

**SAINT PAUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
(NOW PARISH OF SAINT PAUL AND HOLY ROSARY)**

121 (115-125) East 117th Street, Manhattan
Built: 1907-08; Architect: Neville & Bagge

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1645, Lot 7, in part, including the church building and the steps and the land upon which these improvements are sited, and the adjacent alleys and areaways, and excluding the school building and the school play yard, described by the area bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of the property, extending northerly along the eastern property line to the southeastern corner of the south exterior wall of the school building, and extending westerly along a line along the south wall of the school building, and not including this wall, to the southwestern corner of the school building, then southerly to the northwest corner of the exterior wall of the west extension of the church, then southerly along the exterior wall of the west extension of the church to the southwest corner of the west extension of the church, then southerly to meet the intersection of where the west property line extends both easterly and southerly, and then southerly along the west property line to the southwest corner of the property, then easterly along the property line to the point of beginning.

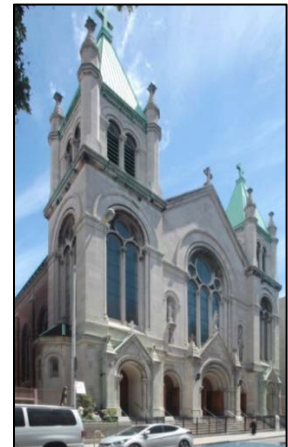
On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Saint Paul Church and School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Public Hearing Item No. 23). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. One person representing the New York Chapter of the A.I.A. testified in favor of designation.

On November 12, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on the Backlog Initiative Items in the Borough of Manhattan, including Saint Paul Church and School (Borough of Manhattan B, Group 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At the public hearing, there was one speaker representing the owner (the Archdiocese of New York) in opposition to the designation of Saint Paul Church and School. Six speakers testified in support of designation including Borough President Gale A. Brewer and representatives of the Victorian Society of New York, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, and Explore New York. Written submissions supporting designation were received from Save Harlem Now! and from one individual.

Summary

Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church, completed in 1908, is significant as an excellent example of the late Romanesque Revival style. Designed by the firm of Neville & Bagge, the facade incorporates both medieval and classical features. It is also historically significant as one of the earliest Roman Catholic parishes in Manhattan, serving the East Harlem neighborhood since 1834.

Dominating the street facade are symmetrical corner towers, an extraordinary row of five entry portals, and large round-arch stained-glass windows with simple geometric tracery. These dramatic windows on the



front and side facades figure prominently in the design and their construction was facilitated by the building's structural use of steel and concrete. Typical Romanesque Revival features include round-arch openings, towers, steep roofs, and carved medieval-style ornamentation. The front facade is particularly distinguished with an unusual "row" of five round-arch molded portals that is reminiscent of medieval cathedrals. Since the design is an early 20th-century interpretation of the Romanesque, it also exhibits such classical characteristics as symmetry, a smooth limestone facade, and a restrained use of ornament.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of New York established Saint Paul Church in semi-rural Harlem Village to serve Catholics in northern Manhattan. During the early 1900s, the Catholic population of the neighborhood increased dramatically due to immigration and development of the area. As a result, Monsignor John McQuirk, the pastor and a distinguished cleric, directed an ambitious campaign to expand and improve the parish facilities. Neville & Bagge, better known for their residential buildings, designed the present-day church, a larger and more sophisticated building that was completed in 1908.

During most of the 19th century and into the 1950s, many Catholics within the parish boundaries identified with an Irish heritage, and this was reflected in Saint Paul Church's congregation and activities. During the 20th century, particularly after World War II, the demographics of the area changed with an influx of Spanish-speaking Catholics, many from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and Latin America. By the 1960s, the archdiocese and the parish responded to these changes and sponsored many cultural and social programs for East Harlem Latinos. Today, the building retains a remarkable level of integrity of its historic design and materials and continues to serve a diverse East Harlem community.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Description

Saint Paul Church is located mid-block on the north side of East 117th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues.¹ The church entrance faces south with stairs immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. The east and west sides of the church front along alleys and both sides are visible from the street. Although the building, for the most part, is free-standing, there is a projecting section of the church's north wall that abuts the rear (south) facade of Saint Paul School, located at 114-122 East 118th Street (not part of this designation).² The church building retains its original design, facade materials and details.

Front Facade

Historic: A central bay flanked by symmetrical three-stage corner towers; tall round-arch stained-glass windows with arched and circular stone tracery; raised entry level sits above a basement; smooth limestone ashlar.

Base and Entry Level: stone steps span the facade and lead to entry doors; low stone wall on each side of steps leading to each tower entry; towers extend slightly forward from the main body of the church; water table; a "row" of five round-arch molded portals; the three major portals consist of a large central portal and slightly smaller tower portals; expressed enframingent of major portals consist of piers topped with tiered pyramids with foliate finials, a triangular pediment with a shallow stone roof topped with a stone statue at the central portal and a cross at each tower portal; two smaller portals flank the central portal; all portals with molded arches springing from engaged colonettes with foliate capitals; a sculpted face added at each capital of the two tower portals; pairs of solid paneled stained-wood doors and wood tympani with glazed panels; molded belt course divides entry level with area above.

Window Section: central bay with front-facing gable topped with a stone cross; tall round-arch window openings with smooth voussoirs with edge molding; continuous molded belt course at spring line of arches; molded window arches springing from engaged colonettes with foliate capitals; all tall stained-glass windows subdivided with mullions consisting of engaged colonettes with foliate capitals; central window has three tall round-arch stained-glass window panels below stone tracery consisting of a large circle with two small circles; each tower window has two tall round-arch stained-glass window panels, same height as central window, below stone tracery consisting of a circle; at each side of the central window, a round-arch niche with smooth voussoirs edged with molding; each niche has a statue on a pedestal, the base of which extends beyond the plane of the facade; molded eave of central bay connects to the molded course at the top of the second stage of the towers.

