Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 30, 2006, Designation List 385
LP- 2165

CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS (ROMAN CATHOLIC), PARISH HOUSE AND SCHOOL, 47 East 129th Street (aka 50-52 East 130th Street, and 2041-2053 Madison Avenue, 41-45 East 129th Street), Manhattan.
Church, built 1883-86 and 1889-1893, Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell, architects.
Parish House, built 1886-89, Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell, architects.
School, built 1902-04, William W. Renwick, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1754, Lots 20 and 24.

On September 21, 2004, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, Parish House and School and its related Landmark site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were twenty-one speakers in favor of designation, including the legal representative of the Archdiocese of New York, Councilmember Bill Perkins, Congressman Charles Rangel, Former Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Gene Norman, the pastor of the Church, Rev. Neil O'Connell, the Chairperson of Community Board 9, numerous parishioners and representatives of various organizations including, Landmarks West, the Victorian Society, the Landmarks Conservancy, the Municipal Arts Society, the Morningside Heights Historic District, the Society for the Architecture of the City, and the Historic Districts Council. There was one speaker opposed to designation and three speakers who did not take a position. In addition the Commission has received a letter from New York State Senator David Patterson in support of designation. The Commission previously held a public hearing on this church on June 14, 1966.

Summary

The Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, with its lively and animated design and exceptionally fine ornament, was created by one of New York's leading nineteenth century architects, James Renwick, Jr., of the firm of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell. Among the many churches he designed during his long career, the Church of All Saints has been called his best.[1] Constructed over the course of several years, the church (1883-93), parish house (1886-89) and school (1902-04) formed an important anchor for the rapidly expanding Harlem neighborhood when they were built, and continue that role today. Renwick, architect of the original Smithsonian building in Washington, designed many of New York City's most beautiful and well-known churches, including Grace Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Church of All Saints is his most fully evolved Italian Gothic Revival style design, an unusual stylistic choice for a late nineteenth century church in New York. The building displayed the texture, shape and color variations that were so important during that period due to the influence of the writings of John Ruskin. The facades of All Saints combine the mixed tones of light and dark brick, terra cotta and stone, with an assortment of window shapes and sizes in a building which is both spirited and inspiring. The neighboring parish house displays elements of the Venetian Gothic Revival style, with its stone balconies pierced by pinwheeling designs, and its narrow windows topped by filled gothic arches. The school building, located north of the church along 130th Street and completed several years later by Renwick's nephew, William W. Renwick, displays a simpler version of the Gothic Revival style, with plain brick wall surfaces juxtaposed with light-colored stone and areas of elaborate terra-cotta ornament.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Development of Harlem[2]

After the Civil War the population of New York increased dramatically, and development spread uptown. Although the New York and Harlem Railroad had begun to run trains and horsecars from lower Manhattan to Harlem in 1837, the trip was slow and unreliable. By 1881, three lines of the elevated railroad, along Second, Third, and Eighth Avenues as far north as 129th Street, created new neighborhoods for development. The introduction of electric cable car service in 1885, on Amsterdam Avenue and along 125th Street, made Harlem even more accessible. Many residential and institutional buildings were constructed, lining the area's newly paved avenues and streets. Rows of brownstones and exclusive apartment houses seemed to appear overnight and speculators and developers made fortunes from the large numbers of New Yorkers who wanted to live in this more open, suburban area. Many elegant homes, such as those developed by David King as the King Model Houses (1891, St. Nicholas Historic District) on West 138th and 139th Streets and Astor Row (1880-83, 8-62 West 130th Street, designated New York City Landmarks) helped establish Harlem as a fashionable community, while banks, businesses and cultural institutions added to the area's appeal.[3] Realtors and newspapers predicted that it would become one of the finest neighborhoods in the city.[4]

History of All Saints Church[5]

As the population in Harlem increased, so did the need for more religious facilities to serve the neighborhood, since many residents of the area came originally from Ireland and Italy. In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the Church of All Saints was among seven Catholic parish churches that were constructed (or altered) in central Harlem to meet the religious needs of the burgeoning immigrant population in the area.[6]

The area was a large one however, so that even as rural tracts and big estates began to be developed, there were still large open spaces. In 1879, New York's Cardinal John McClosky created a new parish incorporating the blocks between Eighth Avenue and the East River, from 124th Street to 150th Street on the east side, and 124th and 130th Streets on the west side.[7] The congregation of this parish first met in the abandoned streetcar barns located at Third Avenue and 129th Street. The Reverend James W. Power, who had been serving at St. Theresa's Church on Rutgers Street in Manhattan, was appointed rector of the new church. After several months, the congregation moved to Lincoln Hall, at 129th Street and Fourth Avenue, a site that they used for two years. In 1882, the site of their services was again relocated to the old Harlem Courthouse and Market, at 125th Street near Third Avenue.

The property at 129th Street and Madison Avenue, which would eventually be the site of the new church, was transferred by Cardinal McCloskey to the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints in 1882.[8] The architectural firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell was hired to create a design for the new building, and the foundation stone was laid in 1883. By 1886, a basement chapel was completed and the congregation met there for the next several years. Raising money for the new structure was difficult and slowed the construction of the church, which was not resumed until 1889. By that time, the local population had soared and the church had 5,000 members.[9] Finally, on December 10, 1893, there was an elaborate dedication ceremony for the new church, presided over by Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan. Local critics called the structure "one of the handsomest in the city."[10]

During the break in the church construction, the same architectural firm designed and built the rectory, located just to the east of the church.[11] It served as home to Rev. Power who led the church until his death in 1926. He oversaw the founding of a church school for boys and one for girls in 1900, and the construction of the school building located just to the north of the church, on the corner of 130th Street and Madison Avenue. It was designed by James Renwick's nephew, W. W. Renwick and built between 1902 and 1904.[12] The schools were run by the Sisters of Charity and the Christian Brothers of Ireland, as Rev. Power and many of the parishioners were of Irish origin.

The bell in the large tower was dedicated on September 13, 1908 in a ceremony led by Right Reverend Bishop Thomas F. Cusack from the Archdiocese of New York. The bell, which was inscribed "Queen of All Saints, pray for us" symbolized the important role of the church and its many services to its neighborhood. During the 1920s and 30s, the population of the area changed from Irish to African-American and although other area parishes were losing population, the fine reputation of All Saints school helped maintain its membership. In the early 1950s, there was a sharp increase in the black population in Harlem generally and particularly at All Saints. Urban unrest of the mid 1960s brought a sudden and steep decline in church membership and a threatened school closure, which ultimately did not happen. At that time and under the leadership of Msrg. Gerald Mahoney, the church also began to attract Hispanic members through the development of a Spanish Mass.

