

**FORT WASHINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, 21 Wadsworth Avenue, (aka 21-27 Wadsworth Avenue, 617-619 West 174<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan.  
Built 1913-14; Thomas Hastings of Carrère & Hastings, architect, C.T. Wills, Inc. builders.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2143, Lot 38 in part, excluding the Sunday School.

On March 24, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. A total of eight witnesses, including the church's pastor, Reverend Carmen Rosario, and members of the congregation, and representatives of the Municipal Art Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, who testified about the building's condition, and the Historic Districts Council, spoke in favor of the designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received a letter of support from the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America

### Summary

Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, built 1913-14 to the designs of Thomas Hastings of the firm of Carrère & Hastings as a daughter church to West Park Presbyterian Church, is an imposing neo-Georgian building, notable for its broad simple massing and carefully-modulated refined detailing. Thomas Hastings was the surviving partner in one of the leading architectural firms in the United States, which had a nationally important reputation for its church designs. Hastings had a personal affiliation with project, since he was the son of the distinguished clergyman, the Rev. Doctor Thomas S. Hastings, who had been pastor of West Presbyterian Church, one of the two churches that merged in 1911 to create West Park Presbyterian. Mindful of the colonial and Revolutionary history of the Fort Washington neighborhood, Hastings drew on eighteenth century models, particularly the churches of the English architect James Gibbs, to produce a richly embellished design that was uniquely his own. Basilican in plan, the church features a temple-fronted Doric entrance portico with four monumental stone columns and an unusually lofty, beautifully sculpted tower embellished with classical motifs. The building is clad with buff-colored brick laid in Flemish bond and trimmed with Indiana limestone given a "rubbed finish" to enhance the Georgian character of the design. The church's Georgian-inspired decoration includes keyed enframements for the three main entrances on Wadsworth Avenue, molded and bracketed window surrounds, pilasters which articulate the principle façade and sidewalls, stone balustrades, and multi-light windows. The tower's height, together with the church's siting near the crest of a hill, on a view corridor from Broadway, gives the tower a dominating presence on the skyline of Washington Heights while the church's monumental facades contribute greatly to the architectural character of the neighborhood.



Fort Washington Presbyterian remained affiliated with West Park Presbyterian until 1923. Fort Washington Presbyterian in turn was the mother church for Fort George Presbyterian on St. Nicholas Avenue at 186th Street, established in 1916. Fort Washington Presbyterian was served by a number of well-respected clergymen and prided itself on its “cosmopolitan membership drawn from every corner of the globe” and a notable history of community service. In 1982 Fort Washington Presbyterian’s congregation ceded its church to the *Primera Iglesia Española de Washington Heights*, a Hispanic congregation established in Washington Heights in 1948, which had been a voice for the Puerto Rican community in New York and had been led by such distinguished pastors as Rev. Guillermo Cotto-Thorner and Rev. Idalisa Fernández. Following the Hispanic congregation’s acquisition of the building its name was changed to *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights* (Fort Washington Heights Presbyterian Church) to acknowledge the dual histories of its congregations. It continues to function both as a church and a vital part of its community.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Early History of the Fort Washington Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>

Northern Manhattan, including the area now known as Fort Washington, is characterized by its hilly geography, which rises “abruptly in every direction from water to water,” extending northward from 127<sup>th</sup> Street to Spuyten Duyvil Creek.<sup>2</sup> This area was inhabited by Native Americans long before European colonization. Largely covered by birch forests, the area was considered to be a portion of the Wiechquaesgeck, “the birch-bark country,” extending along the Hudson River from Yonkers to just below Jeffrey’s Hook. The Wiechquaesgeck Indians were listed as living in northern Manhattan in 1616. In spite of Dutch attempts to drive out and, in the case of Governor Kieft’s War (1643-45), annihilate the Indians of the lower Hudson Valley, the Wiechquaesgecks managed to survive and continued living in Washington Heights throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> They did not completely relinquish their land claims there until 1715 when a fund was raised by special tax to make a final settlement with them.

Europeans, who began settling on the Harlem flatlands in the mid-seventeenth century, originally treated the northern woodlands as common lands. As the population of Harlem Village increased, the demand for additional land led to a partition and allotment of the commons between 1691 and 1712. The land on which this church now stands was part of the Second Division lot 10, allotted to Maria Meyer.

In the summer of 1776, as part of their defense of New York City, the Continental Army built Fort Washington at the summit of what was then known as Long Hill, the high ridge of land running along the Hudson River, north of 176<sup>th</sup> Street. Other forts included Fort Tryon in what is now “Fort Tryon Park, Cock-Hill Fort on Inwood Hill, and Fort George at what is now 192<sup>nd</sup> Street and Audubon Avenue.”<sup>4</sup> These forts remained the last Continental stronghold in the battle for New York falling to the British in November 1776.

This church occupies part of the vast tract that was assembled following the American Revolution by the prominent Quaker shipping merchant William Kenyon. Much of the land acquired by Kenyon had been forfeited by Tory loyalist Colonel Roger Morris and Mary Philipse Rogers including their former country house at 160<sup>th</sup> Street and Edgecombe Avenue. (The Roger and Mary Philipse Morris House aka the Morris-Jumel Mansion is a designated New York City Landmark.)<sup>5</sup> In 1799 Kenyon sold his Northern Manhattan holdings to Leonard Parkinson, an English merchant, who had for a time resided in Jamaica.<sup>6</sup> Parkinson had his holdings mapped and divided into fifteen parcels by surveyor Charles Loss in 1810. He then began selling the parcels. This building is located on a portion of a twenty-nine acre parcel conveyed to Gerardus Post in 1810.<sup>7</sup> Post was a partner in the firm of William & Gerardus Post, paint dealers. In addition to their paint business, it appears the Post brothers were active real estate developers. They purchased five acres in the vicinity of Fort Washington in 1810. According to the federal census of 1820 Gerardus Post was a resident of the First Ward and a slave owner.<sup>8</sup> In May 1814, Post sold the twenty-nine acre tract to merchant Stephen Jumel.<sup>9</sup>

The French-born Jumel had been in the coffee trade and is said to have been part-owner of a coffee plantation in Haiti where the coffee-growing business depended on the labor of slaves.<sup>10</sup> He settled in New York City in 1795 where he became an extremely successful wine trader and began investing in real estate. In 1810 he purchased the former Morris homestead as well as other parcels from Parkinson. He and his wife, Elizabeth Bowen Jumel, began using the former Morris mansion as their summer home. (The Jumels had a number of servants but it has not been established that any of

them were slaves.)<sup>11</sup> Stephen Jumel died in 1832. The following year Madame Jumel married former Vice-President Aaron Burr, but they soon became estranged. Madame Jumel continued to live in the former Morris homestead until her death in 1865. Her estate was immediately contested and remained in dispute until 1881 when the court appointed a referee to divide and sell the property.

By that point Harlem Heights had become a preferred location for the summer estates of wealthy New Yorkers.<sup>12</sup> The neighborhood was increasingly being referred as Washington Heights or Fort Washington in reference to the remnants of the Revolutionary forts.<sup>13</sup> Several large institutional buildings had also been erected, notably the Deaf & Dumb Asylum at Fort Washington Avenue between West 163<sup>rd</sup> Street and West 165<sup>th</sup> Street and the New York Juvenile Asylum between West 176<sup>th</sup> Street and West 178<sup>th</sup> Street near Tenth (Amsterdam) Avenue. Because of the ownership dispute almost all of the former Jumel estate remained undeveloped.

