

CHURCH OF THE HOLY APOSTLES, 300 Ninth Avenue at West 28th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1846, completed 1848; architect Minard Lafever. Transepts, 1858; architect Richard Upjohn & Son.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 751, Lot 76.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Church of the Holy Apostles and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including the Reverend Robert M. C. Griswold, pastor of the Church. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The outstanding feature of the Church of the Holy Apostles is its very handsome spire which is enhanced by unusual detail. In its relatively small size and in the context of its modern environment, the scale of Lafever's tower and spire is particularly fortunate. While being the dominant feature of the Church, it provides a valuable relief and contrast to the large housing units which surround it, and the small Church holds its own among these high apartment buildings. The transition between the square brick tower and the copper clad octagonal steeple is skillfully made by arched pediments. The brick walls of the building provide a handsome wall surface which is enhanced by the round-arched windows. Bull's-eye windows in the tower beneath the arched pediments are a notable detail. The simplicity, boldness and strong rhythm of this composition set off the unusually large steeple to great advantage.

Minard Lafever's work is found elsewhere in New York, and he was especially distinguished in the Greek and Gothic Revival styles. This handsome Church, on the other hand, is interesting for here he introduced classic Italian elements on the exterior and the interior displays a Tuscan order and groin vaults. It is a tribute to Lafever's versatility that this Church, though quite unlike his other buildings in style, has its own impressive quality of elegance.

The cornerstone of the Church was laid in 1846, and the building was initially completed in 1848. However, in 1854 the Church was enlarged by extending it twenty-four feet eastward while retaining its rectangular plan. Further enlargements were made in 1858 when transepts, designed by Charles Babcock of Richard Upjohn & Son, were added. Another major alteration was made in 1908 when the wooden spire was covered with slate and the belfry clad in copper above the square brick tower.

This Church is notable for the distinguished rectors who served it. Robert Shaw Howland, the second rector, founded the Church of the Heavenly Rest on Fifth Avenue, while Robert Lewis Paddock, the liberal rector who served there in the early nineteenth hundreds, was destined to leave the Church to become Missionary Bishop of Eastern Oregon. The thirty year rectorship of Lucius A. Edelblute was notable for his consolidation of the Church during trying times and for his writing the definitive history of the Church.

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 Church of the Holy Apostles 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 Church of the Holy Apostles represents an unusual architectural design, produced by a notable architect, at an early period, contemporary with Trinity Church, that it has a handsome Italian Renaissance interior while the exterior displays an original and interesting combination of elements and that it has provided a fitting and dignified home for its congregation for over one hundred years.

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 Church of the Holy Apostles, 300 Ninth Avenue at West 28th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 751, Lot 76, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.