The Church of All Saints has continued its long tradition of serving the religious, educational and social needs of its parishioners as its Harlem neighborhood has undergone drastic social and economic changes. In 2004 the congregation celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding.

Architects

James Renwick, Jr. (1818-1895)[13] was one of the most renowned New York architects of the nineteenth century. In his numerous church designs, he was a sophisticated practitioner of the nineteenth century Gothic Revival style, as it evolved from its Ecclesiological beginnings to the picturesque Victorian version. Never "much of a purist," as Montgomery Schuyler described him,[14] Renwick was also comfortable working in the Romanesque Revival, Italianate or "modern French" styles. In addition to ecclesiastical designs, Renwick's large body of work includes numerous institutional buildings, such as museums and hospitals, as well as private homes.

James Renwick, Jr. was born into a wealthy and influential American family; his mother was a descendant of the Brevoort family, while his father was a successful merchant and engineer, and later professor of physics and chemistry at Columbia College. James Jr. was educated as an engineer at Columbia College, graduating in 1836, and then received a master's degree in 1839. His early experience was as an engineer on the Erie Railroad and then as supervisor of construction of the Distributing Resevoir of the Croton Aqueduct system. In 1843, at the age of 24, James Renwick, Jr. received the commission to design Grace Church (1843-1846, 800 Broadway, a designated New York City Landmark). This white marble church and rectory complex shows the influence of French medieval churches and is said to be the earliest American church to have a cruciform plan. Other church designs by Renwick in New York City followed, including the French-inspired Romanesque revival style Church of the Puritans (1846-47) and its contemporary Calvary Church (1846-47, located within the Gramercy Park Historic District), patterned after the twin-towered French cathedrals but executed in brownstone. Near the middle of his career, Renwick received the commission for St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue (1858-69, a designated New York City Landmark). The front was based on the many twin-towered, triple portalled cathedrals in Europe, such as Rheims, Amiens and Cologne, while English cathedrals provided the source for the nave design.[15] After this project, Italian Gothic and Romanesque buildings began to be more of a source for Renwick's designs and he used a variety of "richly colored, highly textured materials providing dazzling polychromatic effects." More concerned with a synthesis of form and fabric than stylistic purity, in the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church, Renwick set round-arched Romanesque windows into a Gothic Revival style building (1854-55, Brooklyn), while in his Church of the Covenant (1863-65) he used stone of alternating colors to outline the arched window openings, with a rose window and gables at all the roof terminations. At St. Bartholomew's Church (1871-72, a designated New York City Landmark) Renwick lavishly used polychromy inside and out in a style that has been described variously as "Lombardo-Gothic," "Byzantine," and "Italian Romanesque." St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn (1868-69, a designated New York City Landmark) is an exemplary version of the finely-detailed, elaborately decorated High Victorian Gothic style advocated by John Ruskin. The brownstone walls are contrasted strongly with white stone bands which give a distinctly horizontal emphasis to the design. The Church of All Saints is in this same tradition.

In addition to ecclesiastical work, Renwick supplied designs for numerous types of buildings executed in a wide variety of styles. Among these, the most well-known of Renwick's work is the symmetrical, Gothic Revival style Smithsonian Institution building in Washington, D.C., for which he won the design competition in 1846. Inspired by the work on the new Louvre in Paris, he worked in the Second Empire or "Modern French" style to create the Corcoran Gallery in Washington (1859-61 and 1870-71), later renamed the Renwick Gallery, where he was able to fully integrate the complex decorative and spatial characteristics of the new style.[16] His residential work included a Romanesque Revival style house for his parents on lower Fifth Avenue (demolished), a simple Gothic style cottage (West Haven, Connecticut, 1851), the elaborate mansarded Greystone in Riverdale (for William E. Dodge, 1863-64, a designated New York City Landmark), and an Italianate townhouse at Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street (1881-83, for Almy and Frederic Gallatin, demolished). Among his many other designs were several Italianate style hotels from the 1850s (all demolished), the Renaissance Revival style main building of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY (1861-65), and two structures on Blackwell's Island (Lighthouse 1872, and Smallpox Hospital,1854-56, both designated New York City Landmarks).

As Renwick's architectural practice expanded, especially with the increase in commercial commissions, he could no longer complete all the work himself. In 1858 he joined in partnership with Richard Tylden Auchmuty and two years later he partnered with Joseph Sands. Sands died in 1880 and in 1883 Renwick promoted his wife's cousin, James Lawrence Aspinwall and William H. Russell to partnerships in the firm, which became Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell. Aspinwall (1854-1936), born in New York City, probably studied under French architect/engineer L. Colian, and had entered Renwick's office as a draftsman in 1875.

William Whetten Renwick (1864-1933),[17] a nephew of James Renwick, Jr., was born in Lenox, Mass., graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology in 1885 after studying mechanical engineering, and entered the office of his uncle as a draftsman. He was admitted as a junior partner in 1890, and the firm became Renwick, [James Lawrence] Aspinwall & Renwick in 1892. After the senior Renwick's death in 1895, it changed to Renwick, Aspinwall & [Walter T.] Owen, with Aspinwall as senior partner.

In his uncle's office, William Renwick had participated in the design and decoration of several churchs, including All Saints. In his independent practice after 1900, he specialized in ecclesiastical architecture and decoration. Among his major commissions were St. Aloysius (1902-04); All Saints Roman Catholic Church School (1902-04), Grace Church south porch and open-air pulpit (1910), and alterations to the Chantry (1879, Edward T. Potter); and the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, Indianapolis. He is credited with developing the process of "fresco relief," a type of mural decoration which combined both bas-relief sculpture and painting. All Saints Church has two of these murals, installed in 1918.[18]

Gothic Revival Architecture

By the mid-nineteenth century in America, most people believed that "Gothic architecture is, in the highest sense, the only Christian architecture."[19] Whether based on English, French, German or Italian precedents, Gothic forms had become the standard for church building in the United States.

This came about due to a confluence of several trends, most notably the popular writings of a group of Anglican religious leaders at Oxford University who formed the Cambridge Camden Society. Writing as part of the Ecclesiological Movement in England in the 1830s, this group advocated "a reform movement in the Anglican Church which called for a return to traditional medieval forms both in ritual and church building" as a response to an increasing secularism within society.[20] In design this meant that anything associated with the previous (eighteenth century) classic period was rejected in favor of nostalgia for an earlier, simpler, and "truer" time, the medieval era, including buildings and furniture in the Gothic style.[21] According to these theorists, the art and architecture of a particular period became associated with the society that created it, such that the "architecture of an age illustrates its inner nature, strengths and weaknesses, and that the architect may influence, for good or bad, the lives of those around him."[22] Thus art and architecture came to have associations over and above their basic function and these symbolic values took on a dominant role. Roman designs could be acceptable for civic buildings and Greek architecture could be used for courthouses and other buildings associated with democratic institutions. Egyptian designs suggested permanence and were used for jails, and Gothic was for religious buildings.