In 1883 this lot was sold by the Jumel Estate referee to Cosslet Dickson.<sup>14</sup> The undeveloped property changed hands several times in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1905, real estate investor John O. Baker acquired the entire frontage on the east side of Wadsworth Avenue between West 174<sup>th</sup> Street and West 175<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>15</sup> He had a few old houses facing West 175<sup>th</sup> Street demolished in preparation for an expected boom in construction related to the opening of a new section of the Broadway subway line in 1906. With hundreds of new apartment and flat buildings going up in Washington Heights there was a demand for new churches to serve the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup> In 1907 the Church Extension Committee of the Presbytery of New York acquired the lot at the southeast corner of West 175<sup>th</sup> Street and Wadsworth Avenue from Baker as a potential site for a new church.<sup>17</sup> He sold the corner lot at 174<sup>th</sup> Street to Helen Alexander and Katherine Barnes in 1908 and they immediately conveyed the property to James C. McGuire.<sup>18</sup> In 1911 McGuire sold the lot at Wadsworth Avenue and West 174<sup>th</sup> Street corner to the Church Extension Committee, which conveyed it to the West Park Presbyterian Church in 1912 along with the lot at 175<sup>th</sup> Street and Wadsworth Avenue giving the church title to the entire blockfront.<sup>19</sup> West Park elected to erect a church and Sunday school building on the West 174<sup>th</sup> Street corner holding the West 175<sup>th</sup> Street corner in reserve for future development or sale.

#### The Presbyterian Church in New York City, West Presbyterian Church and the Founding of Fort Washington Presbyterian Church

Presbyterianism began in New York City in the seventeenth century with the formation of congregations in Newtown (1652) and Jamaica (1662).<sup>20</sup> In the early eighteenth century Presbyterians were regarded as dissenters and Governors Fletcher and Cornbury both tried to suppress the religion. After Cornbury's downfall, the First Presbyterian Church was formed in New York City (1716) and began holding services in the City Hall until it opened its own church on Wall Street in 1719. In 1738 the Presbytery of New York was established comprising sixteen ministers from fourteen churches in New York, Long Island, and New Jersey. The first church was enlarged in the 1740s and rebuilt on an enlarged scale in 1810. A second affiliate church, the Brick Church, at Beekman and Nassau Streets, was built under the leadership of Minister John Rodgers. During the Revolutionary War, the First Presbyterian Church in Manhattan became known as "the church of the patriots" because of the activist role played by Rodgers and some of the leading members of the congregation. By 1828 there were twenty-one Presbyterian churches in the city and thirty churches with 6,000 members by 1834.

The growth of Presbyterianism was facilitated both of the growth of the city and by the church's active missionary work, which frequently involved outreach to the poor and minorities. Presbyterians opened the first school for blacks in the city (1787), the first Sunday schools in Manhattan (1793, run by a black woman at Scotch Presbyterian Church)<sup>21</sup> and Brooklyn (1824), and fostered the free school system.

As the city grew northward, some Presbyterian churches, relocated to new neighborhoods and other churches were established. Among these was the North Presbyterian Church, first organized at Bleecker and Greenwich Streets in 1829.<sup>22</sup> The congregation erected its first church building at Carmine and Varick Streets (dedicated May 1832) and changed its name to the West Church. According to *King's Handbook*, "there, for many years, the congregation grew and prospered."<sup>23</sup> In 1856, Rev. Thomas S. Hastings (1827-1911), a young minister and son of Thomas Hastings, the distinguished composer of sacred music best known for his hymn *Rock of Ages*, was called to West Presbyterian. Deciding that the character of the neighborhood was changing, Hastings convinced his congregation to relocate to West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street near Fifth Avenue where land was plentiful and relatively cheap. After meeting in borrowed space for about a year, the congregation began occupying a chapel in its new building in 1862 and the main church in 1865 (demolished). Dr. Hastings was a popular and influential minister, noted for his progressive views including his strong opposition to slavery, and his church was well attended. He remained at the West Presbyterian until 1882 when he left to become a professor at Union Theological Seminary; in 1888 he became the fifth president of the Seminary, serving until 1897. He was succeeded at West Presbyterian by the Rev. John R. Paxton, a noted orator. Paxton's sermons attracted a large and fashionable congregation that included some of the wealthiest men in the country among them Russell Sage, Jay Gould, Seth Thomas, H.M. Flagler, Robert Jaffray, and E. H. Perkins.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Paxton resigned in 1893 and was replaced by the Rev. Anthony Harrison Evans, a Welsh immigrant who had grown up and been educated in Upstate New York. Evans was a less colorful orator than Dr. Paxton and less frequently praised worldly success, resulting in the resignation of some of the wealthier members of the congregation by 1899. The transformation of the area around Fifth Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street from a residential neighborhood to a business and club district was also a serious problem. Although many members remained loyal to their "downtown" church, increasing numbers were opting to worship uptown, closer to their homes. At the same time, the changes in the neighborhood had made the West Church's large through-the-block site increasingly valuable. In March 1911, the church's trustees voted to sell their building and to consolidate with the Park Presbyterian Church, moving to the Park Church's building at West 86<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

With a sale price of \$1,100,000 for its 42<sup>nd</sup> Street property West Presbyterian also committed "to purchase the plot held by the Church Committee of the Presbytery between 174<sup>th</sup> and 175<sup>th</sup> Streets and erect a new church to be affiliated with the consolidated church."<sup>25</sup> An article in the *New York Times* indicated that "the district was selected by the Presbytery as that where there was the least adequate provision for Presbyterians of any in the city, and one where the population is increasing rapidly."<sup>26</sup> In an interview about the consolidation and projected new church Dr. Evans added:

We have had several motives in the arrangement we have made.... The first was to advance the Kingdom of God in the City of New York and to serve the city in the largest way religiously. The second was to conserve the interests of our own

congregation and retain all the sentiment and tradition of a historic church. It was important that we should get a location where that would be possible. We also wanted to make the largest use of the property entrusted to us and to advance Presbyterianism by ministering to those who have no church of our denomination in their neighborhood.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Evans, who became a co-minister with Dr. Anthony P. Atterbury at the merged West Park Presbyterian Church, assumed pastoral responsibility for the new congregation which had its first service in the recently purchased Church House at 603 West 178<sup>th</sup> Street on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1912. The Rev. Lyman R. Hartley, then a student at Union Theological Seminary, resided at and looked after the church house. The commission for the new church building was given Thomas Hastings, son of West Presbyterian's former minister, Thomas S. Hastings, and the surviving partner in the firm of Carrère & Hastings. Plans for the new church were filed with the Department of Buildings in February 1913 and construction by Charles T. Wills, Inc. began in March.<sup>28</sup> The formal laying of the cornerstone took place in mid-April. The formal opening ceremony in the main auditorium took place on December 14, 1913 and on December 19, 1914 the Rev. Daniel Hoffman Martin was installed as pastor to the church with the newly ordained Rev. Hartley as assistant minister. The building was officially completed in February and the dedication took place on March 27, 1914. The illuminated crosses were installed on the church tower in 1917. The clock faces (part of Hastings original design for the church) were installed in 1919.

#### Carrère & Hastings<sup>29</sup>

The important architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed many of New York City's most prominent structures, including the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (1898-1911), Grand Army Plaza, Fifth Avenue at 59<sup>th</sup> Street (1913), the Manhattan Bridge Arch and Colonnade (1905), and the Staten Island Borough Hall (1903-07) (all designated New York City Landmarks).<sup>30</sup> John Mervin Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) met in Paris while studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Carrère, whose previous education was in Switzerland, graduated in 1882 and Hastings, who briefly attended Columbia University, graduated in 1884. Their architectural style was heavily influenced by their studies in Paris. Both men were hired out of school by the office of McKim, Mead & White and, in 1885, they founded their own firm.

