

CHAPEL OF THE INTERCESSION, Broadway at West 155th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1911, completed 1914, architects Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2085, Lot 20.

On June 14, 1966 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark the Chapel of the Intercession and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 38). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The attorney for Trinity Parish also spoke at the hearing.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Here in this modern version of Gothic architecture is a remarkable complex of buildings forming a truly picturesque group which houses the many functions of today's church activities.

The architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, used architectural elements from different periods rather freely combined with a homogeneity which is remarkable. The feeling is generally that of the English Perpendicular style, particularly at the high narrow entrance end. The pointed windows at the sides, however, with their flamboyant tracery, seem to belong to the earlier Decorated Period while the tower, with its square headed belfry, louvers and open-work crenellations, suggests the Tudor antecedents which are so well expressed in the small parish buildings at the rear. A small turret rises up at the southeast corner of the tower and is crowned by a small spire.

The long, narrow nave is beautifully expressed on the exterior. This simple, straightforward solution to the problem belies the belief that the Gothic style, as executed today, need necessarily lack the Gothic Spirit. This spirit is the essential quality sought by so many of our architects today and yet found by so few.

The Chapel of the Intercession was formerly the Church of the Intercession, founded in 1847. The present edifice was completed in 1914. The altar contains 1,563 stones from all over the world. The surrounding cemetery holds the remains of many New Yorkers, some of the most famous being Clement Clarke Moore, author of "Twas the Night Before Christmas," John James Audubon, the first John Jacob Astor and many of his family. Alfred Tennyson Dickens, son of Charles Dickens, is also interred there.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that the Landmark on the property in question (and the Landmark Site) is wholly used for religious and directly related charitable purposes by Trinity Parish and that the needs of Trinity Parish for such uses may change in the years ahead, entailing alterations in the existing structures or the creation of other structures on the Landmark Site. By this designation of the Landmark above described and the Landmark Site on which it is located, it is not intended to freeze the structure in its present state or to prevent future appropriate alterations needed to meet changed requirements of use for religious and directly related charitable purposes. The Commission believes it has the obligation and, indeed, it has the desire to cooperate with owners of Landmarks who may wish to make changes in their properties. In this connection the Commission wishes to state at this time that it recognizes that Trinity Parish may want to erect new buildings in the future on its grounds at the Chapel of the Intercession. The Commission recognizes that Trinity Parish may also wish to make exterior alterations to its existing buildings at the Chapel of the Intercession. The Commission looks forward to working with the representatives of Trinity Parish when the Church desires to erect new buildings on its grounds or to make exterior alterations on its existing buildings.

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 Chapel of the Intercession 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 Chapel of the Intercession represents a clear external statement of the plan, that it harmonizes to a remarkable degree with its Parish buildings, that it successfully displays a very free combination of handsome Gothic design elements from different periods and that it is one of the few Gothic Eclectic buildings in New York expressing the spirit of Gothic architecture.

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 Chapel of the Intercession, Broadway at West 155th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 2085, Lot 20, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.