These ideas traveled rapidly across the Atlantic, where they were immediately accepted. Between 1840 and 1845, of the 10 major churches constructed in the United States, nine were in the Gothic Revival style, including Richard Upjohn's Church of the Ascension (1840-41, 36-38 Fifth Avenue, located within the Greenwich Village Historic District), Christ Church, (1840-41, corner of Clinton and Kane Streets, Brooklyn, located within the Cobble Hill Historic District) and Trinity Church (1839-46, Boadway at Wall Street, a designated New York City Landmark).[23] While many of these churches (including Trinity) reflected the Ecclesiologist's ideal of the English parish church, James Renwick's Grace Episcopal Church was an elaborate expression of the later, Decorated Gothic period and showed the influence of the writings of English architect A.W.N. Pugin.[24] Trinity and Grace Churches were extremely influential on subsequent church design and helped promote the English doctrine. Both Upjohn and Renwick were prolific architects, who designed many churches in variations of the Gothic Revival style, and whose work was widely known and emulated. Although Renwick's earliest designs were more historically accurate, through study and travel abroad he was exposed to work beyond England. He began to incorporate the influences of many different historical precedents and combined them in original ways or made them more elaborate such as the twin-towered St. Patrick's Cathedral.

After mid-century, American designers were less bound by religious doctrine and developed a greater emphasis on picturesque designs, accomplished by a mixing of forms, shapes, materials and textures on a single building.[25] The writings of English critic John Ruskin helped establish the legitimacy of works from other countries beyond England as sources of inspiration, especially Italy, with a resulting interest in polychrome and more elaborate surface decoration.[26] With time, designers worked to ensure that the detailing of a building in a revival style be historically accurate, while combining these details in new and unique ways. Thus "Christian" architecture, associated with the Gothic Revival style, was contrasted with the "pagan" classical traditions.[27] This was especially true of denominations such as Episcopals and Roman Catholics who wanted to emphasize their differences from more evangelical sects. Catholics also needed to adapt the plans of their churches to their particular liturgical needs, which were different from those of the early English churches. This historical melding of styles, planning, and details can be seen in Renwick's last work, the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints,

where he used a plan and surface decoration inspired by twelfth century Italian Gothic churches, combined them with façade details from other locations and eras, and adapted the ensemble for placement on an urban American streetscape, all the while still evoking the religious sentiments intended by the use of the Gothic style.

Roman Catholic Church of All Saints

A compact structure facing on a narrow side street, the Church of All Saints is a dramatically massed building, with forms derived from numerous sources. According to an article by Montgomery Schuler, it was designed by James Renwick, Jr. in 1875, and finely detailed later by Renwick's nephew under his supervision.[28] Renwick's design for the church shares many similarities with the Italian Gothic cathedrals at Sienna, Orvieto, and Florence but it is rendered in more modern materials, rather than multi-colored stone, and is scaled to fit onto a New York street corner. Like the churches at Sienna and Orvieto, the front façade of All Saints has a tripartite division, but the New York church has a single, central entrance set in a molded, pointed archway instead of the three doors of the Italian churches. They all have a large, central traceried rose window above the main entrance. In all of them, the three gabled bays are flanked by narrow piers topped by spires (although the spires were removed on All Saints). The Italian churches have lively facades composed of multi-colored stone and diverse ornamentation. On All Saints Church, the facades have different colors of brick, terra cotta and stone. The gables are faced with terra-cotta panels and projecting stars, and the horizontal bands are either flat or projecting, all working to enhance the textural diversity of the façade. The architectural terra cotta which faces the gables, as well as the spires, the mullions in the rose windows, and other decorative niches and string courses was manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company.[29] Renwick began using architectural terra cotta as a recognizable building material beginning in the 1850s and promoted its use well before it was clearly accepted by many of his fellow architects.[30]

Along the nave, the church sets back one bay to a series of round clerestory windows, a very unusual motif on American churches. There are precedents however, in churches in Florence and Bologna, as well as the English Southwell Collegiate Church.[31] The rose window on the front facade has been compared to that in certain French churches, including Reims and Clermont Ferrand.[32] The stained glass in the church was created by Franz Mayer of Munich, a company started in 1847 in Germany by Joseph Gabriel Mayer as the Institute for Christian Art Works. In 1888, they opened a branch in New York to promote their business which had become world-wide.[33]

The arms of the transept extend in a multi-angled bay to give further variety and picturesqueness to the side facade. The tower, which is located next to the crossing, originally had a tall, hipped roof and four narrow pinnacles, as on the Siennese cathedral, although the proportions are much shorter. It does retain its horizontal banding, a simplified version of the campanile of the church at Sienna.

To the east is a five story rectory. Two bays wide, the entrance is reached by stairs on the eastern bay to a non-historic doorway. The stone and terra-cotta balconies of the second and third stories are fronted by unusual designs which evoke turning wheels. These balconies, as well as the narrow, pointed-arch windows on the second and third stories, and the dormers recall Venetian town houses but with more original details.

The school, which was built several years later and was designed by Renwick's nephew William, continues the Gothic Revival style, but in a simplified, more orderly arrangement. The brick is lighter, and there is more use of plain stone bands. The ornament consists of many similar motifs to those on the church, including the terra-cotta quatrefoil motifs and the geometric light brick designs inset in the brick piers. It is more limited in its application however and is confined to specific areas on the Madison Avenue façade, and above the windows and doors of the first story of the 130th Street façade. There are also several instances of the "triangular gable flanked by narrow spires" motif which is used throughout the church. The terra-cotta moldings in ropes and foliate designs used around the main entrance on Madison Avenue are the same as those William Renwick used on St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church on 132nd Street, which he had designed at the same time.[34] A highly embellished screen was built along Madison Avenue, in front of the apse, to connect the church to the new school. Composed of terra-cotta arches on a stone lintel, with a central niche, this area uses many of the same decorative motifs to create a visual as well as a physical link between the two buildings.

