NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Grace Church

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
800 Broadway (Broadway, Tenth and Fourth Streets)

CITY, TOWN
New York
STATE
New York

3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>OCCUPIED</td>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILDINGS/SITE</td>
<td>PRIVATE</td>
<td>UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td>WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>ENTERTAINMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECT</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>YES RESTRICTED</td>
<td>RELIGIOUS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>NO UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>SCIENTIFIC</td>
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4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Grace Church in New York, Mr. Karl L. Dowhie, Business Manager

STREET & NUMBER
802 Broadway

CITY, TOWN
New York
STATE
New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.
New York County Hall of Records

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER
31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN
New York
STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITILE
New York City Landmarks Commission/National Register

DATE
1966, 1974

FEDERAL
STATE
COUNTY
LOCAL
Description

Condition

- Excellent (church)
- Good (houses)
- Fair

Check One

- Deteriorated
- Ruins
- Unexposed

Check One

- Unaltered
- Altered

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Grace Church occupies the southern half of a long, narrow, trapezoidal block bounded by 10th, Fourth Avenue and Broadway, where Broadway turns and commences its westward slant across Manhattan. With its dramatic spire the church effectively dominates the northward vista at this turn in Broadway.

Constructed of marble, Grace Church (800 Broadway), is rectangular in plan, arranged behind a square tower set on the longitudinal axis. The main entrance, located at the base of the tower is surmounted by a gable and a rose-window followed, above the roof level, by the high tracered openings of the belfry. Rising above the belfry, the tower, embellished by corner pinnacles makes a transition from square to octagonal, terminating ultimately in a slender spire. The marble side walls of the nave consist of a rhythm of pointed-arch windows interspersed by buttresses surmounted by pinnacles. Behind the tower, a crenellated parapet forms the top of the church's bearing walls. The dramatically vertical, vaulted, interior space is adorned by 46 English stained glass windows of which the exceptionally large ones in the transepts and over the altar are particularly striking.

Located immediately north of the church but recessed further on the lot, the essentially square Rectory (804 Broadway), despite the symmetry of its basic shape and its gables, owes its asymmetrical appearance to the differentiating treatment of bay windows. The ecclesiastical character of the church has been carried over into this residence in the use of pinnacled corner buttresses, gables ornamented by crockets and finials, pointed arch windows and fine tracery. Projecting forward to form a vestibule, the main entrance, located in the central bay of the west (front) elevation, is crowned by a richly decorated gable and flanked by pinnacled, miniature, corner buttresses.

The Country, adjoining the south elevation of the church, and Grace House, connecting the church with the Rectory on the north, are both irregularly shaped additions skillfully designed at a later date in the same style. The narrow front (west) elevation of Grace House, dominated by a spired 3-story projecting bay, blends so subtly into the asymmetrical pattern established in the Rectory that it appears to be inherently part of the residence.

This description was provided by Lynn A. Beebe, New York State, Division for Historic Preservation.
### A Significance

#### Period
- Prehistoric
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Commerce
- Communications
- X (1800-1899)

#### Specific Dates
1843-1846

#### Statement of Significance

Grace Church is the first masterpiece of James Renwick, Jr., who would become, after Richard Upjohn, one of the foremost practitioners of the Gothic Revival style. As the new Medievalism eclipsed the Greek mode James Renwick was creating Grace Church and then Saint Patrick's Cathedral—two of the most impressive examples of this mid-century style in America.

Renwick's reputation was firmly established with this commission when he was only 25 years old. English in taste, based on the theories and designs of A. W. Pugin, Grace reflected those high moral values so typical of a romantic era. One contemporary critic wrote of "the architecture of Christianity, the sublime, the glorious Gothic." Perhaps the purest expression of these theories was ecclesiastical, the churches made a valiant attempt at archaeological accuracy—the "Gothick" houses and castles with cusps, crockets and turrets were confections that no medieval man would ever recognize.

Writing in the North American Review in 1844, architect Arthur Gilman stated that Richard Upjohn's nearly completed Trinity Church "surpasses any church erected in England since the revival of the pointed style." Grace Church, began two years later on October 30, 1843, was under construction at the same time—in the opinion of contemporary Philip Hone destined to be "second only to the magnificent Trinity." According to historian Phoebe Stanton,

Comparison of the two shows how rapidly competence in the Gothic style developed in the United States, for even if the difference between the tastes and personal styles of Upjohn and Renwick are acknowledged, Grace Church is more tightly knit, uniform, and less dry than Trinity... (The) major difference between the two lies in the way in which Renwick developed the ornamental possibilities of the style and reduced the amount of inert masonry in the elevation. It is tempting to link Renwick's design with the drawing in (Pugin's book) True Principles, but, though there are similarities between them they are not as obvious as in the case of Trinity... Grace Church is... too brilliant and too free to derive its character solely from the Pugin illustration."