Squared corner towers that become free-standing at the third stage; faceted corner piers at each tower's third stage that incorporate and extend beyond the cornice line and terminate with tiered pinnacles topped with finials; at each of the four sides, a pair of molded and arched openings for metal louvers framed with engaged colonettes with foliate capitals below smooth voussoirs edged with molding; a circle within a round-arch frame above the louvers within the arch; each tower capped with a steep pyramidal metal standing-seam roof.

Alterations at Front Facade: metal crosses atop towers replaced foliate finials that are visible in historic photographs shortly after construction; modern iron handrails along the front facade stairs (handrails of a different design in the 1939-40 tax photograph); iron fencing at the base of the front facade stairs; decorative black metal light fixtures at each side of the main central portal (not present in 1939-40 tax photograph); security cameras and security lights along

front facade; statues and pedestals added within the two central bay niches at an unknown date; a pair of glass inner doors at the central portal; kick plates on doors; clear protective coverings over the stained-glass windows; composition shingles at the main gable roof, roofs at faceted bays at the base of the towers, and the roof at the west side extension; two free-standing statues and signage in front of west tower behind retaining wall adjacent to the sidewalk; a low concrete wall along the sidewalk at each areaway; each retaining wall topped with a tall metal security fence.

East and West Facades

Historic: smooth limestone ashlar extends around the corners of the towers; water table; east and west facades of the towers are the same as the front facades above the first stage; a one-story five-facet projecting bay at basement and entry level of each tower; at each faceted bay are three rectangular window openings at the basement level and three small stained-glass round-arch windows framed with voussoirs at the entry level; faceted bay's roof edged with metal ridge caps and a stone ball finial.

Red-brick cladding to the north beyond the towers; seven bays at each side facade of the building, each with a tall arched window; basement level, entry (sanctuary) level, and tall window section visible from the street; between bays, shallow expressed squared piers that terminate at the frieze, each with a stone cap; entry level has two pairs of stained-wood four-panel doors at each side facade; flush stone lintels above entry-level side doors; two shallow squared brick bays on each facade; one angled brick bay on east facade, with a simple profiled stone cornice; at tall window section, brick trim at round-arch openings for the seven tall stained-glass windows; wood tracery in the same design as the front facade tower windows; wood framework and jambs; stone sills; metal framework for hopper windows at lowest panel of stained glass; shallow stepped-brick frieze, partially painted or parged; gable roof over the main building oriented north to south; copper ridge cap; decorative painted iron balconies and railings at the east facade doorways; decorative iron stairway from balcony at west facade closest to the south main facade.

One-story plus basement brick extension (42 feet by 17 feet) attached to the west facade of the building toward the north end; arched window, rectangular window, and door at entry level at south facade of west extension; several steps and metal railing from extension to balcony; north-south gable roof with cross atop the south gable end.³

Alterations at East and West Facades: painted and/or parged base below water table at faceted bays; some rectangular windows in basement level of faceted bays have modern replacement metal grilles; metal exhaust unit in one of basement rectangular windows at west facade; security camera(s); clear protective coverings over the stained-glass windows; one glass panel in each leaf of double wood doors at east facade; brick infill below stone lintel in third bay from the front on east facade; lift at stairway at east facade; a modern iron balcony, railing and stairway at west doorway adjacent to the west extension; modern iron bridge at west facade from church to rectory next door.

North Facade

Historic: a round stained-glass window near the top of the main church building centered at the gable end; shallow north extension (40 feet by 12 feet) abuts the south wall of the school; extension has a gable roof and is shorter than the main body of the building; round-arch stained-glass windows at the east and west sides of the extension, similar in design to the side facades of

the main body of the building. The north facade extension is not currently visible from a public thoroughfare since it is obscured by the school, a corrugated metal fence, and other adjacent buildings on the block.

SITE HISTORY

East Harlem to World War I⁴

Saint Paul Church sits within the boundaries of East Harlem, a Manhattan neighborhood bounded by East 96th Street to the south, Fifth Avenue to the west, the Harlem River to the east, and East 125th Street to the north. Within East Harlem was the original village of *Nieuw Haarlem*, established in 1658 by Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant. Until the 19th century, scattered settlements and farmsteads dotted the area. From its earliest days, successive waves of newcomers settled in East Harlem, attracted by the area's affordable housing, good public transportation, and accessible shopping. As such, each wave of transplanted residents and immigrants has left its mark on the neighborhood.

Significant to the history of East Harlem was the early development of convenient public transportation lines. The New York and Harlem Railroad began operation in 1832 and reached East Harlem by 1837 with horse-drawn railcars along Fourth Avenue (today's Park Avenue).⁵ During that same time, lower Manhattan began to experience overcrowding due to the first large wave of immigration.⁶ Capitalizing on this transportation link and increased population, real estate developers began marketing former farmland, subdividing tracts into building lots.⁷ Indicative of the projected expansion northward and the creation of new neighborhoods, the city erected a Fire Watch Tower (a New York City Landmark) on nearby Mount Morris in 1855.⁸ Although many blocks were developed, scattered areas still remained semi-rural.

After the Civil War, the population of New York City again increased dramatically, spurring continued development beyond 110th Street, the northern boundary of Central Park. Around that time, Lexington Avenue, just east of Saint Paul Church, was extended from 102nd Street to the Harlem River, creating another north-south corridor into the neighborhood.⁹ By 1881, elevated railroad lines ran along Second and Third Avenues as far north as 129th Street. As a result, tenement apartment buildings soon lined the neighborhood blocks. During the peak years of immigration from European countries around the turn of the 20th century, East Harlem experienced an influx of working class families who were attracted to the area's affordable housing. Since many residents moving to East Harlem at that time were Irish or had a similar Roman Catholic background, the number of Catholics living in East Harlem increased dramatically.¹⁰ This was the period when the current Saint Paul Church building was constructed.

Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church Parish¹¹

Saint Paul Church was the sixth Roman Catholic parish established in New York City.¹² Before its creation by the Diocese of New York in 1834, there were no Catholic parishes in Manhattan north of Old Saint Patrick Cathedral, (a New York City Landmark).¹³ "In the 1820s Bishop [John] Dubois bemoaned the spiritual neglect of several hundred Irish living on the outskirts of the city."¹⁴ The establishment of the parish not only provided a resident priest and church for Catholics in the scattered settlements of northern Manhattan, but it was also intended to be the center of missionary activities extending beyond the city to Westchester County and Long Island.

By the time Saint Paul Church came to what is now East Harlem, there were already several churches established in the immediate area, including the Dutch Reformed Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Church.¹⁵ At that time, most New Yorkers were Protestant, of Dutch or English heritage. This started to change around the time Saint Paul Church was established. Roman Catholicism would become the fastest-growing denomination in New York City due to the immigration waves from other European countries with large Roman Catholic populations.¹⁶

The parish incorporated June 4, 1835 as “Saint Paul’s Church in the Village of Harlem.” That same year, the trustees purchased four lots on a slight rise just east of today’s Park Avenue and East 117th Street. Until 1826, these lots had been part of a farm owned by Sampson A. Benson.¹⁷ Conveniently located, the church was close to several former Dutch and English roads that intersected nearby.¹⁸ There was also a bridge over the Harlem River to the Bronx at the terminus of Third Avenue.¹⁹ Consequently, in addition to serving upper Manhattan Catholics, the new church’s location was convenient for the parish’s missionary work.

Not long after incorporation, the cornerstone of the first church building was laid June 29, 1835. At first, services were held in the basement; later the stone building was expanded and finally completed 35 years later. In 1849, the church property on East 117th Street was transferred from the parish trustees to Bishop John Hughes. One of the hallmarks of John Hughes’ administration was his decision to “...successfully eliminate ‘trusteeism’ by shifting the control of parish property from lay parish trustees to the bishop and pastors.”²⁰ One of the reasons for this was the removal of financial responsibility from the laity to the diocese during a time when many newly established parishes were struggling with overwhelming expenses.

By the 1870s, the Roman Catholic Church had increased dramatically in membership and importance throughout New York City. The impressive Gothic Revival Saint Patrick’s Cathedral on Fifth Avenue (a New York City Landmark) opened in 1879, a sign that the Catholic Church had attained status as a wealthy and sophisticated institution. It was also during the 1870s that Saint Paul Church expanded its property holdings by acquiring four lots along East 118th Street to accommodate a new school building. In 1886, the name of the parish was officially changed to the Roman Catholic Church of Saint Paul. Although the parish boundaries became smaller with the establishment of other East Harlem Catholic churches during the 1880s and 1890s, the parish prospered and maintained its importance as the first Roman Catholic church in the area.

After the turn of the 20th century, the parish decided to upgrade their facilities and build a new church, a new school and rectory (the school and rectory are not part of this designation). The 1904 building campaign that resulted in the present-day complex was initiated by Reverend John McQuirk, a prominent cleric within the archdiocese. McQuirk (1844-1924) was ordained in 1872 and became an assistant priest at Old Saint Patrick Cathedral before his assignment to Saint Paul Church in 1877.²¹ Several years later, he became the pastor, presiding over the parish with an increasing number of working class families, many with an Irish background. Known as a scholar, orator and churchman, McQuirk was appointed an official in the Archdiocese of New York during the 1890s. He was also well known locally through his sermons, published in 1908, 1916 and 1924. As the pastor at Saint Paul Church for 47 years, he was honored with the title of Monsignor for his outstanding service to the Church over the years.

A new building permit for the church was issued on August 6, 1907 for a one-story brick-and-stone church building, with Neville & Bagge listed as the architectural firm.²² A few years earlier in 1905, the parish had constructed the new four-story school building on East 118th Street (not part of this designation). They temporarily used the school basement for services during the

demolition of the old church and the construction of the new church on the same site. Completed in 1908, the new Romanesque Revival style church, with a seating capacity over 1,000 people, was taller, larger, and more impressive than the previous building.²³

Architecture of Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church

Saint Paul Church is architecturally significant as an excellent example of a late Romanesque Revival style church. Completed in 1908, it is notable for its incorporation of both medieval and classical features. Dominating the facade are prominent symmetrical towers at each corner with pyramidal roofs, large round-arch stained-glass windows, and a row of five arched portals.

Popular in the 19th century, the Romanesque Revival style was frequently used for religious properties. This picturesque revival had its beginnings in Germany around 1820 and was known there as *Rundbogenstil*, the round-arched style.²⁴ This design approach was later utilized by American architects from the 1840s onward, adapting it to whatever conditions and requirements a building might have. It was used for a variety of building types well into the early 20th century. Sometimes labeled Lombard, Norman or Roman, the Romanesque Revival style drew on a variety of medieval architectural traditions. It is readily identified by its round-arched openings, often defined by molding; its incorporation of towers; bold shapes; brick or stone cladding; steeply pitched roofs; and carved medieval-style stone ornamentation such as foliate capitals and finials. All of these characteristics are well executed and exhibited at Saint Paul Church.

The Romanesque Revival style for churches has a long history in New York City. In fact, Richard Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims (within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District) is often cited as the first instance of this style for churches in the United States.²⁵ Saint George Church on Stuyvesant Square in midtown Manhattan (a New York City Landmark) is also a pioneering example of the style.²⁶ Illustrating its continuing popularity, several of the nearby Roman Catholic churches that were formed from the earlier boundaries of Saint Paul parish are also Romanesque Revival, including Saint Cecilia Church (a New York City Landmark), Mount Carmel Church, and Holy Rosary Church.²⁷

The Saint Paul Church building illustrates the late Romanesque Revival style. One of the ways it differs from earlier Romanesque Revival style churches is the incorporation of not only medieval, but also classical features into the design. In general, early 20th-century architecture reflected a preference for classical characteristics. Some of Saint Paul's classical features include the use of symmetry, especially evident in the prominent corner towers, the smooth limestone facade with molded belt courses to unify the architectural features, and the restrained use of ornament. In general, Saint Paul Church exhibits an overall simplicity of design.