The school originally extended for four bays along 130th Street, but in 1907, an increasing enrollment created the need for a larger building. An addition was designed by the architectural firm of Neville & Bagge, which had its offices nearby on 125th Street. This architectural partnership was established in 1892 and lasted through the 1920s. They were an extremely prolific firm, known for their apartment and row house designs, which were familiar throughout the Upper West Side, Morningside Heights and Harlem.[35] They added the fifth bay on 130th Street and extended the building back toward the rectory, which is not visible from the street. This bay is similar to the others on130th Street, but has only three windows instead of five, is set off by flanking piers, and

extends up through five stories instead of four. A fifth story was also added along the southern half of the roof. This is barely visible over the church but is made evident by the copper screen of gothic arches at the top of the wall.[36]

Description[37]

Church: The church building fronts onto East 129th Street and extends north along Madison Avenue. Designed in a cruciform plan, the nave and western transept are visible on Madison Avenue, as is the tower, which is located over the crossing. The building retains almost all of its original façade material and details except that the tower and the four spires of the front elevation have been truncated. The building is faced primarily in dark, ironspot brick, with stone, terra-cotta and light brick ornament. Flat bands and string courses of terra cotta ring the building, creating horizontal divisions. The church sits on a raised basement faced with Manhattan schist in a random ashlar pattern and topped by a stone water table. The large basement windows, across open areaways, have brick arches and have been sealed closed. Two historic iron fences, one on each facade, separate the areaways from the sidewalk. The steeply pitched roof is covered with slate and has copper gutters, downspouts and ridgeline.

The *129th Street* façade is divided into three bays, each flanked by four narrow piers that were originally topped by openwork spires. Each pier is now finished by a sheet metal cap with a hipped roof. The piers are distinguished by sting courses and geometric designs of light-colored brick that are embedded on each of their facades. The two piers closest to the center are taller than the outer ones and near the top of each façade of the taller piers there originally were two lancet openings which are now enclosed by bricks.

A short flight of stairs leads to the main entry portal in the center bay. The double wooden doors and transom are intricately carved and deeply recessed beneath a heavily molded entrance porch. Small, non-historic metal and glass light fixtures flank the entry. The arch is framed by a gothic hood resting on stone columns and filled with terra-cotta sexfoils. Terra-cotta crockets emerge from both angles of the hood, which is also crowned by an elaborate extended cross at its peak. Behind and just above the projecting hood is a blind arcade that runs across the central bay. This is topped by a large, traceried rose window featuring sexfoil shapes within it and in its spandrels. The center bay is crowned by a triangular pediment faced with light brick studded with projecting terra-cotta stars and edged in dark brick. In the center of the gable is a grille in an ovoid-shaped opening, framed by terra cotta. Crockets enhance the edges of the pediment, which is crowned by another cross.

The two side bays are identical. On the ground story is a pair of pointed-arch windows filled with traceried stained glass, set on a projecting string course, and topped by a narrow terra-cotta hood molding. A traceried rose window is located above this, framed by a wheel of alternating sections of light and dark brick. The four spandrels around this window are filled by foliate terra-cotta ornament. At the top of the bay is a triangular pediment faced with terra cotta in a diaper pattern with a Star of David in the center. The pediment is enhanced by crockets and a cross at the peak.

The nave on *Madison Avenue* has five bays, separated by projecting wall buttresses. The lower part of the wall is subdivided by horizontal flat terra-cotta bands and projecting string courses. On the main story, each bay has a large, pointed-arch window filled with traceried stained glass, set on a copper sill, crowned by a taller, triangular hood, enhanced by terra-cotta, quatrefoil ornament. The nave sets back one bay above this level, which is capped by a narrow terra-cotta parapet composed of open quatrefoil motifs. The projecting wall buttresses extend above the roofline and culminate in a four-sided gable ending in a pyramid.

The clerestory windows are round, traceried openings, similar to those in the side bays of the front. They are set within similar light and dark brick enframents with foliate terra cotta in their spandrels. Wall buttresses continue from below and extend with gabled tops above the terra-cotta parapet, similar to that on the level below. A steeply pitched roof rises over the nave with its ridgeline parallel to Madison Avenue.

A gabled entry porch extends from the southernmost bay of the nave, toward Madison Avenue. It is reached by a short flight of stairs that lead to a pair of carved wooden doors. The doors are located within a molded terra-cotta pointed arch set on stone columns. Above the door is terra-cotta quatrefoil ornament and the hood, crowned by a cross. Buttressed piers flank the doorway and are topped by small spires. The gabled end of the porch roof has crockets with an enhanced cross at its crest. The side walls of the porch have two small, pointed arch openings set on a continuous string course. The windows on the southern side have stained glass while those on the northern side have been closed.

Toward the northern end of this façade, the western arm of the transept extends toward Madison Avenue. It is composed of five bays that have similar decorative motifs to those on the nave as well as a similar, steeply, pitched and angled roofline. The terra-cotta parapet and wall buttresses are similar to those on the nave. The two bays, which project at right angles from the nave have round traceried windows at the second story. The three

angled bays closest to the street have tall, pointed-arch windows filled with traceried stained glass, similar to those on the main story of the nave. At the center bay, this window is enriched by a tall, terra-cotta hood and crowned by a triangular gable and a cross. The gable is faced with terra cotta bearing a five pointed star, and the wall buttresses rise above the cornice line to form spires. At the ground story, two angled, projecting bays adjoin the transept close to Madison Avenue. Both elevations of these bays have a small, pointed-arch window and are topped by a gable enriched by a terra-cotta quatrefoil motif and a copper roof. The front bay of the transept holds a terra-cotta niche flanked by buttressed piers with spires and topped by a pointed arch with crockets and other terra-cotta ornament.

North of the transept arm, an angled, multi-bay apse is visible above a highly decorated screen on the ground story. The apse continues the same decorative motifs of tall stained-glass windows in each bay at the clerestory level while beneath it are smaller, stained-glass windows -- two to each bay. Connecting the church to the school building is a screen formed by a series of decorated blind gothic arches in terra cotta set on a waist-high stone string course. At the center is a decorated niche reached by two stairs.

Rising beyond the crossing is the bell tower. Square in plan, it is faced with dark brick but is embellished by several horizontal bands of light brick. Each facade has a large, pointed arch opening and the corner piers are buttresses just above where it meets the church. A plain copper cornice completes the tower, which originally had a pointed roof with spires at each corner.

School: The school building adjoins the church on its northern façade. The main entrance to the school is centrally located on the Madison Avenue façade, and the building extends for five bays eastward along 130th Street where it is fronted by an historic iron fence. It is faced with orange brick highlighted by light stone and terra cotta and is four stories tall with a flat roof. All of the windows have 1/1 aluminum replacement sash. Numerous stone and terra cotta band courses wrap the building horizontally, on both visible facades.

The *Madison Avenue* façade is three bays wide, formed by two pairs of slightly projecting piers, flanking the central bay and on both ends of the façade. The piers are marked by the continuous band courses and cornices that wrap the building, as well as inset light brick geometric designs similar to those on the piers of the church. The facade is symmetrically arranged around a large gothic portal in the center bay. A pair of non-historic doors are set within an ornate enframement and topped by a highly detailed, molded pointed arch. The painted, terra-cotta moldings include twisted columns and foliate designs, similar to those on the front façade of St. Aloysius Church on West 132nd Street. Two delicate, openwork spires arise from the piers that flank the entrance. The recessed bay to the north of the portal is blank, while that to the south holds a small window enframed by terra-cotta molding.

