

OLD ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, Mott Street at Prince Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1809, completed 1815; architect Joseph F. Mangin. Restored 1868 after fire.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 509, Lot I.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Old St. Patrick's Cathedral and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. II). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation including Monsignor Arthur Tommaso representing the Archdiocese of New York. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Although only the shell of this building remained intact after the church was completely gutted by a fire in 1886, the original Cathedral, when completed in 1815, was one of the earliest examples of Gothic Revival architecture in the City. Some of this early Gothic work survived the restoration of 1868. Today, the massive stone facade facing Mott Street is still impressive and recalls its past glories. Formal and severely plain in appearance, this smooth faced windowless wall has great dignity and character in its restrained simplicity. Recessed arched niches over the side doors are unadorned as is the plain wall around them and the wall formed by the high pitched gable of the roof above. The handsome rough gray colored fieldstone masonry walls of the North and South elevations each contain eight, pointed arched triply divided stained-glass windows, with elegant tracery at the top. North and South of the Church, enclosed within a brick wall, is a landscaped cemetery containing many old tombstones.

The holy See of New York was established in 1808 by Pope Pius VII. The following year in 1809, the cornerstone of the Cathedral of Old St. Patrick's was laid. Owing to the War of 1812, work on the building was held up and the church was not completed until 1815. The architect was Joseph F. Mangin, co-architect with John McComb Jr., of the New York City Hall. The early history of the Roman Catholic Church in this country relates chiefly to this building, and particularly to the person of the great Archbishop, John Hughes. After the new St. Patrick's Cathedral was dedicated at 50th Street, the old building was reconsecrated as a parish church on March 17, 1885.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Old St. Patrick's Cathedral 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, Old St. Patrick's Cathedral is a superb example of early Gothic Revival architecture in New York City, that it is an impressive and dignified masonry building, that it is historically important as the first seat of the Roman Catholic Holy See in New York City, and that as an ecclesiastical building, it adds architectural richness to the neighborhood.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, Mott Street at Prince Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 509, Lot I, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.