The large round-arch stained-glass windows at the central bay and at the sides are all uniformly colossal in height. Tall mullions terminating in simple geometric arches and circles accentuate their height. These windows also exhibit a higher ratio of glazing to masonry than seen in earlier 19th-century masonry buildings.²⁸ Saint Paul Church had the advantage of steel and concrete to achieve greater structural stability.²⁹ This facilitated the incorporation of these large round-arch windows, not only at the front facade, but also along the sides of the church.

The front facade of Saint Paul Church is particularly distinguished with an unusual "row" of five round-arch molded portals creating an arcade of entrances at the street level. Most Gothic and Romanesque Revival churches have three portals since the number of entrance doors usually corresponds to the central space and the number of side aisles. The interior of Saint Paul Church has no aisles; it is one large unbroken space. Like the windows, the interior configuration reflects

the use of steel and concrete in the construction. The molded portals are a design feature that contributes to a lively and striking entrance facade, reminiscent of large medieval churches.³⁰

Saint Paul Church retains excellent integrity of its historic design and materials. Its bold late Romanesque Revival massing continues to enhance the streetscape along East 117th Street and contributes to the architectural diversity of the neighborhood. According to author David W. Dunlap in his book, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship*, the church is "...among the more distinctive ecclesiastical presences in Harlem...which is only fitting since ...it is one of the oldest institutions in Harlem."³¹

Neville & Bagge³²

Thomas P. Neville (1865-1944), the son of an Irish-born builder, was born in New York City, but lived and studied in Ireland during his childhood. He then returned to New York at the age of 16. George Arthur Bagge (1867-1958) was born in Manchester, England, and immigrated to the United States in 1881. Around 1890 Bagge established a solo architectural practice in New York, although it appears a few years earlier he designed the Gothic Revival style Saint Edward the Martyr Church on East 109th Street.³³ In 1892, he partnered with Thomas P. Neville to create the architectural firm of Neville & Bagge with an office in Harlem on West 125th Street. Each listed himself as an architect for his respective passport. By 1920, Bagge had moved to Westchester County and Neville was living in the Bronx.

The firm of Neville & Bagge was active through the 1920s; the two architects became known as residential specialists working in various popular historical revival styles, particularly the Renaissance Revival, Colonial Revival and Beaux-Arts. They designed hundreds of speculative row houses and apartment buildings, particularly on the West Side and in Harlem, as well as the occasional hotel, store-and-loft, and institutional building.³⁴ One of their institutional buildings, originally a convent and home for working girls, is located nearby on East 106th Street, at Saint Cecilia's Church (both church and convent are New York City Landmarks).³⁵ Although they designed several rectories and convents, Saint Paul Church may be the only example of a church building designed by the partnership. By 1930 the firm became George A. Bagge & Sons, which continued in practice during the 1930s.

Neville & Bagge was one of the most prolific firms active in New York City at the turn of the century. Although it appears that both partners may have lacked a formal architectural education, "they were proficient in producing well-planned and well-appointed dwellings at the reasonable costs expected by developers."³⁶ Their work is well represented today in New York City individual landmarks and in many historic districts.³⁷

Saint Paul Parish and East Harlem Post World War I³⁸

After World War I, the demographics of the area gradually began to change. In particular, Puerto Ricans, American citizens after 1917, began to immigrate to the United States, concentrating in East Harlem.³⁹ These newcomers replaced many of the prior working class residents such as the Irish, Italians, Jews, and African Americans.⁴⁰ After World War II, even more Puerto Ricans settled in East Harlem during the "Great Migration."⁴¹ At the same time, the area was also impacted by the removal of substandard tenements and the construction of many public housing projects.⁴² This urban renewal occurred as most residents from the previous immigration waves of the early 1900s moved to the outer boroughs and the suburbs.⁴³

From its founding until the period between the World War I and World War II, the congregation of Saint Paul Church was predominantly Irish and Irish-American. It was staffed by priests with an Irish heritage even longer.⁴⁴ After Reverend McQuirk died in 1924, the

composition of the parish community gradually began to change to one with a Latin American and Caribbean heritage.⁴⁵ Reverend Cornelius Drew instituted the first Spanish program for the parish in 1940.⁴⁶ During the 1950s, the Archdiocese of New York responded to the increase in the Latino population throughout the city, and instituted many programs that ministered to Spanish-speaking cultures, including the establishment of an archdiocesan office for Hispanic Catholics. An outgrowth of one of the programs was the requirement that half of all newly ordained priests were required to learn Spanish.

A distinguished and well-known priest at Saint Paul Church who worked with the Latino community was Reverend Robert Fox, a New York native and associate pastor.⁴⁷ Fluent in Spanish, he became the coordinator of the Spanish Community Action program in the archdiocese from 1963 to 1969. During that time, he developed many programs aimed at the revitalization of the East Harlem community. His efforts led to the creation of playgrounds and storefront recreation centers and the rehabilitation of tenements into cooperative apartments. He and his programs were often publicly acknowledged and praised by then Mayor John V. Lindsay. Fox was instrumental in easing social tensions, particularly when he organized a peace march of about 1,000 people in the wake of East Harlem violence in the summer of 1967. The march began at Saint Paul Church and resulted in calming tensions and re-establishing order. This event was later commemorated by a special mass at the church celebrated by the archbishop, Cardinal Francis Spellman.⁴⁸ Like John McQuirk before him, Robert Fox was honored with the title of Monsignor. Five years after his death, the parish established the Monsignor Robert Fox Memorial Shelter as a tribute to him and his legacy of work with the Latino and East Harlem community.⁴⁹

Recent History

Saint Paul Church continues to be an important cultural and institutional center for East Harlem's diverse community. Many Puerto Ricans have moved away from East Harlem, like previous waves of immigrants have done. New arrivals include Latinos from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Central and South America; Africans from the Caribbean and West Africa; Asians, particularly Chinese; and Eastern Europeans.⁵⁰ The parish sponsors neighborhood events throughout the year, most notably the Good Friday procession during Holy Week. One of the recent honors bestowed on the church by the New York City Council was the addition of the street sign, "St Pauls Pl" on East 117th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues.

