

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 18, 1966, Calendar No. 3
LP-0092

ST. JAMES CHURCH, 32 St. James Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1835, completed 1837; architect: attributed to Minard Lafever.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 279, Lot 25.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of St. James Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 64). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

St. James Church is one of the monuments of the Greek Revival in New York City, due to the beautiful proportions of its elements and to the refinement of its Greek detail. This handsome church is an example of an interesting building type which has a recessed porch with two columns; on either side of the porch are enclosed stairs with their own doors opening on to the street. The entire front is crowned by a low gable (pediment). One of the principal contributions of the Greek Revival in this country was its modification of the Classic temple form. The templum-in-antis of antiquity was that type in which the walls were extended forward to enclose the sides of the portico. In the United States architects went one step further by adding stairs on each side of the porch, thus widening the front under one great gable or pediment.

The Greek detail in this building is extremely handsome, and the ornament above the entrance door and on the interior balcony is similar to that published in one of Minard Lafever's books on architecture. Historically, this church, begun in 1835, is one of the oldest Roman Catholic church structures still standing in Manhattan.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that St. James Church 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, St. James Church is an extremely beautiful example of Greek Revival architecture, that in detail and proportion it is architecturally one of the finest buildings in the City and that its design is directly attributable to one of the outstanding architects of the period.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark St. James Church, 32 St. James Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 279, Lot 25, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.