

ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL AND GRAVEYARD, Broadway at Fulton Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1764, basically completed 1766; architect Thomas McBean. Tower added 1794, architect James Crommelin Lawrence.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 87, Lot 1.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of St. Paul's Chapel and Graveyard and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 47). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The attorney for Trinity Parish spoke at the hearing.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Among the very few Eighteenth Century buildings which remain to us today, St. Paul's Chapel is undoubtedly the most notable both architecturally and historically. The fact that it is the oldest existing church edifice in New York and that it has outlived all of its contemporaries, including the famous Dutch Reformed Churches, some of which were built at a later date, is remarkable. The architect, Thomas McBean, designed the church to face the river, with its back to Broadway; the east porch was added three years later as a concession to the persistent demands of that busy thoroughfare. General Richard Montgomery is buried beneath the east porch of the Chapel, and the memorial monument, made of marble and carved by the Italian sculptor, Jaques Caffieri, was ordered by Congress, January 25, 1776.

St. Paul's Chapel is built of rough-dressed local stone cut in blocks hardly larger than cobblestones. These are handsomely reinforced at the window openings by brownstone frames, and at the corners by dressed stones or quoins. The most notable feature of this historic church is its spire which was built in 1794 by James Crommelin Lawrence. Thomas McBean was a student of James Gibbs of London, and it is interesting to note the resemblance of the Chapel to the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, one of Gibbs' masterpieces. When Lawrence designed the steeple 28 years after the Chapel was built, he followed the lines of the London church steeple.

Everything about this church, from the handsome iron fence which surrounds it to the balustrade which crowns its roof and unifies it with its porch, is notable, and, as viewed by New Yorkers today, represents the epitome of the Georgian period of architecture.

Since Trinity Church had been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1776, St. Paul's Chapel was the place of the religious service following George Washington's inauguration as the first President in 1789. The fact that this is the only Church in New York in which George Washington worshipped, is in itself sufficient claim to fame, but a tour through its burying-ground will be a sure indication that it is one of the most hallowed places in the City.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that the Landmark on the property in question (and the Landmark Site) is wholly used for religious and directly related charitable purposes by Trinity Parish and that the needs of Trinity Parish for such uses may change in the years ahead, entailing alterations in the existing structures or the creation of other structures on the Landmark Site. By this designation of the Landmark above described and the Landmark Site on which it is located, it is not intended to freeze the structure in its present state or to prevent future appropriate alterations needed to meet changed requirements of use for religious and directly related charitable purposes. 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. In this connection the Commission wishes to state at this time that it recognizes that Trinity Parish may want to erect new buildings in the future on its grounds at St. Paul's Chapel. The Commission recognizes that Trinity Parish may also wish to make exterior alterations to its existing buildings at St. Paul's Chapel. The Commission looks forward to working with the representatives of Trinity Parish when the Church desires to erect new buildings on its grounds or to make exterior alterations on its existing buildings.

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 St. Paul's Chapel and Graveyard have 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, St. Paul's Chapel and Graveyard is one of New York City's most historic areas, that St. Paul's Chapel is the outstanding example of Georgian church architecture in New York, that it displays greater refinement of proportion and detail than any other remaining church of its period, that it is rich in historical associations and unique as the place of worship of George Washington, and that it is a church without peer in the City.

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 St. Paul's Chapel and Graveyard, Broadway at Fulton Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 87, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.