

GRACE CHURCH, 800 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1843, completed 1846; architect James Renwick, Jr.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 557, Lot 1.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Grace Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 27). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation including the Rector of the Church, Rev. Benjamin Minifie, who said the church welcomed the proposed designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Gothic Revival truly began in New York City in 1846 with the advent of two new churches of great significance. One was Richard Upjohn's new Trinity Church at Wall Street; the other was James Renwick, Jr.'s Grace Church, built of sparkling white Sing Sing marble at 10th Street. The tower of Grace Church terminates the northward vista looking along Broadway where it changes direction at Tenth Street - a conspicuous and attractive feature with its flamboyant Gothic spire dominating the scene.

This church is not only outstandingly beautiful but, for its day, was one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture in this country. The main entrance door on Broadway, located at the base of the tower, is surmounted by an attractive gable above which is the very handsome rose-window. Rising above the roof level are the high, traceried openings of the belfry, while above these the tower makes an ingenious transition from square to octagon, embellished by pinnacles at the corners to ease the transition.

The walls of the nave consist of fine, pointed arch windows, interspersed by buttresses which in turn are surmounted by pinnacles. A parapet forms the top of the walls behind the tower and is crenellated, similar to those found on Medieval Castles.

The mastery of Gothic architecture by young Renwick, in this early Gothic church, is truly remarkable and must be accounted for by his excellent training as an engineer and that of his father before him. Grace Church, since its beginning on Rector Street, had always been the house of worship chosen by New York's first families and here at Tenth Street it continued that tradition, being one of the most fashionable parishes in New York from the time it was built.

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 Grace 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, Grace Church is one of the monuments of the early Gothic Revival in New York, that it is an extremely beautiful church richly detailed and well proportioned, that it is built of the finest materials and that it has historically housed one of the outstanding congregations in the City.

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 Grace Church, 800 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 557, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.