The firm's earliest commissions were churches and hotels in Saint Augustine, Florida, designed for the famous developer and partner in Standard Oil, Henry Flagler. Their early hotels include the Ponce de Leon (1888) in St. Augustine, the Laurel-in-the-Pines (1889-90) in Lakewood, New Jersey, and the Hotel Jefferson (1893-94) in Richmond, Virginia. The majority of their significant work was in New York City, but they were responsible for the House and Senate Office Buildings (1906) in Washington, D.C. and Woolsey and Memorial Halls (1906) at Yale University.

Carrère & Hastings designed a wide variety of building types. They introduced the French Beaux Arts-style townhouse to New York City with the Richard Hoe House (1892, 9 East 71st Street, demolished) and the Dr. Christian A. Herter House (1892, 819 Madison Avenue, part of the Upper East Side Historic District), influencing a generation of urban residential building.<sup>31</sup> Early, important houses include the Henry T. and Jessie Sloane House (1894-96, now the Lycée Français) at 9 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and the John Henry and Emily Vanderbilt Sloane Hammond House (1902-03, now the Russian Consulate) at 9 East 91<sup>st</sup> Street. The versatile firm designed the Globe Theater

(now the Lunt-Fontanne Theater, 1909-10) at 203-17 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street and First Church of Christ, Scientist (1899-1903) at 1 West 96<sup>th</sup> Street. All of these buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

The firm won the competition for The New York Public Library Main Building in 1897. This monumental Beaux Arts-style building was a major influence on early twentieth-century Beaux-Arts architecture in New York. The firm proceeded to design fourteen classically-inspired Carnegie branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island from 1904 to 1929. Five of their six branches in Manhattan have survived: the George Bruce, Epiphany, Hudson Park, Muhlenberg, and Washington Heights Branches.

While Thomas Hastings was said to be the firm's main designer, John Carrère had an interest in urban planning, writing *City Improvement from the Artistic Point of View* in 1908. Many of the firm's commissions involved planning and siting, such as Grand Army Plaza, the Manhattan Bridge Approach, and the Staten Island Civic Center.

Carrère & Hastings were active and influential in the architectural profession, both served as directors of the American Institute of Architects and both were elected Fellows. Carrère was a director of the American Academy in Rome and member of the Beaux Arts Society, the New York City Art Commission and Federation of Fine Arts. Hastings was president of the Architectural League of New York. John Carrère died in an automobile accident in 1911 and Thomas Hastings continued the work of the firm, which included the remaining Carnegie libraries and the Standard Oil Building (1920-26, with Shreve, Lamb & Blake) at 26 Broadway and the Cunard Building (1917-21, with Benjamin Wistar Morris) at 25 Broadway (both designated New York City Landmarks).

### The Design of the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church<sup>32</sup>

Mindful of the colonial and Revolutionary heritage of the Fort Washington neighborhood, Thomas Hastings in his design for the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church created what church historians described as “a modern replica of an old New England meeting house transplanted to Washington Heights,” featuring “a beautiful tower of authentic American Colonial design.”<sup>33</sup> These American antecedents — basilican plan churches with gabled roofs, temple-fronted entrance porticos, and lofty stepped towers decorated with classical ornament — ultimately derive from the parish churches created by Sir Christopher Wren for the City of London following the Great Fire of 1666. For almost 150 years English architects refined and expanded on Wren's ideas creating and publishing designs for churches, which in turn inspired eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century American church builders. In designing Fort Washington Presbyterian, it appears that Hastings was broadly influenced by American Colonial prototypes such as St. Michael's Church, Charleston, South Carolina (1753-61), St. Paul's Chapel, New York City (1764-68, tower, James Lawrence, 1794, a designated New York City Landmark) and the First Baptist Meeting House, Providence (1774-75). More particularly, Hastings seems to have drawn on the designs of the eighteenth century English architect James Gibbs, notably his paradigmatic St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the inspiration for St. Paul's and for many other iconic Colonial churches, and his St. Mary-le-Strand. Gibbsian elements at Fort Washington Presbyterian include the plan, which derives from St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The free-standing entrance portico with giant columns supporting a pediment is also a feature of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, although at Fort Washington there are only four columns, set closer to the building façade. The giant pilaster order, which aggrandizes the entrance vestibule of Fort Washington Presbyterian and distinguishes it as a separate space, is, perhaps, based

on the decorative articulation of the vestibule at St. Martin-in-the-Fields with its combination of pilasters and engaged columns. The balustraded parapet set above the cornice of the entrance vestibule at Fort Washington Presbyterian is a design element employed by Gibbs at both St. Martin-in-the-Fields and at St. Mary-le-Strand. The keyed enframements setting off the three main entrances at Fort Washington Presbyterian are employed for the door and window surrounds at St. Martin-in-the-Fields and are used so extensively on other Gibbs buildings that they are commonly known as a Gibbs surrounds. The closest quotation from Gibbs seems to be in the decorative treatment of the second stage of the tower with its paired pilasters framing a bracketed arch and free-standing corner columns, which is almost identical to the decorative treatment of the second stage of the tower at St. Mary-le-Strand. The third stage of the Fort Washington tower with its circular clocks crowned by a curved pediment, seraphim head and swag decorations, volutes and urns, seems to rework elements from the towers of both St. Martin-in-the-Fields and St. Mary-le-Strand, while the tapering crown and domical cap terminated by a fleche also seem to be adapted from St. Mary-le-Strand. Finally, one other late English Georgian church, Thomas Hardwick's St. John's Wood Chapel, London (1814), with its shallow central portico of four columns and two-story façade featuring trabeated entrances at the first story and round-arched windows at the second story, probably was an inspiration for Fort Washington Presbyterian.<sup>34</sup>

Thomas Hastings began drawing on the Wren-Gibbs tradition in his designs for the First Church of Christ, Scientist, employing the bold massing, massive stonework, and some details from the churches of the English Baroque architect Nicholas Hawksmoor, notably his St. Mary Woolnoth (1716-27) and Christ Church Spitalfields (1714-29), both in London. In 1903 Hastings also produced an unexecuted design for the chapel at the United States Military Academy at West Point in which a Gibbsian tower with a four-columned portico served as a frontispiece for a centrally-planned auditorium. The design mixes French eighteenth-century-inspired Beaux Arts motifs, characteristic of the majority of Carrère & Hastings work, with English Georgian features and is noteworthy as the first instance in which Hastings utilized the second stage of the tower of Gibbs' St. Mary-le-Strand as a model for a church design. In designing Fort Washington Presbyterian, Hastings may also have drawn on French eighteenth-century sources, particularly Jean-Francois-Thérèse Chalgrin's St-Philippe-du-Roule, Paris (1768-75), which has a four-columned Doric portico that is very similar in proportions to the portico at Fort Washington Presbyterian and is enriched with mutules on the pediment and cornice like the cornice and pediment at Fort Washington. Moreover, the molded surrounds with projecting lintels and sills employed for the larger windows of the West 174<sup>th</sup> Street facade, which do not appear to be based on English sources, are very similar to the window enframements employed for the side elevations of St. Philippe-du-Roule. Nevertheless, as Mark Alan Hewitt and his co-authors observed in their monograph on Carrère & Hastings, Fort Washington Presbyterian was the "most literal representation [of the] Wren-Baroque churches of London and their Colonial New England counterparts" that the firm had produced to that point.<sup>35</sup> In 1915-16, Hastings again melded French and English eighteenth-century forms in his design for the Colton Chapel at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. Here, he reiterated the basic form of his design for the chapel at West Point, joining a stepped tower to a centrally-planned auditorium. At Colton Chapel Hastings replaced the free-standing portico of his earlier design with a recessed arched entry flanked by columns inspired by the portal of Claude-Nicholas Ledoux's Hôtel d'Hallwyl, Paris (1766). The top three stages of the tower are copied directly from Fort Washington Presbyterian. Hastings was known for his tendency to restudy and rework designs until he was satisfied with them; that he copied a design so closely suggests that he himself was exceptionally