A terra-cotta cornice bearing quatrefoil motifs runs across the façade, above the main portal. A large pointed arch opening filled with several stained glass windows sits atop this cornice. It has a terra-cotta spandrel and is topped by an ornamented, pointed-arch hood. In each side bay is a niche framed by a terra-cotta gable and spire motif that echoes the main entrance and the roof-level pediment.

The front façade is crowned by a terra-cotta cornice above which rises a central gable flanked by two spires. The gable is faced with terra cotta and has a six pointed star in the middle and crockets along the angles. It is crowned by a cross. To each side of this gable, piers rise up above the cornice level. On the southern half of the roof, a copper arcade runs between the gable and the corner pier. The same area on the northern side is enclosed by a wire fence. The copper arcade continues around the corner on the southern façade of the school building. Beneath this cornice the southern façade above the church is mostly blank with a few irregularly placed windows.

The school building is five bays wide along *130th Street*. All of the bays are identical except the easternmost bay. The building, set on a raised basement with segmentally-arched windows, is separated from it by a flat stone band. Each bay of the first story holds three recessed window openings, set on a continuous stone sill and separated from each other by a brick pier with a terra-cotta capital. Each rectangular window opening is topped by a pointed-arch terra-cotta molding filled with terra-cotta quatrefoil ornament. There is a small grille located beneath each window which is framed by a terra-cotta quatrefoil motif. Similar grilles are located in the spandrel areas between the windows, two to each bay.

The second, third and fourth stories have five plain windows in each bay. They are framed by a continuous stone sill and continuous stone lintel above them. Narrow stone piers separate each window, within the bays. Two small grilles are located between each floor. Above the fourth story is a terra-cotta cornice topped by a non-historic iron railing.

The easternmost bay is distinguished by two slightly projecting piers on each side that have light brick designs like those on the piers of the church inset in the darker brick. This bay is narrower than the others, with only three windows per floor, and three grilles between each floor. This bay has a gable-fronted fifth story with a

single window set on a broad terra-cotta band and capped by a highly ornamented terra-cotta arched hood. The angles of the gable are finished by terra-cotta blocks and the flanking piers have copper caps.

The entrance is located on the ground story in the fourth bay from the west. It is comprised of two non-historic metal doors topped by a glass transom painted with the name of the school and fronted by a grille. This entrance is surrounded by a flat rectangular stone enframement with rope moldings and two non-historic light fixtures. Two angels' heads and wings are located at the outside top corners of this enframent, which is also crowned by a cornice. Above this is a small rectangular window set within an elaborate, terra-cotta arch enriched by foliate and quatrefoil motifs and rope moldings, and flanked by small, elaborate spires.

Parish House: The parish house is located just east of the church, facing 129th Street. Two bays wide, it is faced in iron-spot brick, with terra-cotta trim. The entrance is in the eastern bay, reached by two steps up to a wide stoop. The stoop has been refaced, with iron fences atop the side walls. The double, wooden entrance doors are not historic nor is the first story window. Both the window and door are topped by traceried stained glass transoms framed by terra-cotta arched moldings carried on stone columns. The window has a non-historic metal grille in front of it and a non-historic brick wall beneath it. Flat terra-cotta bands run horizontally across the brickwork of the first story. In front of the western bay are steps down to a non-historic basement entrance.

The two windows of the second story are fronted by a continuous balcony carried on brackets. The base of the balcony is stone and the brackets are heavily ornamented terra cotta. The front of the balcony is composed of a series of openwork circles in terra cotta that create the impression of rolling wheels. The two original windows have wood-framed and leaded glass, double-hung sash, with pointed-arch transoms. They are set within vertical terra-cotta moldings creating separate areas above the windows that are faced with light brick. The third story has two windows with separate balconies. The windows are plain glass, wood-framed, double-hung sash and the balcony motifs are circular, but different from those on the second story. A terra-cotta molding in a pointed arch motif rises above each window and is filled by terra-cotta ornament. The vertical moldings continue up from the second story on each side of the windows, reaching to the cornice, and framing light brick sections. Two circular disks faced in marble are located above the windows, near the cornice. Terra-cotta quoins finish the eastern edge of the building, on the second and third stories, along with a rope molding running vertically along the edge.

Above the third story is an elaborate cornice carried on terra-cotta brackets fronted by heads. The cornice is formed of copper-backed foliate swags and other terra-cotta moldings. A steeply pitched roof rises above the cornice. Two hipped-roof dormers are at the fourth story, with a similar one centered above them, at the fifth story. Each dormer is framed by terra-cotta moldings and is comprised of two narrow, double-hung windows separated by an engaged column and topped by pointed arches and terra-cotta quatrefoil infill. The upper dormer is identical but has been painted black. There is a brick chimney on the eastern side of the building and another one which rises from beyond the ridge of the roof. Terra-cotta tiles edge the sides of the roof, which also has copper gutters and ridge cap.

