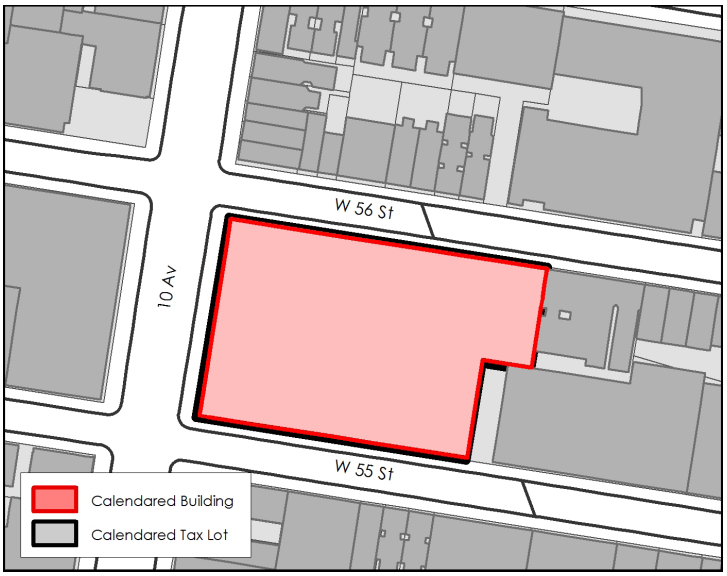
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Backlog Initiative: Addressing 95 Properties
Manhattan A Group 1 Items

Mission of the Immaculate Virgin West

448 West 56th Street, Manhattan
Manhattan Block: 01065; Lot: 0001

Manhattan Community Board 4
Public Hearing Date(s): No Public Hearing,
Calendared 5/12/2009



Photos 2009

Special Public Hearings

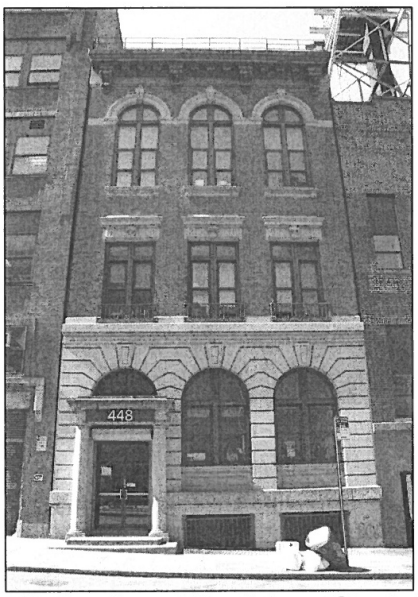
The Landmarks Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the backlog of buildings in the Borough of Manhattan on **November 5, 2015** and encourages interested parties to submit written testimony in advance of that hearing. Each speaker will be given three minutes total to speak, and in that time may address all of the items within Manhattan A Group 1, just particular items, or add comments to support written testimony. In order to conduct efficient hearings, we ask speakers to register in advance, and submit their written statements and materials that will be read at the hearing by **October 29, 2015** to backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov. If you are unable to attend the hearing, your written submissions will be entered into the record and distributed to the Commissioners.

If you have questions about this property or the hearing process please contact backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov or call (212) 669-7817. If you would like more information about this property, please see the research file summary (over) and go to our website (http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/backlog95) and click on the link for this building's research file.

Mission of the Immaculate Virgin West Description Landmark Type: Individual
Built: 1903
Architect: Schickel & Ditmars
Style: Beaux-Arts

Research Staff Calendaring Statement (2009)

MISSION OF THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN
(448 WEST 56TH STREET)
BOROUGH OF THE MANHATTAN



448 West 56th Street is a three-story, three-bay red-brick and limestone building completed in 1903 for the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, a Catholic charity founded c. 1870 by Irish immigrant and Catholic priest John C. Drumgoole (1816-1888). Designed in the Beaux-Arts style by the firm of Schickel & Ditmars, the building was originally used as a boys' club.

During the 1870s and 1880s in New York, Catholic charities began to assume a greater role in municipal poor relief efforts, especially those aimed at children. According to one historian, "by 1885 nuns were rearing over 80 percent of the city's dependent youths and had won effective control of the metropolitan child care system."[1] Catholic priests like Father John Christopher Drumgoole also took leadership in poor relief. Drumgoole founded the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin in the 1870s, with a chapel and boys' home at the northeast corner of Lafayette and Great Jones Streets in what is today NoHo. The stated purpose of the mission was to provide temporary and permanent shelter, food and clothing for dependent boys; and to provide secular and religious education. Father Drumgoole gained considerable recognition for the work of the Mission, becoming known as the "friend and protector of children of the street."[2]

For the mission's Midtown branch, architects Schickel & Ditmars designed a modestly scaled civic building distinguished by an elegantly proportioned Beaux-Arts scheme. The building's rusticated limestone base with off-set entry portico is balanced by a plain brick façade on the second and third floors punctuated by an ordered rhythm of square and round-arched windows under elaborate lintels; a denticulated, pressed-metal cornice with four consoles crowns the building. Schickel & Ditmars were responsible for two individually designated New York City Landmarks –the Renaissance Revival-style Church of St. Ignatius Loyola at 980 Park Avenue (1895-1900) and the Beaux-Arts-style Baumgarten House at 294 Riverside Drive (1900-1901)– as well as many buildings in the Madison Square North, Greenwich Village, Upper West Side-Central Park West, Ladies' Mile, Expanded Carnegie Hill, and the Tribeca West Historic Districts. They also designed a number of buildings for Lenox Hill Hospital, the successor to the old German Hospital on the Lower East Side.

Since the mid-1990s, 448 West 56th Street has housed part of the High School for Environmental Studies.

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[1] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace. *Gotham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1161.
[2] "Cared for the Gamins," undated newspaper clipping, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, New York Public Library.