pleased with his work at Fort Washington Presbyterian. During the 1920s Hastings produced two more churches drawing on Georgian prototypes — Central Presbyterian Church in Montclair, New Jersey (1922) and the Congregational Church of Wellesley, Massachusetts (1922-23). Following architectural trends in the late 1910s and 1920s, “which stressed patriotic architecture and American cultural heritage,”<sup>36</sup> these red brick and limestone churches, with their tall tapering spires, are related to Federal-period American models, such as the First Church of Christ (the Center Church), New Haven (Ithiel Town, 1812-14) the First Church of Christ, Hartford (the Center Church, 1806), and St. John’s Chapel, New York City (John McComb, 1803-07, demolished 1918-19), although they share some common features with Hastings earlier Georgian churches, particularly Fort Washington Presbyterian.

At Fort Washington Presbyterian, Hastings drew on eighteenth century prototypes, particularly the Gibbs churches, to produce a design that was uniquely his own.<sup>37</sup> The church is an imposing structure notable for its broad simple massing and carefully-modulated refined detailing, which emphasizes linear effects while creating a decorative play of light and shadow. A model of urban church planning, it incorporated the then most up-to-date structural techniques, including steel-framing, concrete slab construction, fireproofing, and metal window sash for the large windows. Its facades were clad with a fashionable buff-colored brick, a material not generally available before the late nineteenth century, but here laid in Flemish bond with a light-colored mortar to enhance the Georgian character of the building. The buff-colored Indiana limestone ornament was given a “rubbed finish” and the roofs, above fireproof clay tiles, were clad with copper (cladding replaced) to add to the historic quality of the design. In general the proportions of Fort Washington Presbyterian are taller and heavier than in its Georgian models. This is particularly true of the beautifully sculpted and detailed bell tower which rises “to almost three times the height of the church itself.”<sup>38</sup> The tower’s height, together with the church’s siting near the crest of a hill, on a view corridor from Broadway, gives the tower a dominating presence on the skyline of Washington Heights. At the same time the church’s monumental facades contribute greatly to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

### Fort Washington Presbyterian Church<sup>39</sup>

Fort Washington Presbyterian’s first minister, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Hoffman Martin (?-1920), was a graduate of Union Seminary who had previously served as pastor to churches in Newark and Glens Falls, New York, and published several books on theology. Dr. Martin believed in the value of publicity and advertising and his sermons and the activities of his church were widely reported in the newspapers of the day.<sup>40</sup> Under his leadership Fort Washington Presbyterian gained 800 new members between 1914 and 1917 and the church “was crowded every Sunday.”<sup>41</sup> As Washington Heights was continuing to grow at a phenomenal pace with “scores of new apartment houses”<sup>42</sup> under construction, in 1916 Dr. Martin convinced the Presbytery to organize a daughter church, Fort George Presbyterian Church, at St. Nicholas Avenue and West 186<sup>th</sup> Street.

In 1919, Dr. Martin was badly injured in an automobile accident and died of his injuries in January 1920.<sup>43</sup> In February, 1920 Fort Washington Presbyterian called the Rev. Dr. John McNeill (1854-1933), a Scotch clergyman who began his career ministering to the poor in Edinburgh and came to the United States to preach at the Columbian Exposition in 1893.<sup>44</sup> A famous evangelist and missionary, Dr. McNeill preached on all five continents and held pastorates in Scotland, England, Canada, Denver, and Alabama, prior to coming to Fort Washington Presbyterian. He

remained with the church for four-and-one-half years and during those years his preaching often filled the church to capacity and his activities received wide press coverage.

During Rev. McNeill's pastorate, in October 1923, with the mutual consent of both churches, West Park Presbyterian ended its affiliation with Fort Washington Presbyterian. At that time West Park deeded the church property and the adjoining vacant lot at the southeast corner of Wadsworth Avenue and West 175<sup>th</sup> Street to Fort Washington Presbyterian. In addition it turned over to the church \$36,000 in securities as the nucleus of an endowment fund.<sup>45</sup> Rev. McNeill's successor, the Rev. Dr. Wesley Megaw (1890-1973), was born in Northern Ireland and educated at the Assembly College, Belfast, and Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, and had ministered to churches in Toronto and Ottawa before being called to Fort Washington Presbyterian in June 1925.<sup>46</sup> Dr. Megaw considered himself a fundamentalist, but "believed in modern applications of fundamentalism."<sup>47</sup>

He conceived the church as a vital force in solving modern social and economic problems. He advocated church support of labor and the application of Christian principles in government and business. [He urged] Presbyterians to become more active in the movement for equal rights, [saying] "Toleration is not enough for the church. We have to go far beyond toleration to understanding."<sup>48</sup>

During the Depression, under Rev. Megaw's leadership, Fort Washington Presbyterian quickly converted its basement into a dining room to provide hot meals to the unemployed, earning Distinguished Service Medals from the New York Presbytery in 1931 and 1932. Once the New Deal was passed, the church continued to offer assistance to those not eligible for government assistance.

With the construction of the City-owned IND, the George Washington and Tri-Borough Bridges, Washington Heights became more accessible, and middle class residents flocked to the neighborhood. The 1930s brought many European immigrants and ethnic diversity to the neighborhood. By 1938, when the Fort Washington Presbyterian celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, its membership was constantly changing although its numbers remained fairly constant. A commemorative history published at that time noted that Fort Washington Presbyterian "has drawn a cosmopolitan audience which at one time or another has embraced men, women, and children from every country on the globe. All are welcome without regard to race, color or creed."<sup>49</sup>

During World War II and the 1950s, Fort Washington Presbyterian continued its community service programs. Dr. Megaw remained as pastor until 1953, and was an influential clergyman whose sermons were widely covered in the press.<sup>50</sup>

In 1953 Dr. Megaw accepted a call from the West End Presbyterian Church where he continued to serve until 1967. Subsequent pastors at Fort Washington Presbyterian included the Rev. Waldo H. Kilhlstrom (1958-?),<sup>51</sup> and the Rev. Donald Doss (1960-61). By 1963 when the congregation held a dinner dance to celebrate the church's fiftieth anniversary, Fort Washington Presbyterian was beginning to experience shortfalls in its budget as members died or moved away and were not replaced due to the changing demographics of Washington Heights. These trends accelerated in the 1970s, and in 1982, the congregation decided to disband. Desiring to continue the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Washington Heights, they turned over their building to the *Primera Iglesia Española de Washington Heights*.