The parish is no longer staffed by diocesan priests. Since 1998 a Spanish-speaking religious order, the Institute of the Incarnate Word, has served the congregation. Today, mass and religious services are conducted in both Spanish and English. In November of 2014, Archbishop Timothy Dolan announced plans to reduce the number of parishes in the Archdiocese of New York.⁵¹ As a result, Saint Paul Church combined with nearby Holy Rosary Church, creating the Parish of Saint Paul and Holy Rosary in November of 2015.

Report prepared by
Marianne Hurley
Research Department

NOTES

-
- ¹ Today's Lot 7 is a consolidation of former lots 7 to 11 fronting onto East 117th Street and former lots 62 to 66 fronting onto East 118th Street.
- ² This projecting section of the north wall creates a shallow chancel on the interior.
- ³ This extension to the west appears to be either a sacristy or similar secondary support space for the church.
- ⁴ Information in this section is based on the following sources: James Riker, *Revised History of Harlem: Its Origins and Early Annals* (New York: New Harlem Publishing Co., 1904), 171-178; I. N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Volume III, (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1916); Jonathan Gill, *Harlem*, (New York: Grove Press, 2011); David W. Dunlap, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Mount Morris Bank Building* (LP-1839), (New York: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Andrew Dolkart; LPC, *Graham Court Apartments* (LP-1254), (New York: City of New York, October 16, 1984), prepared by Jay Shockley.
- ⁵ During the 1830s, Third Avenue extended from lower Manhattan into East Harlem, with horse-drawn rail service by 1853. Stokes, Plate 79.
- ⁶ From 1830 to 1860, the population of the city quadrupled with immigrants from Europe, particularly Ireland and Germany. George J. Lankevich, *New York City: A Short History*, (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 70-71.
- ⁷ "Auction Sale of 225 Harlem lots by A.J. Beecker & Co. at 2nd Avenue from 108th to 113th streets," 1857, (Photograph: Museum of the City of New York).
- ⁸ Now Marcus Garvey Park at Madison Avenue and East 120th Street. LPC, *Watch Tower* (LP-0313), (New York: City of New York, 1967), prepared by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
- ⁹ Stokes, 1004.
- ¹⁰ In addition to the large number of Irish, many other ethnic and cultural groups settled in East Harlem by the turn of the 20th century including Italian, German, Polish, Slovak, Hungarian, Swedish, and a large Jewish population. Our Lady of Mount Carmel on 115th Street served the Italians by 1889; Our Lady Queen of Angels on East 113th Street was established for the Germans in 1886; and Saint Hedwig Church on East 106th Street was established for the Poles in 1934. Irish, Germans, and Italians attended Holy Rosary Church, built in 1899 on East 119th Street.
- ¹¹ Information in this section is based on the following sources: *Randel's MS Map of Farms*, as reproduced in Stokes, Plate 86 depicting the grid superimposed onto an accurate depiction of Manhattan Island in 1819-20; Historical Records Survey, Work Projects Administration, *Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: Roman Catholic Church, Archdiocese of New York*, Vol 2 (New York: City of New York, 1941); Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1816-1865*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd Ed, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Thomas J. Shelley, *The Archdiocese of New York: The Bicentennial History, 1808-2008*, (Strasbourg, France: Editions du Signe, 2007).
- ¹² Dolan, 13.
- ¹³ Saint Paul Church, when established, was the only Roman Catholic parish between Old Saint Patrick Cathedral and New Rochelle, New York. Old Saint Patrick Cathedral was built in 1809-15 and was located at Mott and Prince streets, near Houston Street. The diocese became an archdiocese in 1850.
- ¹⁴ Dolan, 66.
- ¹⁵ The Dutch Reformed congregation built their third church building in 1825, on East 121st Street near Third Avenue; Saint Andrew Episcopal Church was built in 1829 on East 127th Street, and the Methodists built a meeting house on East 125th Street. None of these early buildings are extant.
- ¹⁶ Gill, 89.