Report researched and written by
Virginia Kurshan
Research Department

NOTES

[1] Montgomery Schulyer, "Italian Gothic in New York," *Architectural Record*, 26 (July,1901), 47.
[2] Adapted from: LPC, *Abyssinian Baptist Church and Community House Designation Report* (LP-1851)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Christopher Moore and Andrew S. Dolkart.
[3] David L. Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 25-29; *History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (1898, reprinted Arno Press, 1967), 94-97, 101.
[4] Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem:The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930* (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), 75.
[5] Unless otherwise noted, the history of the church is taken from various church histories compiled for special anniversaries, and in the possession of the church.
[6] The other central Harlem parish churches are: St. Joseph of the Holy Family (1860; 1871; 1889, Herter Bros.), 405 West 125th Street; Charles Borromeo (1901, George H. Streeton), 211 West 141st Street; Church of St. Aloysius (1902-04, W.W. Renwick), 219 West 132nd Street; St. Thomas the Apostle (1904-07, Thomas H. Poole & Co.), 262 West 118th Street; St. Mark the Evangelist (1907-08, George F. Pelham), 65 West 138th Street; and Resurrection (1908), 276 West 151st Street
[7] "City and Suburban News," *The New York Times* (Sept. 22, 1880), 8.
[8] "Real Estate Notes," *The New York Times* (June 8, 1882), 8.
[9] *The New York Catholic News* (Mar. 3, 1889), 5.
[10] "Blessing of All Saints Church," *The New York Times* (Dec. 9, 1893), 2.
[11] According to *The New York Catholic News* (Dec. 1. 1886), 8, the rectory was built in 1886-87, although church records note that it was completed in 1889. There are no building department records available for this building.
[12] New York City Department of Buildings, NB 88-1902. The extension to the school was designed by the firm of Neville & Bagge and carried out in 1907, on Alteration permit 2372.
[13] Much of the matrerial in this section was taken from "Renwick, James, Jr." by Selma Rattner in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Adolf K. Placzek, ed., Vol. 3 (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 541-548.
[14] *Macmillan Encyclopedia*, 541.
[15]St. Patrick's was intended to be the culmination of Renwick's work in the Decorated Gothic Revival style, including a monumental stone tower over the crossing and the first large masonry vault in the United States. Budget constraints forced him to change or abandon many of his plans. The crossing tower was eliminated and the interior was finished with lath and plaster, rather than stone, making the already-completed buttresses structurally unnecessary.
[16] *Macmillan Encyclopedia*, 543.
[17] Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1979); James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989); W.W. Renwick obit., *New York Times*, (Mar. 16, 1933), 20; Aspinwall obit., *New York Times*, (May 16, 1936), II, 9; Selma Rattner, "James L. Aspinwall," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Vol. 1, 109-110; LPC, *Tribeca West Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1713) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1991); LPC, architects files.
[18] This information is taken from the *All Saints R.C. Church Family and Friends Storybook*, 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Upper Church, Sunday, November 7, 1993.
[19] Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture, An Episode of Taste* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 83.
[20] William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Architects and Their Buildings, Technology and The Picturesque, the Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 152.
[21] Stanton, xvii.
[22] Stanton, 5-7.
[23] Stanton, 56.
[24] Augustus W. N. Pugin, an English designer who converted to Roman Catholicism. His large body of work as well as his writings in the 1830s and 40s, including *Contrasts, Apology* and *True Principles*, had a huge effect on church designs of the period. He promoted Gothic design as the only proper one for Christian architects, denigrating anything deriving from the Italian or Renaissance tradition. He was the first writer to associate the feelings and ideas of the Gothic period with its architecture and wanted to see buildings that would express their structure, rather than disguising it.
[25] Alan Gowans, *Images of American Living, Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression* (NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 288.
[26] Kevin Decker, "Grand and Godly Proportions: Roman Catholic Cathedral Churches of the Northeast, 1840-1900" (Unpublished masters thesis, University at Albany, 2000), 226-27.
[27] Gowans, 306.
[28] Schuyler, 47.

[29] The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co. was established in 1886 by Orlando B. Potter (with Asahel Clarke Geer) after his experience in the construction of his Potter Building (1883-86, Norris G. Starkweather, a designated New York City Landmark), which used extensive architectural terra cotta. The only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City, it became one of the largest such American manufacturers, producing ornament for such New York City Landmarks as Carnegie Hall (1889-91, William B. Tuthill), Montauk Club (1889-91, Francis H. Kimball), West End Collegiate Church and School (1892-93, Robert W. Gibson), Ansonia Hotel (1899-1904, Paul E.M. Duboy), and the Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Henry Hardenbergh). The company's factory was located in Long Island City. The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co. lasted until bankruptcy in 1932. Shortly after its installation on the Church of All Saints, the terra cotta failed and the Church sued the company to have it replaced. "About That Terra Cotta," *The New York Times* (January 9, 1892).
[30] *A History of Real Estate*…, 512-13.
[31] Effingham Humphrey, "The Churches of James Renwick Jr." (Unpublished masters thesis, NYU, 1942), 73.
[32] Humphrey, 74.
[33] Information about the company can be found on their web site, www.mayerofmunich.com.
[34] The moldings on the school building have been painted while those on St. Aloysious are not.
[35] Information about the firm of Neville & Bagge comes from research files at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Examples of their work can be found in the historic districts of Chelsea, Greenwich Village, Carnegie Hill, the Upper West Side, and Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill.
[36] The extent of the alterations was made clear by drawings filed at the New York City Building Department for Alteration 2372 in 1907.
[37] Unless a particular element is noted as non-historic, it should be presumed to be part of the historic fabric.

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 Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, School and Parish House has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

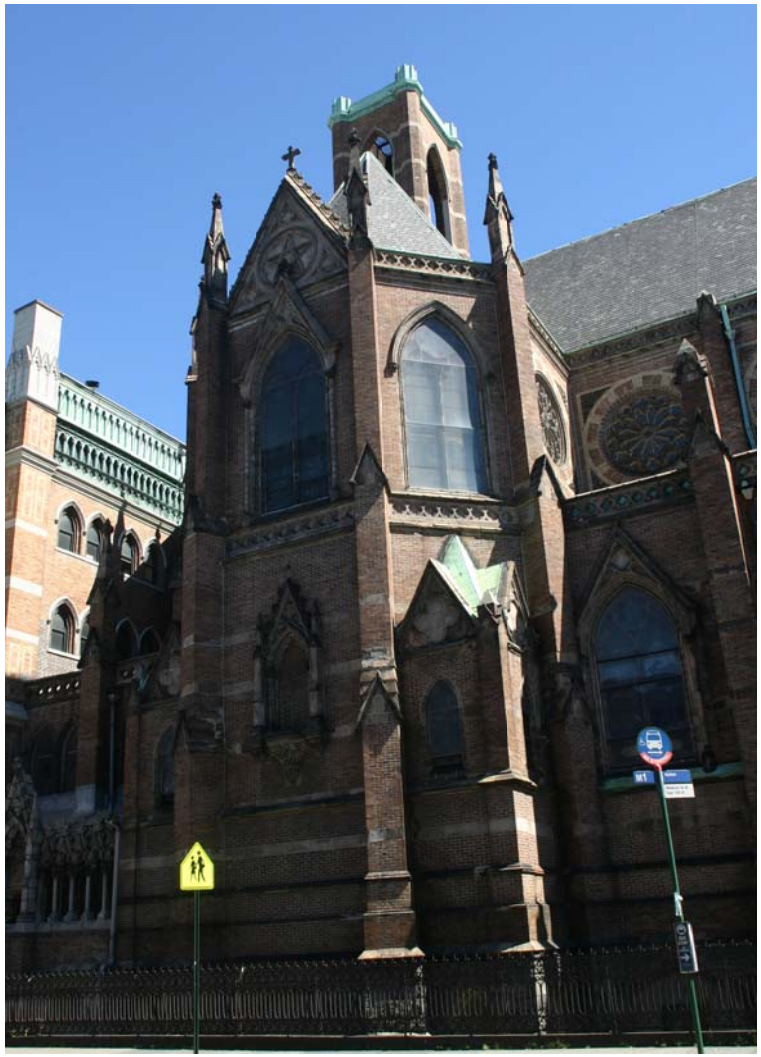
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, designed by James Renwick, Jr. and constructed between 1883 and 1893, is a masterful example of a late nineteenth century Gothic Revival church; that it was designed by one of New York's foremost architects whose numerous church designs included the delicate, marble Grace Church, as well as St. Patrick's Cathedral; that during the course of his career, Renwick was inspired by a variety of medieval sources for his design ideas, which he then used to create elegant and intelligent church designs adapted to the needs of specific congregations; that the design of All Saints Church was one of the last created by Renwick before his death, and the details were elaborated by Renwick's nephew, William W. Renwick who was working in the office at the time; that the design of All Saints has precedents in the twelfth century churches at Sienna and Florence, as well as other Italian and French buildings, with specific arrangements and details adapted to its New York location; that the All Saints parish, one of the first in Harlem, was founded in 1879 in response to the area's growing population; that the parish met in a variety of settings until the church was finally finished in 1893; that Renwick's firm also designed and built a complementary parish house to the east of the church; that the five-story brick and terra cotta building is based on Venetian Gothic designs and features balconies fronted by wheel motifs in terra cotta, and highly ornamented pointed arch windows and dormers; that the congregation, originally composed primarily of immigrants from Ireland, and led by their first pastor, Msgr. James Power, started its own grammar school in 1900, led by the Sisters of Charity and the Christian Brothers of Ireland; that Msrg. Power commissioned a large school building from William Renwick, constructed in 1902-04 which continued the Italian Gothic Revival style of the earlier buildings in a cleaner, less picturesque manner, more suitable to the early twentieth century period; that the church, parish house and school are an exceptionally fine example of a unified ensemble in the Gothic Revival style, using brick, stone and terra cotta in a variety of pointed-arches, spires, rose windows and other medieval motifs; that the construction of these buildings at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was indicative of the vibrancy of the growing Harlem neighborhood at that time; that this church and its high quality school continued to serve its parishioners as the neighborhood changed from predominantly Irish to African-American and later to Hispanic and other local parochial schools closed; and that it continues to be the focus of a strong sense of community in this section of Harlem today.

