

WEST END COLLEGIATE CHURCH AND COLLEGIATE SCHOOL, West 77th Street and West End Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1892, Completed 1893; architect Robert W. Gibson.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1169, Lot 1.

On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 19). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. This hearing was continued to subsequent hearings of the Commission. The public hearing on the church and school was closed on November 10, 1966. (Item No. 9). The governing body of the church has informed the Commission that it approves of the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The West End Collegiate Church and School are a well integrated group of buildings executed in a uniform style of architecture providing an accent of quaint charm among the surrounding high-rise apartments of West End Avenue. Since the Church and School trace their origins back to the first Dutch community in New York, the architect, Robert W. Gibson, appropriately combined elements of Dutch and Flemish Renaissance styles for his design. This group of buildings is one of the few good examples of this character in the City.

The dominant feature of the church is the elaborate stepped gable of the facade. This also provides the unifying theme for the entire complex since the church's gable is echoed in a smaller gable on the chapel and is finally repeated in a tiny gable atop the school building. The basic building material of the walls is brown brick but, following the example of old-world models, the surfaces of these structures are trimmed with stone-work. Thus, the front elevation of the church is broken up by means of string courses of stone and stone is also used to frame its large rose window. Corner stones (quoins) define the corners of the buildings and underscore the zig zag outlines of the gables, while terra cotta urns elaborate them even further. The wealth of ornamental detail characteristic of Dutch buildings of this period can perhaps best be seen in the dormer windows in the roof which are literally encrusted with stone detail. A handsome lacy spire (fleche) thrusts up from the center of the Church's high pitched roof.

The Collegiate Church is an arm of the Reformed Dutch Church which was organized here in 1628, when New York was still New Amsterdam. Ten years later the Church established the Collegiate School. It is believed to be the oldest private secondary school in the United States. The Church and School have been located on their present site since 1892.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that among its important qualities, the West End Collegiate Church and School is one of the few good examples combining Dutch and Flemish Renaissance architecture in New York, that this group of buildings gives an aura of old world charm to the residential area in which it is located, and that as a home of the first Protestant sect established in the United States and of the oldest private secondary school, its historical associations are indeed significant.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School, West 77th Street and West End Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1169, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.