-
- ¹⁷ Sampson A. Benson, who owned the parcel until 1826, was the grandson of Samson Benson, who in turn was the great grandson of Captain Johannes Benson who settled in *Nieuw Haarlem* in 1696. During the ensuing years, the heirs of Johannes were among the largest landowners in Harlem. Riker, 426-429, 824. Noted in the 1820 federal census, a “Samprn A Benson” of Ward 9 owned 6 slaves. “Section 6, Block 1645, General Statement: Parcel one, within the Samson Benson Farm, passed to Peter Poillon in 1826.” One of the intermediate owners was Archibald Watt who transferred lots 7-10 to the Trustees of Saint Paul Church. Liber 337, page 489. Manhattan City Register Office, Conveyances and Deeds.
- ¹⁸ The block where the parish purchased lots and built their first church building is where the Old Harlem Road and the Harlem Bridge Road intersected.
- ¹⁹ The Coles Bridge of 1795 to the Bronx was located where the 17th-century *New Haerlem* ferry crossed the Harlem River. Stokes, 926. Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue) opened in 1853. Stokes, 1,000.
- ²⁰ Jackson, 216. The bishop or clerical administrative committee controls all parochial or archdiocesan property.
- ²¹ “Msgr. John McQuirk Dead,” *New York Times (NYT)*, November 22, 1924, 15. There is a plaque in the vestibule of the church honoring Rev. John McQuirk.
- ²² New Building (#NB-211) permit issued August 6, 1907, \$160,000; work completed November 3, 1908. New York City Building Department.
- ²³ Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church Website, <http://stpaulchurchive.org/>
- ²⁴ Information on the Romanesque Revival style is based on the following sources: Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); LPC, *St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sunday School, and Parsonage* (LP-2418), (New York: City of New York, 2011), prepared by Virginia Kurshan.
- ²⁵ Built 1844-46, Richard Upjohn, architect; now Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Rite Roman Catholic Church at Hicks and Remsen streets, Brooklyn.
- ²⁶ Built 1846-56, Blesch & Eidlitz, architects. LPC, *St. George’s Church* (LP-0244), (New York: City of New York, 1967); LPC, *Church of St. Paul the Apostle* (LP-2260), (New York: City of New York, 2013), prepared by Matthew A. Postal.
- ²⁷ Saint Cecilia Church on East 106th Street was built in 1883-87, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church on East 115th Street was built in 1884-89, and Holy Rosary Church on East 119th Street was built in 1894-9.
- ²⁸ Nearby Saint Paul Church is the 1891-93 Harlem Courthouse (a New York City Landmark). It is a slightly earlier Romanesque Revival style and illustrates larger areas of solid masonry walls to glazing.
- ²⁹ Property Information Cards, Municipal Archives, City of New York.
- ³⁰ An example of another church in New York City with five portals is the Romanesque Revival style Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus on West 51st Street, designed by Napoleon Le Brun & Sons and built in 1884. Five portals are more common for large European cathedrals that have two aisles on each side of the nave, such as Saint Mark’s Cathedral in Venice and Bourges Cathedral in France.
- ³¹ Dunlap, 239
- ³² Information in this section is based on the following sources: Ancestry.com, *U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925* [database on-line] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2007; U.S. Census records, 1900, 1910, 1930-1940; “New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949,” database, *Family Search* (familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2WPK-67T : 20 March 2015); LPC, “Architects’ Appendix,” *Riverside West End Historic District Extension II Designation Report* (LP-2464), (New York: City of New York, 2015), Appendix prepared by Marianne S. Percival; Andrew S. Dolkart, *Morningside Heights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 13, 57; “Obituary Notes,” [Richard Neville], *NYT*, April 30, 1902, 9; “Deaths,” [George A. Bagge], *NYT*, January 22, 1958, 27; James Ward, *Architects in Practice New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 4, 57.

-
- ³³ Saint Edward the Martyr was built 1887-88; located at 14 East 109th Street. Dunlap, 200.
- ³⁴ “In their peak production year, 1909, they filed plans for 57 projects just in Manhattan. Christopher Gray, “Streetscapes: El Nido, 116th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue; Amid a Grid of Boxes, a Triangular-Shaped Building,” *NYT*, March 16, 2003.
- ³⁵ . LPC, *Saint Cecilia’s Convent* (LP-0934), (New York: City of New York, 1976), prepared by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The 1907 building was a combined convent and school known as the Regina Angelorum.
- ³⁶ Dolkart, 279.
- ³⁷ The Edwin and Elizabeth Shuttleworth House in the Bronx (built in 1896, Neville & Bagge, 1857 Anthony Avenue, a New York City Landmark) is an excellent example of the firm’s work designing a single family home. Additional examples of their work are in the historic districts of Chelsea, Greenwich Village, Carnegie Hill, the Upper West Side/Central Park West, Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill, and Riverside West End and Extensions. Examples of the firm’s apartment buildings are found in the Mott Haven East, Mount Morris Park, Clay Avenue, and Audubon Park historic districts, among others. Examples of their store-and-loft buildings are found in the Ladies’ Mile Historic District.
- ³⁸ Information in this section is based on the following sources: Edward J. Sullivan, ed., *Nueva York: 1613-1945*, (New York: The New York Historical Society, 2010); Virginia E. Sanchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983); Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue: The Impact of the Puerto Rican Migration upon the Archdiocese of New York*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).
- ³⁹ Korrol, 55; In 1930, 40% of New York City Latinos were Puerto Rican. Sullivan, 113. That same year, the archdiocese established its first national parish for Hispanics, the Catholic Church of the Holy Agony, first at 260 East 98th Street and moving in 1952 to 1834 Third Avenue. Dunlap, 98.
- ⁴⁰ In 1926 there was a riot in East Harlem since Spanish-speaking newcomers were perceived as taking over the low paying jobs. Sullivan, 65.
- ⁴¹ East Harlem became known as *El Barrio*, or the neighborhood in Spanish. In New York City, the population of Puerto Rican residents increased from 60,000 in 1940 to approximately 860,000 in 1980. Korrol, 213.
- ⁴² Urban Renewal occurred in the East Harlem neighborhoods from 1938 to 1965 displacing residents and business owners on approximately 171 acres. http://www.east-harlem.com/cb11_197A_history.htm, accessed May 3, 2016.
- ⁴³ During the 1930s and after World War II, large numbers of Italians and Jews moved from East Harlem to the Upper West Side, the outer boroughs, and the suburbs. Gill, 332.
- ⁴⁴ During much of its history in New York City, the Roman Catholic Church has been associated with Irish culture; the leading bishops before 1850 and the all archbishops after 1850 have been of Irish heritage except Bishop John DuBois (1764-1843) who was French.
- ⁴⁵ Historic photographs on the parish website <http://stpaulchurchive.org/> show the diversity of the parish school students.
- ⁴⁶ “History of the Parish,” Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church Website, <http://stpaulchurchive.org/>
- ⁴⁷ “Msgr. Robert J. Fox, 54, Dies; Aide to Hispanic Community,” *NYT*, April 30, 1984.
- ⁴⁸ This was one of the archbishop’s last public appearances before his death. Diaz-Stevens, 166-67.
- ⁴⁹ Msgr. Robert Fox Memorial Shelter at Fox House (not part of this designation), 111 East 117th Street, opened May 7, 1989.
- ⁵⁰ 1990 Census data. http://www.east-harlem.com/cb11_197A_history.htm, accessed May 3, 2016.
- ⁵¹ “Heartache for New York’s Catholics as Church Closings Are Announced,” *NYT*, November 2, 2014. A total of 112 parishes were merged, the largest reorganization in the history of the archdiocese. The Holy Rosary Church building on East 119th Street is closed and is no longer used for services.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the buildings and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church (Parish of Saint Paul and Holy Rosary) 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, Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church was constructed in 1907-08 to the designs of Neville & Bagge; that it is significant as an excellent example of the late Romanesque Revival style, incorporating both medieval and classical features; that it is also historically significant because it represents one of the earliest Roman Catholic parishes in Manhattan, serving the East Harlem neighborhood since 1834; that the street facade exhibits symmetrical corner towers, an extraordinary row of five entry portals, and large round-arch stained-glass windows with simple geometric tracery; that these dramatic windows on the front and side facades were facilitated by the building's structural use of steel and concrete; that the building exhibits typical Romanesque Revival features including round-arch openings, towers, steep roofs, bold shapes, and carved medieval-style ornamentation; that the front facade is particularly distinguished with an unusual "row" of five round-arch molded portals that is reminiscent of medieval cathedrals; that Saint Paul Church's early 20th century interpretation of the Romanesque style exhibits classical characteristics such as symmetry, a smooth limestone facade, and a restrained use of ornament; that the Roman Catholic Diocese of New York established Saint Paul Church in semi-rural Harlem as its sixth parish and the only Catholic Church in Manhattan north of Houston Street; that the parish constructed a small stone church in 1835, but outgrew it by the early 1900s since the Catholic population of the neighborhood had increased dramatically due to immigration and development of the area; that the present-day church was built under the direction of Monsignor John McQuirk, a distinguished cleric and administrator; that the church's construction was part of an ambitious campaign to expand and improve the parish facilities; that Neville & Bagge, better known for their residential buildings, designed the current Saint Paul Church as a larger and more sophisticated building; that the building was completed in 1908 on the same site as the original church; that until the 1950s, many Catholics within the parish boundaries identified with an Irish heritage, and was reflected in the congregation and activities; that after World War II, the demographics of the area changed with an influx of Spanish-speaking Catholics, many from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and Latin America; that by the 1960s, the archdiocese and the Saint Paul parish sponsored many cultural and social programs for East Harlem Latinos during a time of neighborhood unrest; and that today, the building retains a remarkable level of integrity of its historic design and materials and continues to serve a diverse East Harlem community.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church, and designates Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1645, Lot 7 in part, including the church building and the steps and the land upon which these improvements are sited, and the adjacent alleys and areaways, and excluding the school building and the school play yard, described by the area bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of the

property, extending northerly along the eastern property line to the southeastern corner of the south exterior wall of the school building, and extending westerly along a line along the south wall of the school building, and not including this wall, to the southwestern corner of the school building, then southerly to the northwest corner of the exterior wall of the west extension of the church, then southerly along the exterior wall of the west extension of the church to the southwest corner of the west extension of the church, then southerly to meet the intersection of where the west property line extends both easterly and southerly, and then southerly along the west property line to the southwest corner of the property, then easterly along the property line to the point of beginning, as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Frederick Bland, Wellington Chen, Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum, Jeanne Lutfy, and
Adi Shamir Baron, Commissioners



Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church

Borough of Manhattan

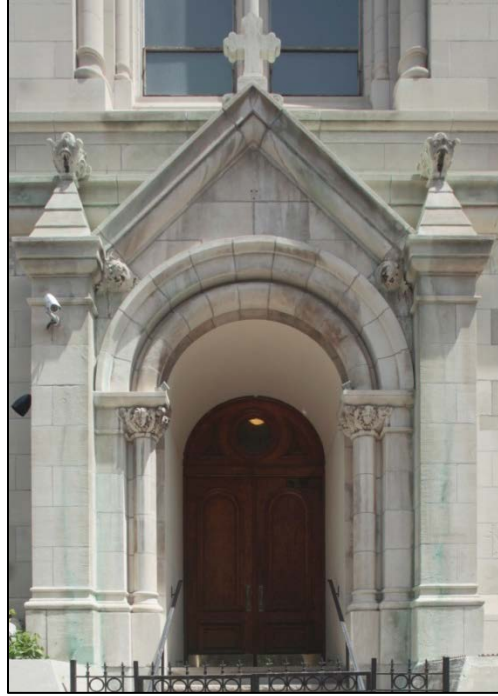
Tax Map Block: 1645, Lot 7 in part

121 East 117th Street

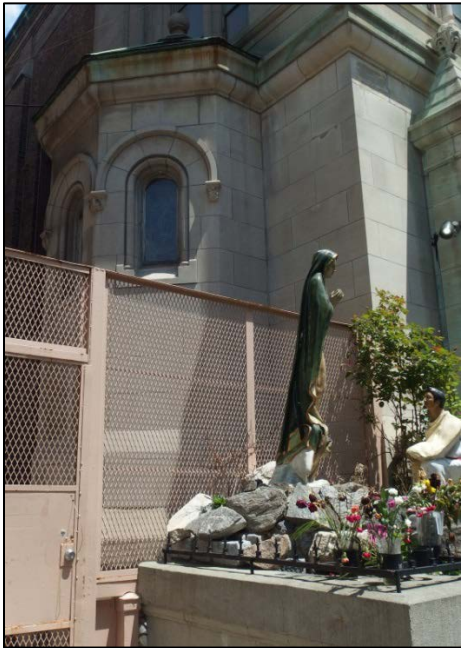
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)



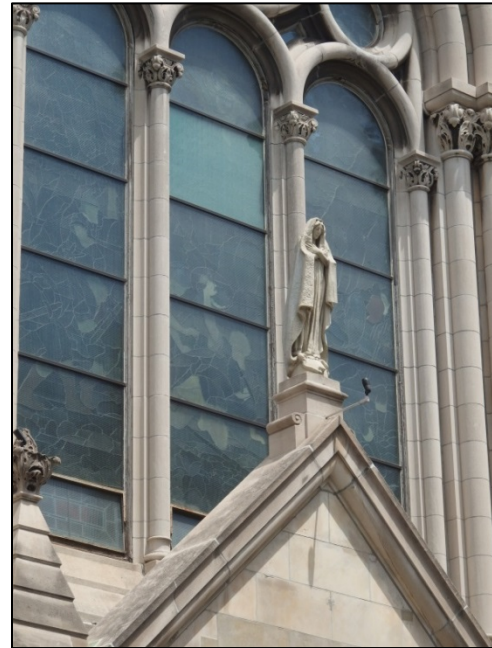
East Tower
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



Westernmost Entry Portal
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)



Southwest Corner
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



Central Bay
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



West Facade, West Extension, and Areaway
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



East Facade and Areaway
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



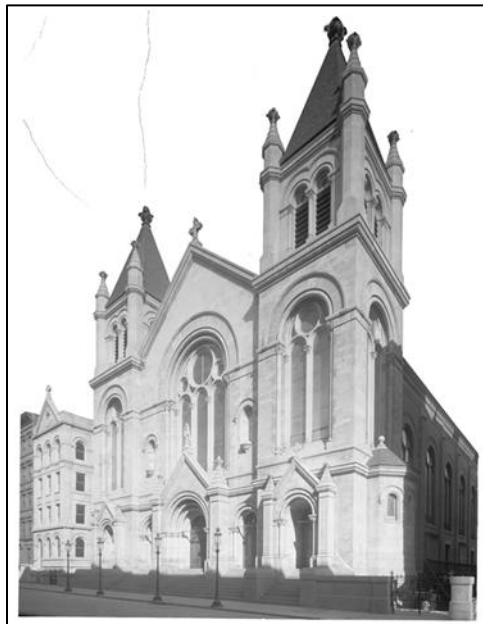
West Facade and West Extension from Park Avenue
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2106)



East Facade from Lexington Avenue
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)



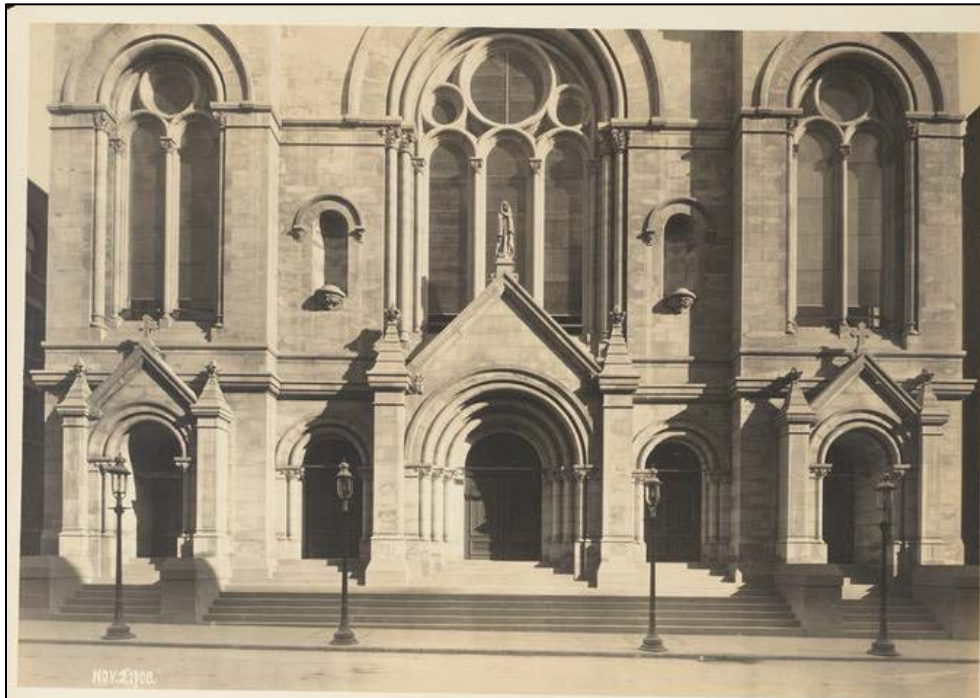
Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church
121 East 117th Street
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)



Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church
Historic Photograph 1908
Source: Museum of the City of New York
(Photograph: Wurts Bros.)



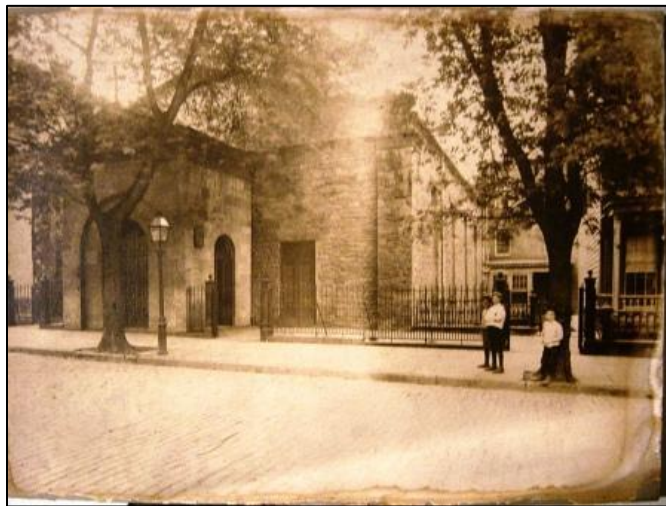
Front Facade 121 East 117th Street
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)



Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church
Historic Photograph 1908
Source: Museum of the City of New York
(Photograph: Wurts Bros.)



Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church
Historic Photograph 1934
Source: New York Public Library
(Photograph: P. L. Sperr)



Previous church building before demolition in 1907
(Source: Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church Website)



North Side of East 117th Street Looking Northwest
(Photograph: Marianne Hurley, 2016)