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 the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints, School and Parish House, 47 East 129th Street (aka 41-45 East 129th Street, 50-52 East 130th Street, and 2041-2053 Madison Avenue), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1754, Lots 20 and 24, as its Landmark Site.

Commissioners:
Robert B. Tierny, Chair
Pablo Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Steven Byrns, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz,
Margery Perlmutter, Thomas Pike, Jan Pokorny

Church of All Saints (Roman Catholic), Parish House and School
47 East 129th Street (aka 50-52 East 130th Street, 2041-2053 Madison Avenue, 41-45 East 129th Street)
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1754, Lots 20 and 24
Graphic Source: NYC Dept. of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003

Church of All Saints
129th Street façade
Photo: Carl Forster

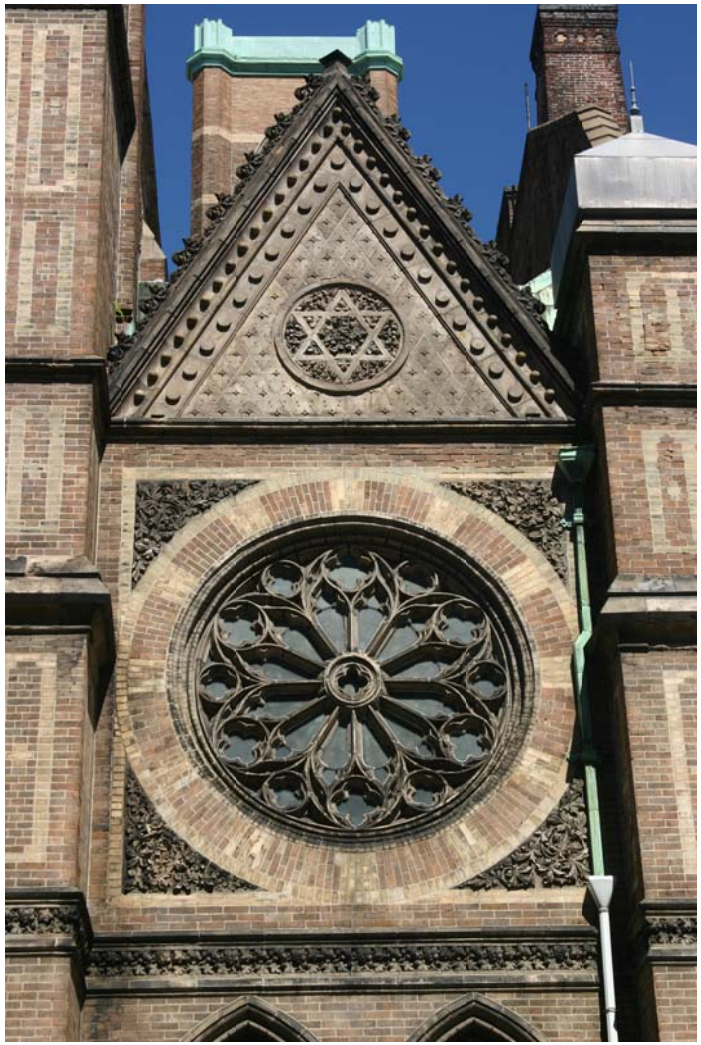


Church of All Saints

Main façade

Madison Avenue façade

Photos: Carl Forster



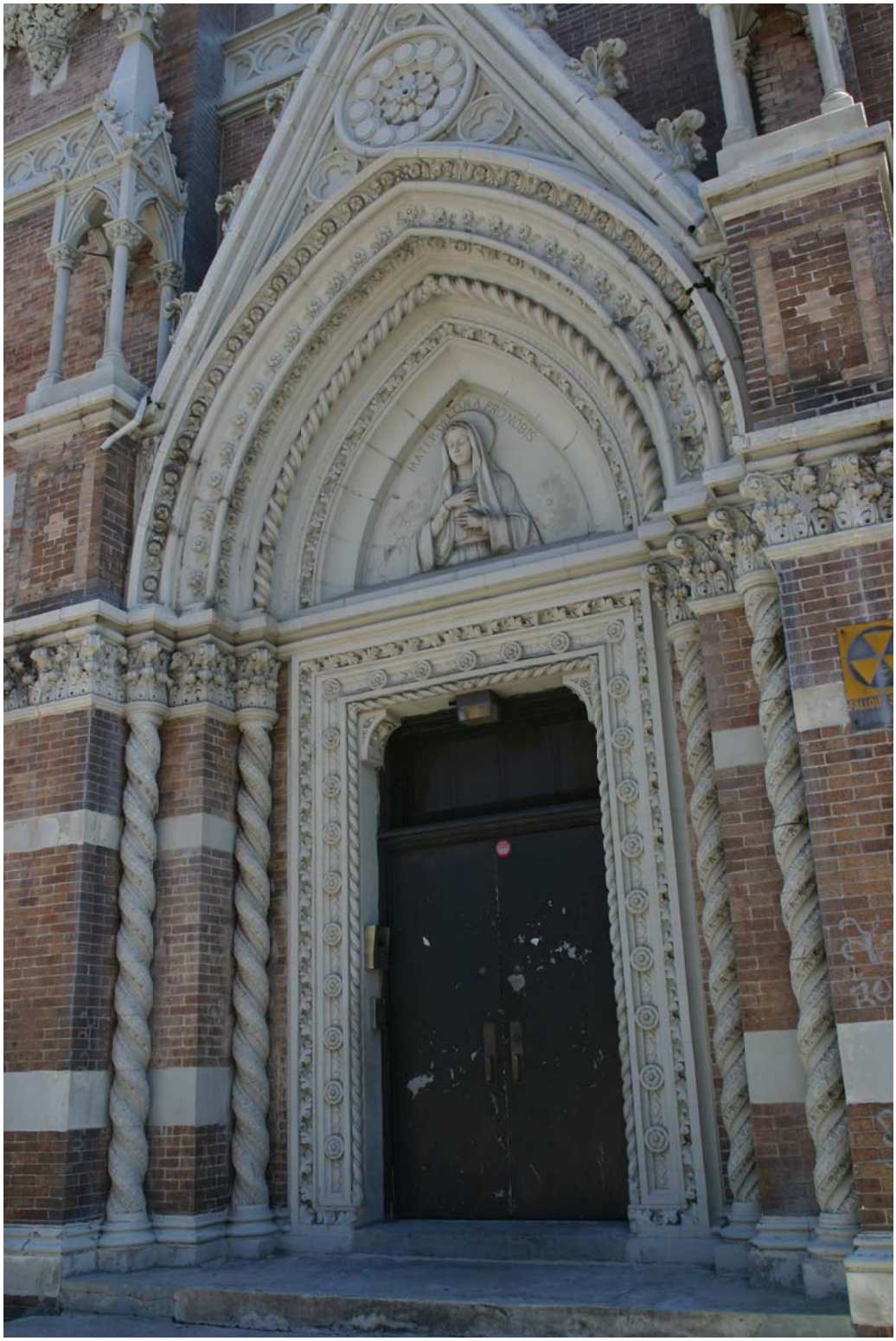
Church of All Saints
