements may have been reused when the entrance porch was removed from the Sunday school building in conjunction with the construction of the church.) All the window sash in the three sections are replacements. Most are double-hung six-over-six or four-over-four. The rear elevations of the three sections of the parish house are visible from Shltering Arms Park. A fire escape has been added to the main section.

The yard and garden in front of these buildings is paved with flagstones and contains several large trees.⁶⁰ It is sheltered from the street by a brick wall with brick posts, topped by a wrought-iron fence. This is a replacement for the low wrought-iron fence which originally fronted the garden.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

1. The St. Mary's (Manhattanville) complex had been heard previously on July 15, 1991 as LP-1852. No action was taken on this proposed designation.
2. Manhattanville was notable among several other early nineteenth-century villages and settlements in Manhattan island's rural, "uptown" vicinity such as Yorkville, Seneca Village, Harsenville, and the village of Harlem. For the overall history of Manhattanville see: Howard Brown Woolston, *A Study of the Population of Manhattanville*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1909); Ruth Singer, *Historical, Social and Economic Changes of Manhattanville* (New York: Manhattanville Community Outreach-St. Mary's Church, 1973).

3. The "125th Street fault," cited by Christopher J. Schubert, *Geology of New York and Environs* (New York: American Museum of Natural History Press, 1968).
4. The first registered residents of Nieuw Haerlem, although retained by the Dutch West India Company, were not all native Hollanders. Numbering 32, they comprised 11 French, 4 Walloons, 4 Danes, 3 Swedes, and 3 Germans. James Riker, *Revised History of Harlem: Its Origins and Early Annals* (New York: New Harlem Publishing Co., 1904) describes land transfers of or around Moertje David's Fly (loosely translated as Mother, or Widow, David's Valley). All three words appear in variant spellings, depending on the source, e.g. Moertje, Moetje, Matje, or Metje: David, or the truer Dutch Davit; and Fly, or Vly, which appears more akin to the Dutch word *vlei*, reduced from the Du. *vallei*, meaning valley. Translation of moertje not found, but Cassell's Dutch-English dictionary offers *moetje* to mean "a shotgun marriage." See Riker, 832, for a map of these properties.
5. James Fenimore Cooper also placed this valley in his 1821 novel of the Revolutionary War, *The Spy*.
6. See R.S. Guernsey, *New York City and Vicinity during the War of 1812-'15, being a Military, Civic and Financial Local History of that Period, with Incidents and Anecdotes Thereof* . . . (New York: Charles L. Woodward, 1895).
7. I.N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: Philip Dodd, 1918), III, 615-616; V, 1448: July 9, 1806.
8. Some contemporary journals in 1806 chronicled the presence, if not the function, of a "handsome" and "convenient" Academy newly built on the main road. The 1811 Commissioners' Plan drawn by John Randel, Jr., indicates the Academy in the line of Tenth Avenue between 126th and 127th Streets, which had not yet been platted; the building is represented by a square from which a cruciform extends from one side, suggesting a possible religious affiliation. The Academy does not appear in the *Blue Book of 1815*, drawn by city surveyor Otto Sackersdorff based upon Randel's street map.
9. Stokes, V, 1448: *N.Y. Spectator*, July 9, 1806.
10. Stokes, V, 1454: *N.Y. Gazette and General Advertiser*, Feb. 4, 1807.
11. Rev. T.M. Peters, *A Historical Address Delivered at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville, N.Y., December 1873* (New York, 1874). This may have been a result of the state's 1799 gradual emancipation enactment which freed children of enslaved parents born after that year upon majority age. As farm and business owners found it to be more frugal to hire white laborers than to own "Negroes," the number of whites grew. On an undated floor plan of the original church building, the last three east rear pews, nos. 17 to 19, are specifically indicated (in pencil) as "Free for col," presumably abbreviating "colored," which might signify a black presence from the church's inception. See Schieffelin Family Papers, New York Public Library.
12. Stokes, V, 1729: Oct. 27, 1834, *Mayor's Message* (1834), 28.
13. Stokes, V, 1740: May 4, 1836, *Laws of N.Y.* (1836), chap. 251; *Doc. No. 109, Bd. of Ald., Mayor's Message* (1835), 102. See also III, pl. 112.
14. See Singer, 2. John Punnett Peters recalls how St. Mary's rector, Thomas McClure Peters, relieved out-of-work laborers during the financial Panic of 1857 by "employing men to quarry and haul stones for a future St. Mary's, and to macadamize Lawrence Street..."; *Annals of St. Michael's: Being the History of St. Michael's Protestant Episcopal Church, New York, for One Hundred Years 1807-1907*, compiled by Order of the Vestry, edited by John Punnett Peters, D.D. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 148.
15. It should be noted that the village's growth rate did not keep exactly apace with that of the entire city -- nor even with the Twelfth Ward of which it was then a part -- because of its topography which made the main lines of communication less accessible. In 1865, Manhattanville's population numbered 2,189 out of the 28,259 people in the whole ward. However, in 1900, the growth of the village to 14,675 people should have more than doubled to be on a par with the population of the whole Ward which was 462,227.
16. Singer, 5.

