

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0420

ST. JEAN BAPTISTE CHURCH, 1067-1071 Lexington Avenue, Borough of Manhattan.
Begun 1910, completed 1913; architect Nicholas Sirracino.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1410, Lot 53.

On November 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the St. Jean Baptiste Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 39). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the Rev. Adrian Hebert, S.S.S., Pastor of the Church, said, "I am grateful to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for electing to designate the Church."

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Ordered but vital monumentality is the quality with which the St. Jean Baptiste Church impresses on the passerby. Nicholas Sirracino designed it in the style of the Italian Renaissance with a four-column pedimented porch, twin bell towers and high dome over the crossing. It was built in 1910 to serve the French Canadian community in New York; Thomas Fortune Ryan, the noted financier, was the principal contributor toward its construction.

The principal facade on Lexington Avenue is a masterpiece of lively symmetry with a tasteful and intelligent statement and re-statement of architectural motifs. A temple-front portico screens the central door of the three that give access to the Church. Four free-standing Corinthian columns, on a high plinth, support a full entablature and pediment. It is this main pediment which provides the facade's unifying theme. Two small echoing pediments flank the temple front over panels above the side doors. The scroll on the crest of the large central pediment is repeated over the smaller side ones and again above the cornices of the doors. The triangular shape of the pediment is restated at the parapet where a globe supported by angels effects a transition between the bell towers.

The bell towers at the sides of the front facade and the dome over the crossing are impressive features at the skyline. The octagonal bases of the towers have on four sides round arch openings flanked by pilasters and this design is used again for the drum supporting the dome. The towers are capped with a circle of Corinthian columns supporting a ribbed dome. This type of lantern also crowns the high ribbed dome at the crossing.

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 St. Jean Baptiste 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, the St. Jean Baptiste Church is designed in a dignified and handsome manner in the Italian Renaissance style with monumental scale, that the parts of the Church are particularly well integrated and harmonized by the repetition of various architectural themes and motifs, and that the ornamental detail is beautifully designed.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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 St. Jean Baptiste Church, 1067-1071 Lexington Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1410, Lot 53, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.