Façade details
Photos: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints
Madison Avenue details
Photos: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints School
Madison Avenue façade
Photo: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints School
Madison Avenue façade
Photo: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints School
130th Street façade
Photo: Carl Forster



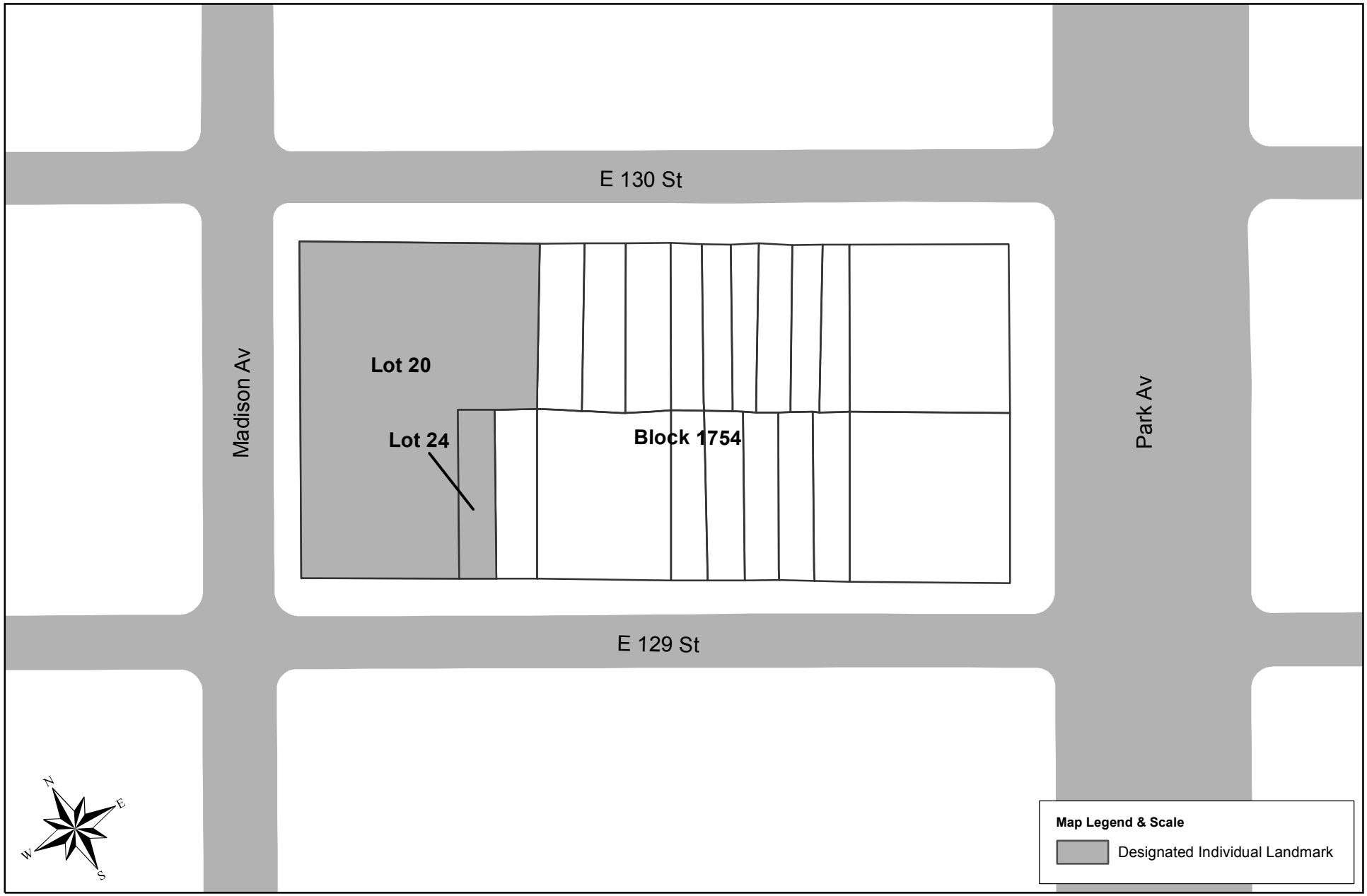
All Saints Church School
Entrance detail
Photo: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints School
details
Photo: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints Parish House
Photo: Carl Forster

Church of All Saints Parish House, details

Photos: Carl Forster



0 0.005 0.01 Miles

Church of All Saints (Roman Catholic) Parish House and School (LP-2165), 47 East 129th Street
aka 50-52 East 130th Street, 2041-2053 Madison Avenue, 41-45 East 129th Street.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1754, Lots 20 and 24.

Designated: January 30, 2007

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003.
Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM.