

MARBLE COLLEGIATE REFORMED CHURCH, 275 Fifth Avenue at West 29th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1851, completed 1854; architect Samuel A. Warner.

Landmark:Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 831, Lot 33.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Marble Collegiate Reformed Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 16). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two 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 was closed on November 10, 1966. (Item No. 1). The governing body of the church has informed the Commission that it approves of the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

As its name implies, the material used on the exterior of this Church is marble. This striking edifice, with a tower and spire which resembles that of a New England wooden church, commands a corner site, where it can be advantageously seen from all directions. Though the architect considered it Romanesque in style, he nonetheless used Gothic forms in the details of the building. This church is an architectural creation of outstanding quality and unique in character.

Symmetrical in plan, the central tower is flanked at its base by tall double windows, with octagonal turrets at the angles, terminating in spires with carved finials. The handsome doorway, in the center of the tower, is set in a richly carved recessed arch carried on colonnettes with ornamented capitals. The impressive tower, rising from a square plan, is divided vertically into four sections: belfry, clock section, lantern and octagonal shaped spire topped by a weathervane. At the angles there are massive, graduated buttresses surmounted by octagonal turrets with pinnacles having neatly moulded cornices and carved finials.

At the eastern end of the church, on each side, an entrance doorway opens into the spacious first floor lobby. The side elevations consist of five attractive round arched windows set between heavy buttresses. At the western extremity a lecture room is flanked by octagonal towers, one at each angle of an imposing gable with cornice and copings, vaulting a pinnacle at the center. A street level arched colonnade connects the church with the Poling Memorial Chapel and Office Building to the west.

The Collegiate Church, founded in 1628, is the oldest Protestant Church in America having a continuous ministry from the date of its establishment. Its succession of Ministers, Elders and Deacons has been unbroken since 1628. Serving the church in common, its ministers are "colleagues". Hence arose its familiar name of Collegiate Church. A plaque on the exterior commemorates its succession to "the Stone Church in the Fort" of 1642. In the church yard the bell from the "North Church" of 1769 has been preserved. The bell bears the inscription "Cast in Amsterdam in 1768".

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 Marble Collegiate Reformed Church 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 the Marble Collegiate Church is a distinguished example of early Romanesque Revival church architecture, with an impressive tower and spire, that it is built of handsome materials and contains much fine detail, that it stands today as an historical symbol of the oldest Protestant Church in America, having a continuous ministry from 1628, and that it continues to serve our religious community.

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 Marble Collegiate Reformed Church, 272 Fifth Avenue at West 29th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Block 831, Lot 33, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark:Site.