

SERBIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL OF ST. SAVA AND CLERGY HOUSE AND PARISH HOUSE,
15 West 25th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Cathedral and Clergy House begun
1850, completed 1855; architect Richard Upjohn. Parish House completed 1860.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 827, Lot 22.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava and Clergy House and Parish House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 15). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Cathedral also spoke at that time. Following a recent conference at the Commission, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees has indicated to the Commission that the congregation is now in favor of the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Justly celebrated for its fine proportions, this imposing brownstone structure is an excellent example of the large metropolitan church done in the English Gothic Revival style. It is a pleasing edifice, rugged in character, of substantial construction, and reinforced with large buttresses which give it both durability and permanence. The lofty nave is expressed in the steep pitched slate roof and the sharp, angular gable of the south elevation facing Twenty-fifth Street. Centered in this gable wall is a large wheel window of impressive size. Directly below and flanked by buttresses, a bold and striking pointed-arch portal, accented with slender columns and graceful arches within its deep reveal, serves as the main entrance to the Cathedral. Three side entrances provide additional access to the nave. The sidewalls of the long nave are pierced by slender pointed-arch windows, nine on each side, and end in a spacious apse of seven bays, topped by an octagonal-shaped slate covered roof.

Adjacent to and contiguous with the chancel, the Clergy House completes the short leg of the L shaped plan of the ensemble. It is picturesque and charming in character with a steep pitched pyramidal roof containing a superb triangular dormer window. A pair of leaded glass, pointed-arch windows pierce the center of the sturdy buttress-supported wall. Completing the ensemble is a fine entrance door topped by an arched molding and a pointed gable.

The Parish House to the east, separated from the church by about forty feet, is a beautiful example of the English Gothic style. Completed about five years later than the Cathedral, it is more flamboyant in character and style. The high pointed-arch leaded glass windows are truly distinctive and contain fine stone tracery. One distinctive feature is the open-arched belfry rising above the gable of the south elevation. Taken together, these buildings make a remarkably homogeneous group.

Consecrated in 1855 as Trinity Chapel to serve the uptown communicants of Trinity Parish, this church, noted for the great length of its nave, was designed by Richard M. Upjohn, the most prominent church architect of his day. It was purchased by the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1945 and renamed the Cathedral of St. Sava.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that the Landmarks on the property in question (and the Landmark Site) are wholly used for religious and directly related charitable purposes by the Cathedral of St. Sava and that the needs of the Cathedral for such uses may change in the years ahead, entailing alterations in the existing structures. By this designation of the Landmarks above described and the Landmark Site on which they are located, it is not intended to freeze the structures in their present state or to prevent future appropriate alterations needed to meet changed requirements of use by the Cathedral of St. Sava. The Commission believes it has the obligation and, indeed, it has the desire to cooperate with owners of Landmarks who may wish to make changes in their properties. The Commission recognizes that the Cathedral of St. Sava may wish to make exterior alterations to its existing buildings. The Commission looks forward to working with the representatives of the Cathedral when the Cathedral desires to make exterior alterations on its existing buildings.

The Commission also recognizes that the Cathedral of St. Sava is currently attempting to rehabilitate the interior of its Parish House, that the Cathedral has complete architectural plans for these interior alterations and that it has raised more than one half of the money needed for the rehabilitation. The Commission appreciates that the officials of the Cathedral are, nevertheless, very concerned that they may not be able to undertake and complete the rehabilitation of the Parish House. The Commission recognizes that if these rehabilitation plans are not implemented, the Cathedral will be applying to the Commission to make some other use of that part of the Landmark Site. The Commission promises that at all times it will be mindful of the future needs of the Cathedral of St. Sava.

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 Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava and Clergy House and Parish House 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 Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava and Clergy House and Parish House are outstanding examples of Gothic Revival architecture, that they are straightforward expressions of masonry bearing-wall church construction, that they are striking in appearance and command attention, and that taken together they form an attractive group, revered and honored by their congregation.

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 Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava and Clergy House and Parish House, 15 West 25th Street Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 827, Lot 22, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.