### *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights*<sup>52</sup>

On April 25, 1948 in response to a request by sixty Puerto Rican Presbyterians who desired to form a church under the Presbytery, a service of organization was held at the Second United Presbyterian Church, Audubon Avenue and West 172<sup>nd</sup> Street, establishing *La Primera Iglesia Española de Manhattan* (First Spanish Presbyterian Church of Manhattan). The services were conducted by the congregation's newly appointed minister, the Rev. Herminio Pérez, with sermons by the President and Field Secretary of the New York Missions Society and prayers by the Moderator of the Presbytery of New York. With the Puerto Rican population of Washington Heights expanding rapidly, the church grew quickly. By 1949, it was holding services three days a week. In the 1950s, a chorus, Men's, Women's, and Missionary Societies were established. The church supported Puerto Rican charities without regard to denomination and Rev. Pérez became a spokesman for the New York Presbytery on Puerto Rican issues.<sup>53</sup>

In 1956 the Congregation of the Second United Church ceded its sanctuary to the Spanish congregation. The following year, in recognition of the establishment of additional Spanish Presbyterian congregations in Manhattan, the Spanish congregation voted to change its name to *Primera Iglesia Española de Washington Heights* (First Spanish Presbyterian Church of Washington Heights). Rev. Pérez fell ill in 1957 and between 1957 and 1960 the church was served by several pastors in a variety of capacities, including the Rev. Carlos Amado Ruiz, a former member of the Consultative Council of Evangelical Churches in the Dominican Republic, who served the *Primera Iglesia Española* from 1958 to 1960 as a "Stated Supply" pastor (a minister appointed by the Presbytery to perform the functions of a pastor in a church which is not seeking an installed pastor). At that time the church was receiving financial assistance from the Presbyterian Progress Program of the New York Presbytery.<sup>54</sup>

In 1960 the church extended a call to the Rev. Guillermo Cotto-Thorner, a well-known writer and minister, whose "religious writings in Protestant periodicals were reprinted throughout Spanish-speaking communities in the United States and Latin America."<sup>55</sup> Cotto-Thorner was also the author of *Trópico en Manhattan* (1951), a landmark novel documenting the Puerto Rican experience in New York in the post World War II period, and he wrote extensively for New York newspapers, such as *Liberación* and *Pueblos Hispanos*, espousing Puerto Rican independence and a variety of causes. A noted preacher, his tenure at the *Primera Iglesia Española* was considered particularly fruitful for the church. Following Rev. Cotto-Thorner's retirement from the ministry in 1968, the Rev. Diego Rico Soltero served as interim pastor.

The Rev. Erasmo Reina was installed as pastor in March 1968. Previously president of the Dominican Evangelical Church, Rev. Reina was considered a great administrator and a minister well aware of the needs of his congregation and the community. Under his administration the church finally reached the point of being a self-sustaining institution.

In 1978, after ten years of service, Rev. Reina resigned for reasons of health and became pastor emeritus. The Rev. Hipolito Meléndez was named Moderator of the Consistory and the Rev. Idalisa Fernández became part-time pastor. A renowned champion of Women's Rights, who served as director of the Hoboken Family Planning clinic from 1973 to 1990, Rev. Fernández was responsible for arranging for the *Primera Iglesia Española* to take over this building in 1982.<sup>56</sup> At that time the building's name was changed to *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights* (Fort Washington Heights Presbyterian Church) to acknowledge the dual histories of its congregations. Rev. Fernández served as pastor for almost ten years and was one of the founders of Operation Exodus Inner City, Inc., an enrichment program for youths, which is still affiliated with the church.

Upon Rev. Fernández's resignation as pastor, the Rev. Julio García was appointed interim pastor and Moderator of the Consistory. In December 1989, the Rev. Michael Doménech Del Pilar was installed as full-time pastor. He resigned in 1991. The Reverend Alvin Padilla was then named "Stated Supply" pastor and remained with the church until 1997 when he resigned to take a position with the Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary in Boston. From 1997 to 2002 the Rev. Miriam Shelton served as Moderator of the Consistory. The Rev. Amparo (Amy) Mendez was installed as Pastor in 2002 and remained with the church until 2004. Following her, the Rev. Luis Espinosa was Moderator of the Consistory. In June 2006 the Rev. Carmen M. Rosario, "one of the first Hispanic women to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA),"<sup>57</sup> was called to the church as temporary "Stated Supply" pastor and Moderator of the Consistory. Currently (May 2009), she continues to serve as pastor.

Today Fort Washington Presbyterian, now *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights*, continues to function both as a church and a vital part of its community.

### Description

Fort Washington Presbyterian Church is located at the northeast corner of Wadsworth Avenue and West 174<sup>th</sup> Street on a square lot measuring 100 feet by 100 feet. The portion of the lot occupied by the Sunday School wing is not included in this designation. The metal picket fence surrounding the church is non-historic.

The neo-Georgian church is a two-story plus basement basilican-plan gable-roofed building with a monumental temple-fronted entrance and prominent steeple rising in five steps on Wadsworth Avenue. Constructed with a steel frame, concrete slabs, and brick bearing walls, the church is faced with tan brick laid in Flemish bond set off by Indiana limestone ornament, including elaborate keyed enframements for the three main entrances on Wadsworth Avenue, molded and bracketed window surrounds, and pilasters that articulate the principle facade and the side walls of the entrance vestibule. Both facades are capped by full Doric stone entablatures, which are enriched with mutules. Stone balustrades extend above the Wadsworth Avenue facade and the western end of the West 174<sup>th</sup> Street facade. Much of the stone trim on the lower portions of the church has been painted with non-historic white paint to conceal graffiti. The church retains its large multi-light metal window sash and smaller multi-light wood sash but a number of the historic window lights have been lost. The stepped tower has brick walls, stone cornices, and is elaborately embellished with classical motifs. It retains much of its original detailing, however, cracks in the masonry due to weathering and lack of maintenance has caused damage to the tower's underlying steel supports and stone veneer.

**Wadsworth Avenue Façade:** The Wadsworth Avenue façade is articulated into five bays. The center and end bays are entrance bays and are approached by low stone stoops. Stone plinths extend across the base of bays 2 and 4 (reading south to north). These plinths support a projecting portico with four free-standing giant Tuscan Doric columns and a pedimented gable. Paired Tuscan Doric pilasters frame the corners of the façade and pilaster responds are set behind the outer portico columns. The three entrances are framed by Gibbs surrounds. A molded cornice caps the center surround acting as a belt course between the first and second stories. Simpler belt courses and fielded brick panels articulate bays 2 and 4. At the second story, the three round-arched windows have molded stone surrounds with prominent keystones and projected bracketed sills. The section of the crowning cornice above the portico is enriched with triglyphs and guttae and the raking cornices of the pediment are embellished with mutules. There is considerable staining on the tympanum of

the pediment due to water penetration. The three entrances retain their historic paneled wood doors and paneled wood transoms. The second-story windows have their original wood multi-light sashes and some but far from all of their historic tinted stippled glass panes. There is a historic bronze plaque reading “The Fort Washington Presbyterian Church” at the center of bay 2. The cased metal and glass message board/sign affixed to the bricks between the pilasters at the southern end of bay 1 is non-historic.

**West 174<sup>th</sup> Street Façade:** The West 174<sup>th</sup> Street façade is divided into three sections: the projected western bay, which forms the side wall of the southern stair hall, the five-bay-wide center section that extends along the south wall of the church auditorium, and the recessed eastern bay that forms the south wall of a one story room originally used as the minister’s study, then sets back at the second story following the angled south wall of the chancel.

The basement of this façade is faced with ashlar stone blocks, which have been painted. A low (now painted) limestone socle extends along the base of the first story. The upper portion of the façade is faced with buff brick laid in Flemish bond and trimmed with limestone. Tuscan pilasters resting on projected plinths frame the corners of the western bay. There is a single flat-arched window, which lights the staircase landing between the first and second stories. It has a projecting stone sill and prominent fielded stone keystone. The window retains its original ten-over-ten wood sash. A non-historic banner identifying the church as the *Iglesia Presbitereriana Fort Washington Heights* is attached to the wall with hooks. This portion of the façade is capped by a balustraded parapet that matches the parapet on the primary façade.

The mid-section of the façade is articulated into five bays. The basement is lit by square headed windows with splayed lintels. The windows are largely below grade but become more visible as the site slopes downward to the east. Extending in front of the windows is a narrow light well, which retains its original granite curbs and cast iron grates. Most of the grates are covered by non-historic wire mesh. The basement windows retain their original multi-light metal sash. In the easternmost of the five window bays, the top portion of the upper sash is concealed behind non-historic infill. A narrow metal pipe extends from the base of the window to the middle of the basement wall.

Above the basement, the tall square-headed windows that light the double-height auditorium have molded surrounds with bracketed sills and cornices supported by scrolled brackets. The windows retain their original multi-light metal sashes. These are divided into fixed upper and lower sashes each containing eighteen lights and central operable paired casements, each containing nine lights. Large non-historic exterior storm glass panels have been installed to protect the windows.

The one-story plus basement study-wing originally had a basement doorway to provide access for ash and trash removal that has been sealed. At the first story the east bay is pierced by a single window that is similar in design but smaller than the window at the west end of the façade. It also retains its original ten-over-ten wood sash. The first story is capped by a molded cornice and a brick parapet with limestone coping. At the second story the crowning entablature continues as it angles around the rear wall of the nave and the northeast and north walls of the chancel, however, the mutules decorations are confined to the nave. Above the entablature the wall continues as a brick parapet, which is coped with stone.

**North elevation:** The Sunday School is set back from the church creating a fenced and paved courtyard with a staircase leading down to a basement entry. The portion of the church’s north wall, extending along the side of the north stair hall, is visible. This façade is articulated to match the west bay of the West 174<sup>th</sup> Street façade. Like that façade it has a limestone socle set above a stone base,

is faced with brick set in Flemish bond, is framed by corner pilasters, and is capped by a full entablature. The flat-arched window retains its original ten-over-ten wood sash windows.

**The Tower:** Largely a brick bearing wall structure incorporating some steel transfer beams and reinforced concrete floors, the tower rises in five stepped stages that are generally rectangular in plan. The lowest level is treated as a brick plinth decorated with stone copings, recessed stone panels, and a stone cornice. There are several cracks and a piece has broken off the stone panel on the north façade. The stone cornice has many open joints.

The second stage is a tall arched bell chamber with paired Corinthian pilasters, stone archivols and scrolled brackets setting off the arches and free-standing Corinthian columns surmounted by entablature blocks. The louvers that fill the arched openings appear to be non-historic but replace original louvers. A conditions report on the tower prepared in 2008 noted that the top stone blocks of the cornice had shifted slightly out of plane and that there had been some separation movement between the brick and the northwest stone column.

The third stage has clock faces on all four sides of the tower set off by curved stone pediments, scrolled volutes, angel heads with decorative swags. Flaming stone amphorae are set above the projecting stone columns at the corners of the second stage. The conditions report notes that exterior brick of this stage of the tower is in good condition; however, “there is a large spall on the stone veneer of the east side. Due to rusting of underlying steel there is a wide continuous horizontal crack below the beams indicative of uplifting. There is also a crack on the west wall above the clock. There are also large vertical cracks on the east wall and at the corner of the north wall.

The fourth stage consists of open brick arches with chamfered corners faced with stone pilasters with scrolled volutes. The exterior brick and arches remain in good condition but the stone veneer at the chamfered northeast corner has buckled. The crosses in the openings were not original to the design but were in place by the 1930s and historically have been illuminated

The fifth stage consists of stone dado with chamfered corners which forms the base for a domical cap which appears to retain its original copper cladding. The stone façade appears to be in good condition although there is evidence of interior water damage.

**Roof:** The building’s original standing seam copper roof has been replaced with a non-historic metal roof. The tall buff-brick chimney located near the east corner of the roof is visible from West 174<sup>th</sup> Street.

Report researched and written by  
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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This section on the early history of Fort Washington is based Reginald Pelham Bolton, "The Defense and Reduction of Mount Washington, Manhattan Island in *Fort Washington* (New York: Empire State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1902), 50- 54 ; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Fort Tryon Park Designation Report* , prepared by Jay Shockley and Sherene Baugher (LP-1417), (New York: City of New York, 1983); Robert W. Snyder, "Washington Heights," *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 1242; James Riker, *Revised History of Harlem* (New York: New Harlem Publishing Co., 1904), New York County, Office of the Register, Block Indices, sec. 8, block 2143, "General Statement of Early Title."

<sup>2</sup> Bolton, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Remains of Indian habitation have been documented on the south side of Inwood Hill, at Jeffrey's Hook, and south of West 181<sup>st</sup> Street between Kingsbridge Road (Broadway) and the Hudson bluff. See Bolton, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Snyder, 1141.

<sup>5</sup> New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, 58, 489-499. For Kenyon see also Riker, 819.

<sup>6</sup> Conveyances, Liber 57, 354; Riker, 819-820.

<sup>7</sup> For Gerardus Post see LPC, *F.W. Devoe & Co. Factory Designation Report* (LP-2308) (New York: City of New York, 2008), prepared by Christopher D. Brazee, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ancestry.com, *1820 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2004), New York City, Ward 1, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Conveyances, Liber 106, 261.

<sup>10</sup> For the Jumels see James E. Mooney, "Elizabeth [nee Brown; Bowen] Jumel," and "Stephen Jumel," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 609; William H. Shelton, *The Jumel Mansion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916).

<sup>11</sup> This information comes from Ken Moss, Executive Director of the Morris-Jumel House Museum.

<sup>12</sup> For this period of Washington Height's development see Snyder, 1141; Robinson, 1879.

<sup>13</sup> Proquest searches of the *New York Times* for "Fort Washington" and "Washington Heights" return multiple hits beginning in the early 1850s.

<sup>14</sup> Conveyances, Liber 1731, p. 403.

<sup>15</sup> Conveyances, sec 8, Liber 26, p. 280.

<sup>16</sup> On the rapid development of the Fort George neighborhood see "Citadel of Apartment Houses Rising on Fort George Hill, *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1924, RE1.

<sup>17</sup> Conveyances, sec 8, Liber 32, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Conveyances, sec 8, Liber 31, 431; sec 8, Liber 34, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Conveyances, sec 8, Liber 40, 17; sec 8, Liber 42, 300.

<sup>20</sup> This information on Presbyterianism in New York City is drawn from David E Meerse, "Presbyterians," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 937-38; Theodore Fiske Savage, *The Presbyterian Church in New York City* (New York: Presbytery of New York, 1949); J.F. Richmond, *New York and Its Institutions* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1871), 147-48; Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King, 1893), 365-69.

<sup>21</sup> Meerse, 937.

<sup>22</sup> This history of West Park Presbyterian is based on *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church: Twenty-five Years of Service* (New York: Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, 1938); *Centennial of the One Hundredth Anniversary of West Presbyterian Church and Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Park Presbyterian Church* (New York: West Park Presbyterian Church, 1929); King's, 367; "Thomas Samuel Hastings," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, v. 7, 317-18; "Dr. Paxton's Successor," *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1895, 9; "Resigns the Pastorate," *New York Times*, March 14, 1899,

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8; "Vote Sustains Dr. Evans," *New York Times*, Apr. 7, 1899, 14; "Famous Old Church to Close Its Doors," *New York Times*, March 13, 1911, 3; "To Build Skyscraper Near Times Square," *New York Times*, March 31, 1911, 5;

<sup>23</sup> King's, 367.

<sup>24</sup> According to the *New York Times* the church was sometimes spoken of "as the Millionaires Gate to Heaven. "Famous Old Church to Close Its Doors," 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church*, 50-51.

<sup>26</sup> "Famous Old Church to Close Its Doors," 3. See also "'God Had Made Up His Mind,' Pastor Says in Story of Founding of Uptown Church," *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1938, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Docket 51-1913. Charles T. Wills, Inc. was one of the city's most prominent construction firms in New York, responsible for such notable structures as the Montauk Club (1189-91, Francis H. Kimball), Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Place, Brooklyn; Judson Memorial Church (1888-93, McKim, Mead & White), 51 Washington Square South; Presbyterian Building (1894-95, Rowe & Baker), 156 Fifth Avenue; American Surety Co. Building (1894-96, Bruce Price), 100 Broadway; University Club (1896-1900, McKim, Mead & White), 1 West 534<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers (1896-97, Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz), 220 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. (The Montauk Club is located within the Park Slope Historic District, the Presbyterian Building is located within the Ladies' Mile Historic District, and the other buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.)

<sup>29</sup> Information in this section adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch Designation Report*, prepared by David Breiner (New York: City of New York, 1995), 4; with additional information from Channing Blake, "Carrère & Hastings" in Adolf Placzek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 387-88; "The Works of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings," *Architectural Record* 27 (January, 1910-120); David Gray, *The Architecture of Thomas Hastings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933); "John Mervin Carrère Obituary," *New York Times*, March 2, 1911, 9; Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1970), 109-110; 269-271. For additional information on the firm see also Mark Alan Hewitt et al., *Carrère & Hastings Architects* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Information in this section adapted from: Margot Gayle and Michele Cohen, *The Art Commission and Municipal Art Society Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture* (New York: Prentice Hall Press 1988), 192-193.

<sup>31</sup> Information in this section adapted from: Robert A.M. Stern, et. al, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 325-329.

<sup>32</sup> On the design of the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church see Hewitt et al, v. 2, 194-197; Stern et al., 113; Jean-Pierre Isbouts, "Carrère & Hastings: Architects to an Era" (Ph D thesis, Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden, 1980), 141-149; David Dunlap, *Abyssian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Contemporary publications included "The Fort Washington Presbyterian Church," *Architecture and Building* 46 (Mar. 1914), 116-117; "West Park Presbyterian Church," *Brickbuilder* 24 (Dec. 1915), pls. 168-171; "The Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, New York City," *American Architect*, 111, n. 2164 (Jun. 13, 1917), pls. 368; Richard F. Bach, "Architecture," *A Compendium of the World's Progress for the Year 1914*, ed. Frank M Colby (New York: Dodd Mead & Co, 1915), 50; Richard F. Bach, "Church Planning in the United States," *Architectural Record* 40 (Dec. 1916?), 531.

<sup>33</sup> *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> This comparison was suggested at the public hearing by Annice Alt in her testimony in support of the designation of Fort Washington Presbyterian Church.

<sup>35</sup> Hewitt et al, v. 2, 194.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 2, 199.



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<sup>37</sup> The *Brickbuilder* in describing Hastings' working methods observed that "from whatever source he gleans an inspiration ... he penetrates the spirit of his chosen example and saturates himself with its character before he translates it into a new creation which has become a part of himself." "As He Is Known: Brief Sketches of Contemporary Members of the Architectural Profession," *Brickbuilder* 24 (Dec. 1915), 315.

<sup>38</sup> Stern et al, 113.

<sup>39</sup> This history of Fort Washington Presbyterian Church is based on *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church; Centennial of the One Hundredth Anniversary of West Presbyterian Church and Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Park Presbyterian Church*; and the newspaper articles cited below.

<sup>40</sup> For example see "Salvation Army Sunday," *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1916, 18; "Fight Denounced in Many Pulpits," *New York Times*, Mar. 27, 1916, 11; "Elkus Guest at Luncheon," *New York Times*, Jul. 21, 1917, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Percival H. Barker, "The Church That Is in New York," *New York Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1917, 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> "To Unveil Tablet to Dr. Martin," *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1920, 13.

<sup>44</sup> For Rev. McNeill see "To Call Dr. John McNeill," *New York Times*, Feb 16, 1920, 10; "Dr. John McNeill Here," *New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1920, 9; "Dr. John McNeill Begins Pastorate," *New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1920, 29; "Churches Lend Pastors," *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1922; "Rev. John M'Neill, Evangelist, Dies," *New York Times*, Apr. 20, 1933, 17.

<sup>45</sup> In 1926, Fort Washington sold the vacant lot applying most of the \$70,000 proceeds to the endowment fund except for \$15,000, which was used for alterations and improvements to the church and Sunday School.

<sup>46</sup>For Rev. Megaw see "Canadian Pastor Called," *New York Times*, Jun. 24, 1925, 14; "Dr. Megaw to Occupy Pulpit Today," *New York Times*, Sep. 27, 1925, E4; "New Pastor Installed," *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1925; "Pastor Seeks His Son Through Radio Plea," *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 1940, 25; "Minister's Son Home; Missing Two Months," *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1941, 21; "Pastor to Assist Son's Ordination," *New York Times*, Jun. 21, 1941, 18; "Completes His 15<sup>th</sup> Year In New York Pastorate," *New York Times*, Jul. 27, 1950, 16; "Dr. Megaw Is Honored," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1950, 37; "Dr. Megaw Chosen Presbytery Head," *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 1950, 21; "Accepts Calls to Pastorate of West End Presbyterian," *New York Times*, Mar. 10, 1953, 19; "Dr. Wesley Megaw, 82, Pastor of West End Church, Is Dead," *New York Times*, Apr. 15, 1973, 61.

<sup>47</sup>"Dr. Wesley Megaw," 61.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> *Fort Washington Presbyterian Church*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> "Today's Services in City's Churches," *New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1927, E4; "Dr. Megaw Pleads for Pioneer Spirit," *New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1930, 23; "Megaw Denies Talk of Peace Is 'Treason'," *New York Times*, Jun. 23, 1941, 20; "Romance in Little Things," *New York Times*, Jun. 30, 1941, 30.

<sup>51</sup> "New Pastorate Is Opened," *New York Times*, Sep. 8, 1958, 21; "Ft. Washington Church Installs New Minister," *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1958, 33; "Religious Services," *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1959, 16.

<sup>52</sup> This history of the Hispanic Congregation and the *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights* is based on Celestino Ruiz and Rev. Carmen M. Rosario, "Breve Reseña Histórico Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights" [courtesy of Rev. Rosario, copy available in the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Fort Washington Presbyterian Church Research File]; First Spanish Presbyterian Church of Manhattan, "Minutes of Sessions, 1948-1970 in the archives of the Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights.

<sup>53</sup> See "Puerto Ricans Get Pledge by Lehman," *New York Times*, May 14, 1950, 24; Preston King Sheldon "Youth Conference Opens Next Friday," *New York Times*, Aug. 27. 3, 1949, 14.

<sup>54</sup> "Six Wise Men Bear Epiphany to City," *New York Times*, Jan 4, 1960, 42. On the New York Presbytery's outreach to Puerto Rican community during this period see Meerse, 938; John Wicklein, "Presbyterians Push Integration in City,"

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*New York Times*, Jan. 26. 3, 1959, 1, 20; John Wicklein, "Sanctuary Opens in Labor Temple," *New York Times*, May 10, 1959, 75.

<sup>55</sup> Nicolás Kanellos, Kenya Dworkin y Méndez, and Alejanda Balestra, *Herencia: The Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 56. For Cotto-Thorner see also Academic Commons, Kim Sanabria "Tropico en Manhattan": Una fotografía literaria de la comunidad puertoriquena en Nueva York mediados del siglo veinte," @ <http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/ac/handle/10022/AC:P:6817>.

<sup>56</sup> For Idalisa Fernández see Hoboken Family Planning, Inc. *Healthlength* 1 (Sept. 2002), 4; Cat Garlit Bucher, "Going Out With Joy to Share and Serve: Encuentro Gathers Hispanic Latina Presbyterian Women," Presbyterian Church (USA), *Presbyterian News Service*, July 31, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Emily Enders Odom, "Hope for the Church – The Reverend Carmen Rosario," @ <http://www.pcusa.org/prep4min/rosario.htm>.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 Fort Washington Presbyterian Church has a special character and 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 Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, built 1913-14 to the designs of Thomas Hastings of the firm of Carrère & Hastings as a daughter church to West Park Presbyterian Church, is an imposing neo-Georgian building, notable for its broad simple massing and carefully-modulated refined detailing; that Thomas Hastings was the surviving partner in one of the leading architectural firms in the United States, which had a nationally important reputation for its church designs; that Hastings had a personal affiliation with project, since he was the son of the distinguished clergyman, the Rev. Doctor Thomas S. Hastings, who had been pastor of West Presbyterian Church, one of the two churches that merged in 1911 to create West Park Presbyterian Church; that mindful of the colonial and Revolutionary history of the Fort Washington neighborhood, Hastings drew on eighteenth century models, particularly the churches of the English architect James Gibbs, to produce a richly embellished design that was uniquely his own; that this basilican-plan church features a temple-fronted Doric entrance portico with four monumental stone columns and an unusually lofty, beautifully sculpted tower embellished with classical motifs; that the building is clad with buff-colored brick laid in Flemish bond and trimmed with Indiana limestone given a “rubbed finish” to enhance the Georgian character of the design; that the church’s Georgian-inspired decoration includes keyed enframements for the three main entrances on Wadsworth Avenue, molded and bracketed window surrounds, pilasters which articulate the principle façade and sidewalls, stone balustrades, and multi-light windows; that the tower’s height, together with the church’s siting near the crest of a hill, on a view corridor from Broadway, gives the tower a dominating presence on the skyline of Washington Heights while the church’s monumental facades contribute greatly to the architectural character of the neighborhood; that Fort Washington Presbyterian remained affiliated with West Park Presbyterian until 1923 and in turn was the mother church for Fort George Presbyterian on St. Nicholas Avenue at 186th Street, established in 1916; that Fort Washington Presbyterian was served by a number of well-respected clergymen and prided itself on its “cosmopolitan membership drawn from every corner of the globe” and a notable history of community service; that in 1982 Fort Washington Presbyterian’s congregation ceded its church to the *Primera Iglesia Española de Washington Heights*, a Hispanic congregation established in Washington Heights in 1948, which had been a voice for the Puerto Rican community in New York and had been led by such distinguished pastor’s as Rev. Guillermo Cotto-Thorner and Rev. Idalisa Fernández; that following the Hispanic congregation’s acquisition of the building its name was changed to *Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights* (Fort Washington Heights Presbyterian Church) to acknowledge the dual histories of its congregations; and that it continues to function both as a church and a vital part of its community.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, 21 Wadsworth Avenue (aka 21-27 Wadsworth Avenue, 617-619 West 174<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2143, Lot 38, in part, excluding the Sunday School as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice Chair

Frederick Bland, Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioner



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
21 Wadsworth Avenue (aka 21-27 Wadsworth Avenue, 617-619 West 174<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*

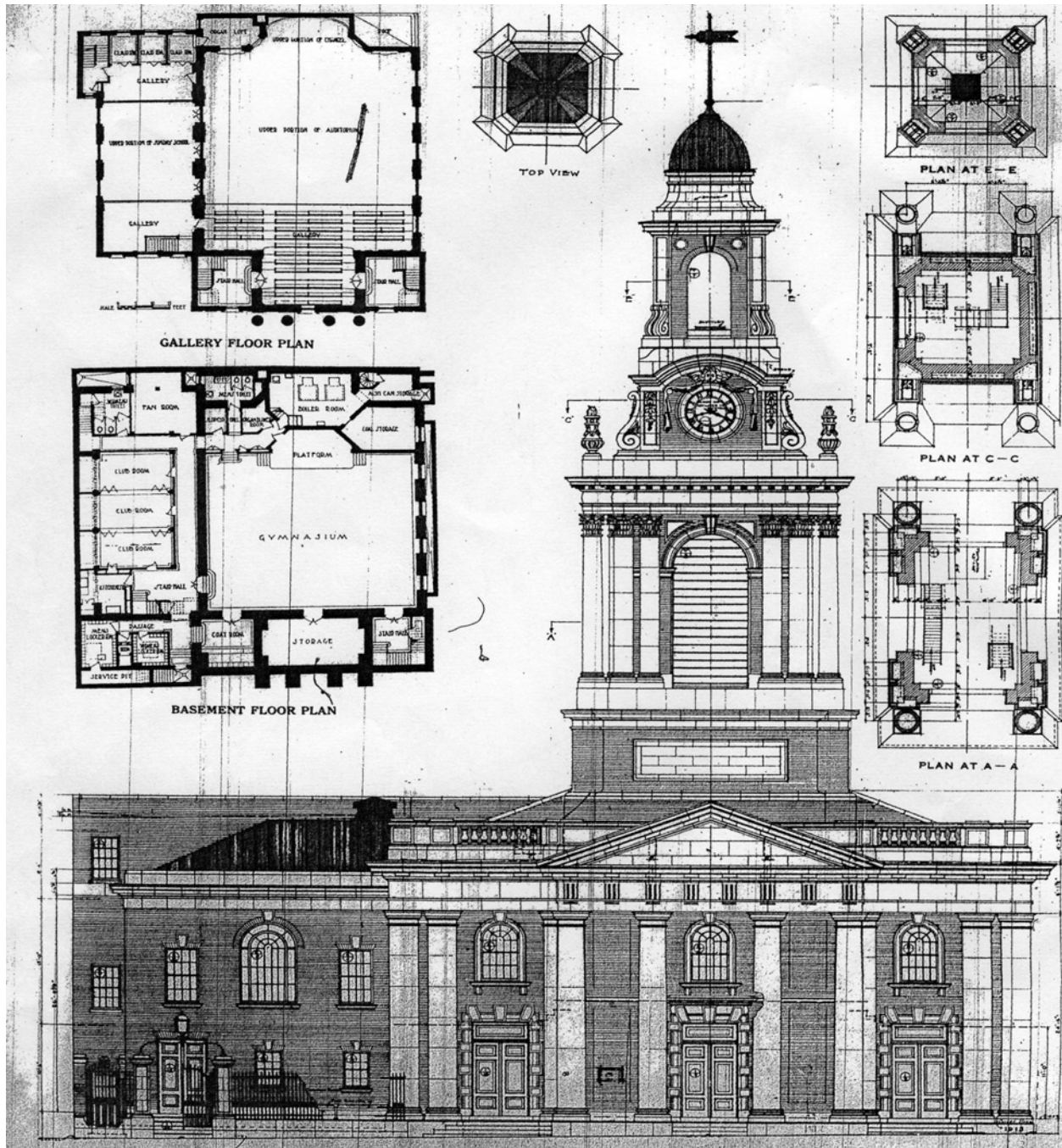


Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Historic Photograph, c. 1915



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Wadsworth Avenue Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*





Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
 Façade elevation and plans  
 Source: Brickbuilder, December 1915





Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
West 174th Street Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Window details  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*





Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Wadsworth Avenue Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Tower

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Tower

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*





Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Tower details  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church  
Tower

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



FORT WASHINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (LP-2337), 21 Wadsworth Avenue (aka 21-27 Wadsworth Avenue; 617-619 West 174th Street).  
Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 2143, Lot 38 in part, excluding the Sunday School.

Designated: May 12, 2009