

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD, 155-03 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, Borough of Queens. Church begun 1861, completed 1862; enlarged 1901-1902. Graveyard about 1734; original architect Dudley Field. Enlargement by Cady, Berg & See.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9754, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described improvements are situated.

On December 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 33). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation including a representative from the Church who said the Vestry was in favor of the proposed designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Impressive in size and strikingly bold in appearance, this rugged English Gothic Revival Church, with steeply pitched gable roof and sharp spire, has great nobility and dignity. This handsome rough-cut sandstone structure appears timeless both in character and in substance. It stands in a charming landscaped country churchyard, dotted with small tombstones, which give the building a fine sense of scale. The Church was erected in 1861-1862 from plans by Dudley Field of New York and is the third church building on the site.

The broached spire, making the transition from a square to an octagon with its buttressed base, is located to the left of the entrance and slightly in front of the main body of the building. Single, narrow, pointed-arch windows, placed one above the other in the tower, accentuate the verticality of the steeple. Above the buttresses and resting on a horizontal stone band course are the four louvred openings of the belfry, each crowned with a steeply pitched gable. The octagonal steeple converging almost to a point is surmounted by a delicate cross.

The asymmetrical entrance facade has a vestibule with handsome double doors set within a pointed (lancet) arch, crowned by a steep gable. The side walls of the nave have slender, pointed-arch stained glass windows alternating with stepped buttresses. The handsome chancel to the rear of the Church was added in 1901. This extension has the same architectural character and scale, and the construction materials and details are similar to those used in the nave of the Church even though it was done by another architect some forty years later. Two wings, with low sloping roofs, project from the chancel. One contains a stoop and side entrance leading into the vestry vestibule.

History of the Church

Grace Church dates its founding from 1702 when a missionary minister was sent out by the English organization, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, in response to a request from a group of Jamaica residents. In 1733 "the widow of Colonel Caleb Heathcote" of New York (and other heirs) deeded about half an acre of land to "Thomas Colgan, Rector" on which these Church of England adherents erected their own first church building. It was completed in 1734, and the "Heathcote Deed" of 1733 is still in possession of the Church. Subsequently the church property has been enlarged by gifts and purchases.

A survey of "Grace Church Cemetery" shows a large part of the property occupied by a burying ground. Some of the tombstones date from the seventeen hundreds. Rufus King, whose home is preserved in nearby Kings Park, is buried in Grace Churchyard. He and members of his family in two succeeding generations were parishioners and active supporters of Grace Church. Rufus King was elected by New York State in 1789 to the first United States Senate. In 1796 he became Minister to England by appointment of President Washington. His son, John Alsop King, was Governor of New York from 1857 to 1859.

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 Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard have 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 an outstanding example of Gothic Revival architecture, that this rugged sandstone building has dignity and ageless quality in appearance, that the Graveyard is one of the oldest in the City, and that in its setting, standing as it does in an historic and picturesque country churchyard, the Church lends both enchantment and beauty to its community and to 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 Episcopal Church and Graveyard, 155-03 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, Borough of Queens and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9754, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described improvements are situated.