17. *N.Y. Herald*, Oct. 24, 1905.
18. Singer, 7.
19. Woolston, 89.
20. Singer, 8.
21. Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *American Institute of Architects Guide to New York City*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovonovich, 1988), 428.
22. Singer, 9.
23. *Ibid.*, 10-14.
24. *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 6, 1950, 18.
25. *New York Times*, July 17, 1950, 22. Singer, 12.
26. *Annals of St. Michael's*, 238.
27. Thanksgiving was celebrated in December at that time. See *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, "Centennial Service of St. Mary's Church, Thanksgiving Day, 1923," 25.
28. *Ibid.*, 26.
29. St. Mary's Minutes of the Vestry, December 27, 1823; see Schieffelin Family Papers, NYPL.
30. See *A Historical Address Delivered at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville, N.Y.*; Schieffelin Family Papers, NYPL; *N.Y. Evening Post*, June 12, 1824; *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, 28. For further information on Schieffelin and the family see, *Schieffelin & Co., One Hundred Years of Business Life, 1794-1894* (New York, W.H.Schieffelin & Co., 1894) and "A British Prisoner of War in the American Revolution, the Experiences of Jacob Schieffelin from Vincennes to Williamsburg, 1779-1780," Gerald O. Haffner ed., *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 86 (1978).
31. *Annals of St. Michael's*, 243-244, footnote, 69. St. Mary's Minutes of the Vestry, October 8, 1827; Vestry minutes, June 30, 1829, Schieffelin Family Papers, NYPL. The only extant receipt from pew-rentals indicates \$53 collected in 1827. Relative to pew selection: Jacob Schieffelin, in exchange for having donated the church land, reserved the first choice of a pew (see his letter of declaration written June 19, 1828 referring to deed agreement of May 16, 1824, Schieffelin Family Papers, NYPL), as well as to the privilege of selecting a church site for the construction of his family's burial vault. Jacob and his wife, Hannah Lawrence, are still buried in the vault, along with eight other family members, which lies under the church's porch.
32. *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, 29. William Richmond's rectorship at St. Mary's was concurrent with his rectorship of St. Michael's. This double duty seems to account for his multiple resignations and reappearances. His tenure at St. Mary's was from 1823-25 and 1828-37. It is likely that his successor, the Rev. John Sellon, was elected on the 27th of April 1825 only for the legal purpose of allowing the vestry to execute the church's mortgage, since neither his name nor his resignation reappear in subsequent minutes. Thomas T. Groshen, who was slated to become rector when he received deacon's orders, continued to act as lay reader. Unfortunately, Groshen died on October 3, 1828, succumbing like many (including his brother, Henry M. Groshen, M.D., also a vestry member) to an epidemic sweeping the city that year. William Richmond's brother, the Rev. James Cook Richmond, replaced him from 1837 until at least November 1841. By March 1842, William Richmond was signing again as the Rector in St. Mary's parish records, where he appears as such until at least August 1850. It is T.M. Peters' name, however, that most often appears without a title between 1848-51 recorded as performing the clerical duties of baptisms, marriages, etc.; G.L. Neide (without a title) in 1851-53; and Thomas M. Peters again in 1853-59 as the Rector.
33. Hinton resigned two years later, however, over financial matters and moved to St. Andrew's Parish in Harlem, where he was rector when he perished in the city's first cholera epidemic in 1832. *Ibid.*, 30. St. Mary's financial distress was severe enough to cause a judgment to be brought against the parish in 1834. The Rev. William Richmond never received his due salary from the church during his entire rectorship from

- 1823 until 1853; nor was he ever reimbursed for his own expenditures, and he continually donated the sum owed to him. In 1832 the city made Rev. Richmond a health officer "with power to order and spend as he saw fit" in his capacity as almoner of upper Manhattan's poor. *Annals of St. Michael's*, 147.
34. *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, 30. See also note 30 above.
 35. *Ibid.*, 31.
 36. *Annals of St. Michael's*, 89. *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, 31-32: The Rev. Charles Breck Ackley recalls Peters and the Richmond brothers as St. Mary's "three great rectors."
 37. *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*. This name reoccurs as "Neide" in St. Mary's parish records.
 38. See J.F. Richmond, *New York and its Institutions* (New York: 1873), 308-310. The Sheltering Arms was modeled after the rough house cottages of Wichern, near Hamburg, on the Horn, where children were dispersed in equal numbering "families," but Manhattan land values prohibited such a physical venture. Instead, the Sheltering Arms opened on February 5, 1870, in Manhattanville as a single building of attached cottages of "two-story brick, with basement and attic, in the Gothic order, with slated French roof...composed of five sections." The institution had space to house 120 children at a time, and received children from infancy to fourteen, "subject to the call of their parents or relatives." They were also taken regardless of creed or nationality, which probably accounted for donations from Gentiles and Jews alike. Despite its inter-denominational governing board, the institution's internal management was committed, from its inception, to the Sisterhood of St. Mary of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Discomfitting many as too similar in habit, and likely faith, to the sisters of the Roman Catholic orders, the board eventually removed them from the management of Sheltering Arms. The site was acquired by the City and opened as Sheltering Arms Park in 1945.
 39. Relatively little is known about Keister, one of the most talented architects active in New York City at the end of the nineteenth century. His work includes religious structures, such as the First Baptist Church (1891) at Broadway and West 79th Street, residential structures, such as the Gerard (1893-94, designated New York City Landmark), an apartment hotel, at 123 West 44th Street and a row of ten houses (1891) on East 136th Street in the Bronx, part of the Bertine Block Historic District, and several theaters including the Apollo (1913-14, designated New York City Landmark) on West 125th Street and the Belasco (1906-07, a designated New York City Landmark), 111-121 West 44th Street. For further information on Keister see *Bertine Block Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1900), report by Andrew S. Dolkart (New York: City of New York, 1994), 6-7.
 40. See New York City, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building application 1065-1890.
 41. *The Year Book-Board of Religious Education-Diocese of New York* (October 1915), records St. Mary's school as having 20 teachers for 206 pupils.
 42. *Directory of St. Mary's Church 1924*, 52-53. Rev. Ackley praised the "splendid work" of the school's 40 teachers and officers for the results the school achieved, despite having to run with only 57 percent of the ideal number of staff and equipment.
 43. Christopher Gray, "A Demur on Designation with a Decided Difference," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1991, Real Estate Section, 7.
 44. Curtis Channing Blake, "The Architecture of Carrère & Hastings," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1976, index : "Probably designed wholly [sic] by T.E.Blake." New Building application 36-1908 lists the architect as Carrère & Hastings and T.E. Blake. "St. Mary's Church, Lawrence Street, New York City," *American Architect and Building News*, 97 (Jan. 12, 1910), plates, lists the architects as Carrère & Hastings and T.E. Blake.
 45. With this arrangement, Blake maintained offices at Carrère & Hastings, but apparently was able to accept commissions on his own. See Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice New York 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979) and James Ward, *Architects in Practice New York 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989) for Blake's office

listings.