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In Stanton's opinion Grace Church is "less monumental than Trinity and more elegant in its wealth of decorative detail."\(^4\)

"Upjohn was a man of modest parentage, and his early training was as a cabinetmaker and as an apprentice in an English architect's office. Renwick, on the other hand, was the son of a Columbia College professor who had married into the Brevvoort family, and, brought up in luxurious surroundings, he took the diversions of the rich for granted. His contemporary as an undergraduate at Columbia, George Templeton Strong, a remarkable diarist with a sharp eye for the arts and a sharper tongue, thought him the "most windy of all the bags of conceit and coxcombry that every dubbed themselves Architect." If St. Patrick's Cathedral is Renwick's most conspicuous ecclesiastical edifice, Grace Church in New York (it was completed when Renwick was only twenty-eight in 1846) is his most conspicuous architectural accomplishment, a moody and picturesque Gothic structure with a handsome parish house and rectory adjoining it. Most of Renwick's contemporaries were greatly impressed by it, though Mayor Hone was shocked at the prices for which pews were sold and the pew rents that were charged. (Owning a pew in those days was like owning a cooperative apartment now; a family paid for its pew and then had to pay the equivalent of "maintenance" to retain if for its private use.) "The new church at the head of Broadway is nearly finished and ready for consecration," Hone wrote in his diary.

This is to be a fashionable church, and already its aisles are filled...with gay parties of ladies in feathers and "mousseline-delaine dresses" and dandies with moustaches and high-heeled boots; the lofty arches resound with astute criticisms upon "Gothic architecture" from fair ladies who have had the advantage of foreign travel, and scientific remarks upon "acoustics" from elderly millionaires who do not hear quite as well as formerly.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 60

(Continued)
There was a competition for Grace Church, though it appears that family position and favoritism got Renwick the job. His only qualifications as an architect were training as an engineer and employment on the building of the Erie Railroad and the Croton Aqueduct. He was, in a sense, part of the tradition of the gentleman amateurs who had built (or initiated) the buildings in the Nation's capital and the great mansions on the James. Strong, who could not find it in his heart to say a good word for Renwick, wrote of a conversation about Grace Church with its architect:

"If the infatuated monkey showed the slightest trace or germ of feeling for his art, one could pardon and pass over blunders and atrocities so gross as to be palpable even to my ignorance; but nature cut him out for a boss carpenter and the vanity and pretension that are endurable in an artist are not endured in a mechanic, and especially not in one who is a mechanic in spite of his ennobling vocation, and degrades, vulgarizes, and pollutes every glorious idea of form of the successive eras of Christian art that he travesties and tampsers with, as a sacrifice to the stolidity of building committees and his own love of fat jobs and profitable contracts.

He had many fat jobs. He designed hotels and stores, asylums and hospitals, apartment houses, row houses, and a workhouse for prisoners. He designed the main building for Vassar College, basing it on the Tuileries. But as a young man he was caught up in the prevailing romantic preoccupation with keeps and dungeons illuminated by flashes of lightning and ringing with the clash of sword on shield."

Later in the century (1877-79) the property on the Fourth Avenue side was developed by Renwick's firm and after his death by the Architects Heins and LaFarge, who designed St. John the Divine. The structures included a Chantry (1879), Grace House (1880), Grace Memorial House (1882-83), Clergy House (1902), and a Choir School. History has been kinder to Renwick than his critics. Grace Church is as much a masterpiece as his Smithsonian Castle on the Mall in the Nation's capital.
**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

(See continuation sheet).

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

- **ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY**: approximately one acre
- **UTM REFERENCES**
  - Zone A: 58 512 0 0
  - Zone C: 45 10 9 28 0
  - Zone B: 80 E 0
  - Zone D: 0
- **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**: Bounded on the West by Broadway; on the north by Lot 9 (806 Broadway); on the east by Lots 50-53 (102, 100, 98 and 94 Park Avenue South, a/k/a Fourth Avenue), the rear of the lots of Grace Church Houses (92, 90 and 88 Park Avenue South, a/k/a Fourth Avenue) and Lots 37-39 and 41 (86, 84, 80-2 Park Avenue South, a/k/a Fourth Avenue); on the south by East 10th Street. Building lots, together, from the south-west corner; north 240.4'; then east 150'; then south approximately 245'; then west 152.8'.

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
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**FORM PREPARED BY**

- **NAME / TITLE**: Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian
- **ORGANIZATION**: National Park Service - Historic Sites Survey Division
- **STREET & NUMBER**: 1100 L Street, NW.
- **CITY OR TOWN**: Washington, D. C.
- **DATE**: 4/19/77
- **TELEPHONE**: 202-523-5464

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- National _____
- State _____
- Local _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-666), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

**FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE**

**TITLE**

**DATE**

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

- [ ] I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
- [ ] DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHOEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
- [ ] KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**ATTEST:**

**DATE**


-RAE CHURCH

# BOH
RECTOR

# 800
GRACE CHURCH
GRACE HOUSE

CHANTRY

SCHOOL CHOR

FIFTH AVENUE

BROADWAY

TENTH STREET

N

184
Photographs and Their Descriptions

Location: Grace Church, New York, New York

Photo credit: Sidney Bradford, NPS; N. Y. Landmarks Commission

Photo description: 1. Side View
2. Same as above
3. Same as above
4. Same as above
5. Side windows
6. Front facade
7. Chancery-Grace House
8. Same as above
9. Same as above
10. Same as above
11. Same as above