

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 17, 1966, Number 5
LP-0196

JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH, Washington Square South at Thompson Street, Borough of Manhattan 1892; architects McKim, Mead & White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 541, Lot 23.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Judson Memorial Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 20). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including the Rev. Howard Moody, the Minister of the Church, who urged the Commission to designate it. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Borough President's Community Planning Board Number Two supported designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Sitting proudly on a corner lot of Washington Square South, this small rectangular church, with its sharply defined gable roof, is a superb example of Italian Renaissance Eclectic architecture. Adjacent to and contiguous with the Tower (campanile) of Judson Hall, the Church completes this architectural composition which was designed by one of the city's great architectural firms. An outstanding feature of this Church is the two story entrance doorway set between the Tower and the Church proper. Five half round steps lead gracefully up to a small platform, where one enters the Church through a pair of dark wood panelled doors, recessed within a richly decorated Italian Renaissance terra-cotta frame. The shallow arched porch (portico) is supported by two columns. The panels (coffers) in the vault of the arch contain floral rosettes centered in ornamental panels. The low pitched tile roof adds another dimension and scale to this fine building.

The bands of superb terra-cotta ornament alternating with two courses of recessed yellow Roman brick continue in horizontal bands around the first floor of the north and east elevations. The north facade contains three round-headed stained glass windows placed between brick pilasters and symmetrically balanced by round-headed brick panels. Below the sills are marble panels enframed in handsome terra-cotta mouldings. Crowning this facade is a beautifully proportioned low-pitched pediment enriched by a handsomely ornate cornice. The east elevation also contains slender brick pilasters placed between seven round-headed stained glass windows, enhanced by their graceful arches sweeping along this facade in uninterrupted rhythm.

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 Judson Memorial 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, among its important qualities, Judson Memorial Church is a rare example of the Italian Renaissance Eclectic style, that along with its companion buildings Judson Hall and the Tower, it forms a superior architectural composition unsurpassed in New York City and that they add to the rich heritage of our architecture.

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 Judson Memorial Church, Washington Square South at Thompson Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 541, Lot 23, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.