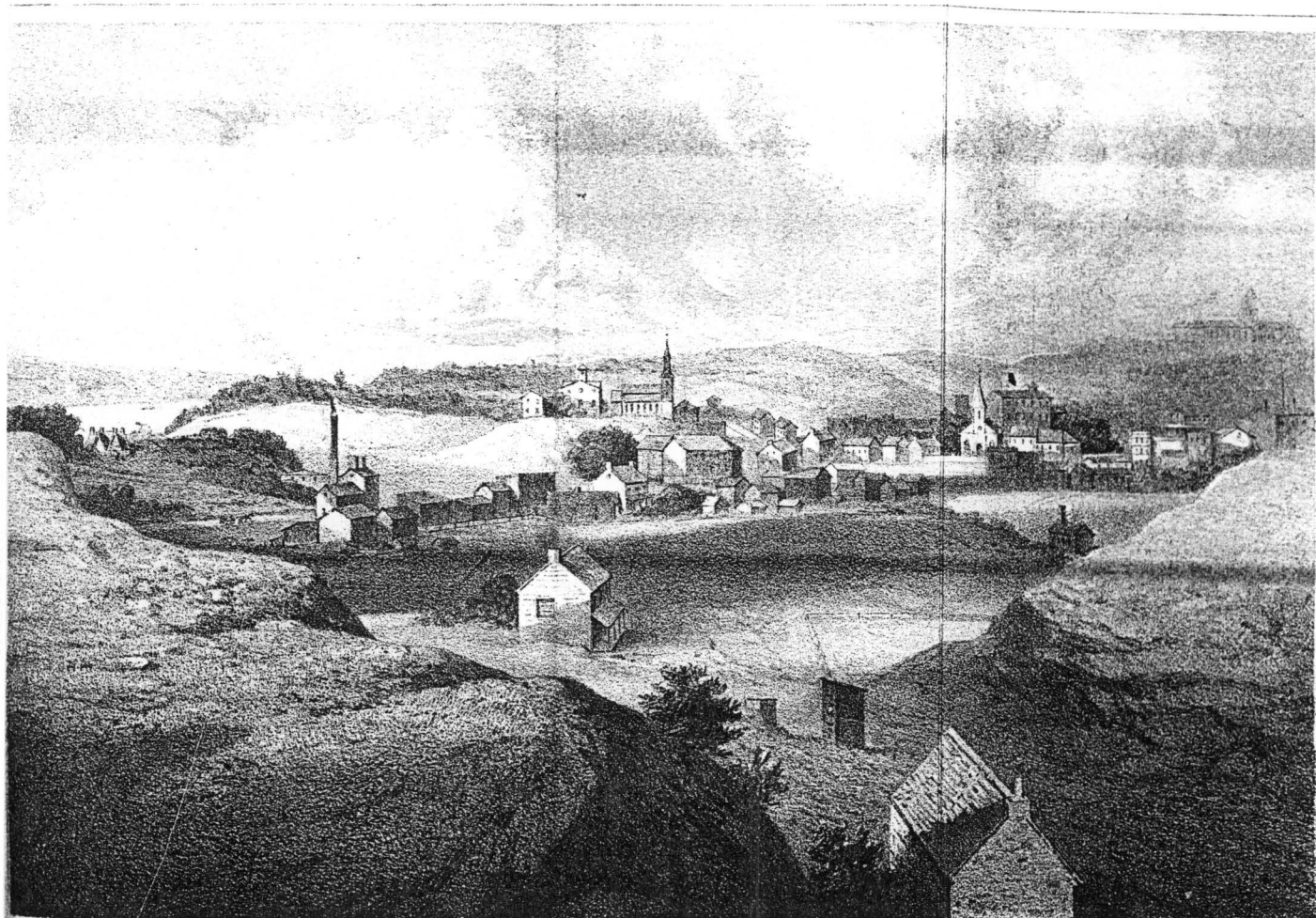
46. See Theodore Evernghim Blake's biographical questionnaire "To the Academicians and Associates of the National Academy of Design" to which he was elected an associate in 1948; also *NYT*, obit. July 4, 1949.
47. While it is likely that the socially prominent Schieffelin family was involved in the selection of the firm, vestry minutes for the relevant years have not been located to confirm this assertion.
48. See Alteration application 177-1908.
49. Episcopal Diocese of New York, Archives, Letters from H.R. Hulse to Bishop Coadjutor David Hummell Greer, January - June, 1905.
50. Woolston, 83.
51. See *Ibid.*, 84, citing Parish report by Rev. Hulse. In his letter of March 17, 1905, Rev. Hulse makes an impassioned argument for attaining resources for St. Mary's to do "strong neighborhood work" among the area's Protestants. "The other churches have not staid [sic] away because there were no people here, or because the people could not be reached, but because the people were poor." He adds, "I admit that our people are not as well to do as those in the neighborhood of the Archangel, but there are just as many of them and they all have souls." The Church of the Archangel was at that time holding services in the crypt of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, before it consolidated with All Souls Church the next year.
52. Singer, 8.
53. *Ibid.*, 16.
54. *NYT*, March 14, 1967. The School-Community Committee of P.S. 36-125 organized classes for over 1,000 pupils at the Ackley Center, the Grant Community center, and at Riverside Church.
55. The program was called "Community Outreach: A Church's Response to its Neighborhood." Singer, 16.
56. St. Mary's Episcopal Church Brochure, current 1997-98.
57. While Rev. Castle was contracted to become priest-in-charge of St. Mary's as of Aug. 1, 1986, he recalls that he had begun working there part-time since the morning of Dec. 25, 1985. He also recalls moving into the rectory on "April Fools Day," (April 1) 1986. Rev. Castle's temerity, as recalled in *Cousin Bobby*, a 1992 film documentary by Jonathan Demme, had already made him a controversial figure since the 1960s. In his hometown of Jersey City, New Jersey, he had integrated African-Americans into St. John's Episcopal Church's white parish. The coffee-house he started there was remembered as the seat of much anti-Vietnam War activity, as well as for fostering the growth of that city's Black Panther Party, causes that had occasionally landed the activist preacher, who is white, in jail.; N.R. Kleinfeld, "Old Friends, New Foes: President and a Preacher-One 60's Activist Runs Columbia, One Fights It," *NYT*, May 31, 1996. Castle is scheduled to retire from St. Mary's parish at the end of May 1998.
58. See Peter Salwen, "Visible City," *Metropolis*, April 1985, 43.
59. The church interior is not subject to this designation.
60. This open space has been retained since the church originally established itself on this site in 1824-26. There is a potential for the recovery of nineteenth-century archeological resources, if any subsurface work is done on the property. Such resources may reveal information about the role of this Episcopal church in the community during this time period.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House and Sunday School has a special character and 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, St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville) has been in continuous service for some 175 years on its original site; that the church and a free school were founded in 1823 under the leadership of the Rev. William Richmond; that the first church building, a white wood frame structure with a steeple, was built in 1824-26 facing Lawrence Street (today West 126th Street) on land donated by Jacob Schieffelin, who laid out the village's roads, and his wife Hanna Lawrence; that in 1831, St. Mary's became the first "free pew" Protestant Episcopal Church in the city; that the white frame parish house, when erected as a rectory in 1851, housed the village's first resident clergyman; that the present church, designed by Theodore E. Blake in association with the nationally prominent firm of Carrère & Hastings, replaced the original in 1908-09; that the church is a notable example of the English Gothic style with a rustic bell-tower rising from the gabled front, an open gable-roofed side porch, and a prominent pointed-arch window with traceried infill holding leaded glass; that the brick Sunday school building behind the church and linked to it was constructed in 1890 to the designs of New York architect George Keister; and that the three buildings are sited around a garden which recalls the church's original rural setting.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the 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 St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House and Sunday School, 517-523 West 126th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1983, Lot 11, as its Landmark Site.



For D.T. Valentine's Manual, 1861

VIEW OF MANHATTANVILLE, TAKEN FROM FORT HAIGHT, 1860.

View of Manhattanville, 1860 with St. Mary's Church in right background

Source: *Valentine's Manual*, 1861



St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House, and Sunday School
517-523 West 126th Street, Manhattan

Photo: Carl Forster



St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House, and Sunday School
517-523 West 126th Street, Manhattan - West elevation of church

Photo: Carl Forster



St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House, and Sunday School
517-523 West 126th Street, Manhattan - View of Parish House

Photo: Carl Forster



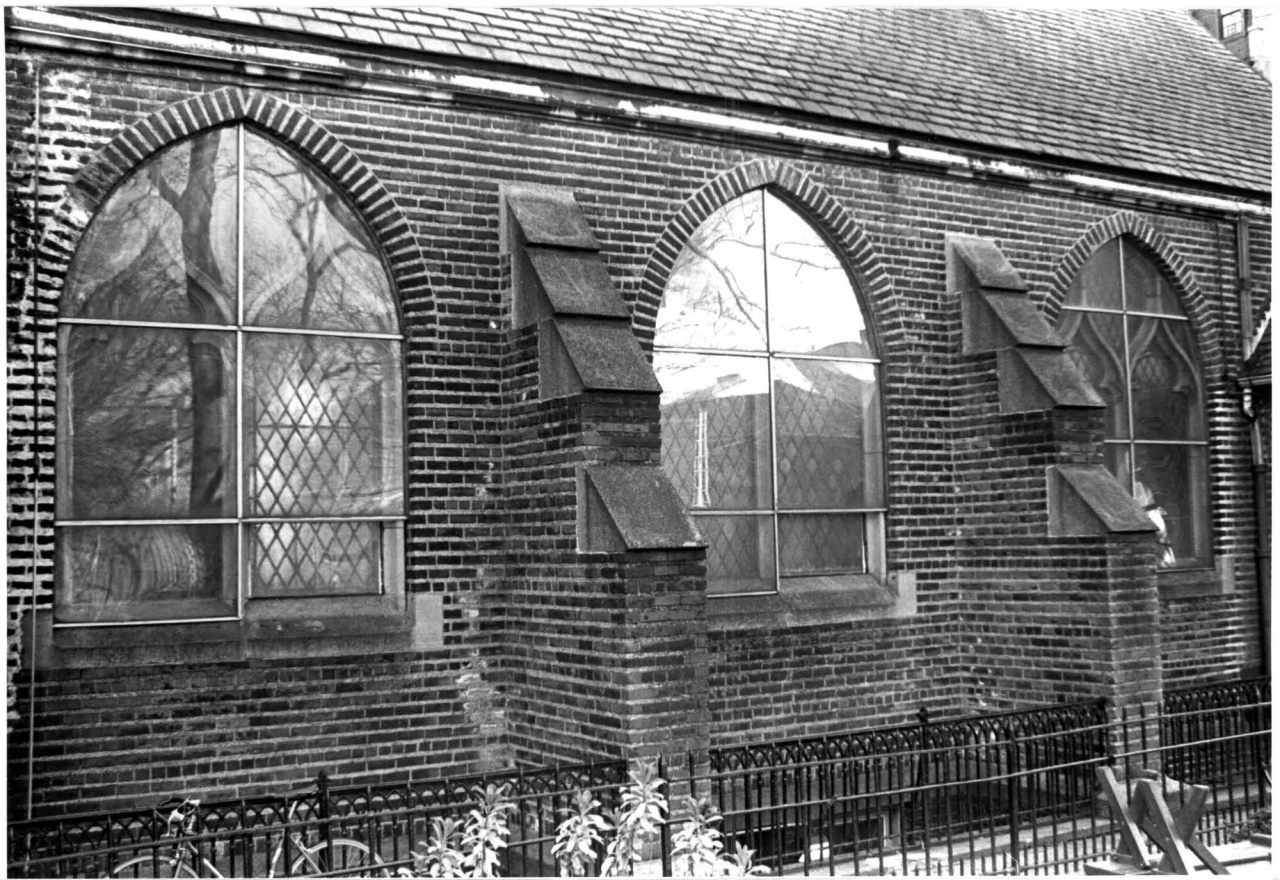
St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House, and Sunday School
517-523 West 126th Street, Manhattan - Details of entrance porch

Photo: Carl Forster



Detail of bell tower

Photo: Carl Forster

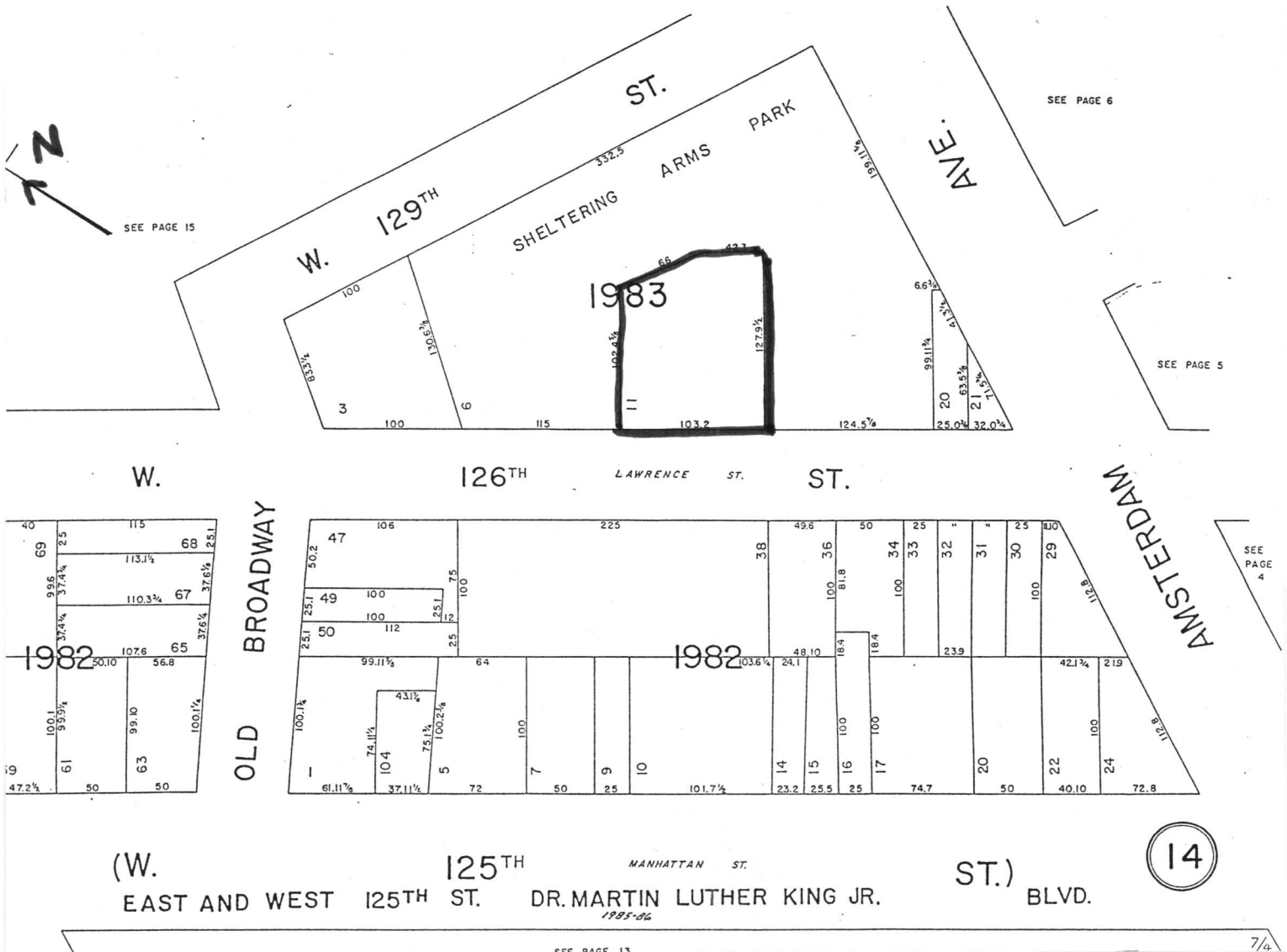


Detail of stepped buttresses flanking pointed-arch windows on west elevation

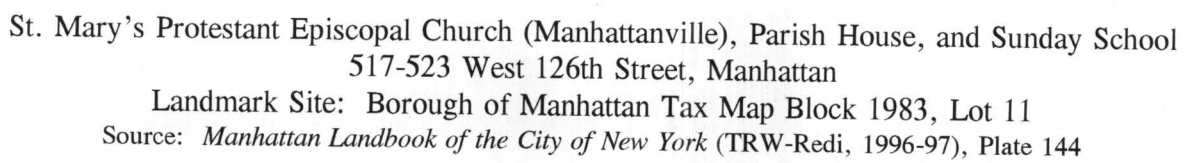


East elevation of church with Sunday school building at rear

Photos: Carl Forster



St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (Manhattanville), Parish House, and Sunday School
 517-523 West 126th Street, Manhattan
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1983, Lot 11
 Source: Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map



Source: *Manhattan Landbook of the City of New York* (TRW-Redi, 1996-97), Plate 144