

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE AND THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE

1047 Amsterdam Avenue (aka 1021-1061 Amsterdam Avenue and 419 West 110th Street [Cathedral Parkway]), Manhattan

Block 1865 / Lots 1, 10, 30 and 8010

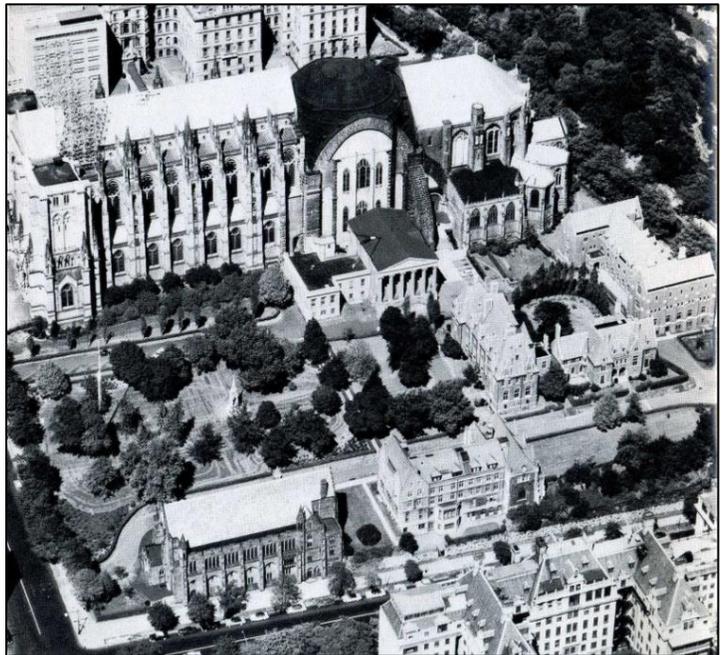
Built: 1838-42; 1892-1941; 1979-85

Architects: Ithiel Town; Heins & Lafarge; Cook & Welch; Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson

Actions: Heard July 12, September 13, and October 11, 1966, December 11, 1979, and November 12, 2002; Cathedral designated June 17, 2003; designation overturned by the City Council

One of the great religious complexes of the world, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and the Cathedral Close serve as the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Along with the Cathedral, the auxiliary buildings are not only considered one of the crowning glories of the Morningside Heights neighborhood, but also constitute one of the outstanding ecclesiastical ensembles in the city.

The complex consists of the cathedral church and six buildings that form the Close, including the Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum building, St. Faith's House, the Choir School, Synod House, the Deanery, and the Bishops House.



The entire site of the Cathedral and Close was originally occupied by the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum, which sold the property to the Episcopal Church in 1887. One building of the Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum was retained – the Greek Revival style building, which has served a variety of Cathedral functions over the years. Built in 1838-42, it is the oldest building in Morningside Heights, and one of the most significant examples of a Greek Revival style institutional building surviving in New York City. It was designed by Ithiel Town, and built by Samuel Thomson

The Cathedral was chartered in 1873 under the leadership of Bishop Horatio Potter. In 1888, an architectural competition was held and won in 1891 by the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge. The winning proposal was an eclectic design incorporating elements of the Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic styles. The first phase of construction began in 1892 with the laying of the cornerstone, and continued to 1911, when the crypt, choir, and crossing were completed. Changes in taste, and the death of Heins in 1907,

brought about a new French Gothic design for the completion of the Cathedral by architect Ralph Adams Cram of the firm Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson. A second construction phase began in 1916 and continued until 1941. During this period, the nave was completed and joined to the choir by a rough-finished crossing, the imposing west front was added, and the north transept was begun. Work resumed in 1979 on the towers of the west front. Although the Cathedral is presently unfinished, it remains the largest church in the United States and the largest cathedral in the world, rising to a height of 124 feet, and an entire length of 601 feet. Its monumental size, which takes advantage of its lofty location above Morningside Park, coupled with its fine detailing, such as arched buttresses topped by finials and arched portals with life-sized figures on pedestals, creates one of the most impressive architectural statements in the city.

Along with the Cathedral, the auxiliary buildings and grounds of the Cathedral Close are not only considered one of the crowning glories of the Morningside Heights neighborhood, which came to be known as “the Acropolis of the New World” for the many cultural institutions that moved there in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also constitute one of the outstanding ecclesiastical ensembles in the city. The Collegiate Gothic style St. Faith’s House (1909-11, C. Grant LaFarge) was built as the home of the New York Training School for Deaconesses, an independent Episcopal institution founded in 1890, that was granted a location on the Cathedral grounds by the trustees. The Choir School (1912-13, [Walter] Cook & [Winthrop A.] Welch), also designed in the Collegiate Gothic style, housed the school that was founded in 1901 in order to educate boys who would sing in the Cathedral choir. Synod House (1912-14) was the first of the Cathedral’s auxiliary buildings designed by Ralph Adams Cram of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, its design inspired by French and Spanish Gothic sources. It was built specifically for the purpose of New York hosting the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1913. Among its most notable features are the grisaille glass windows executed by Charles J. Connick, and the main façade’s architectural sculpture by John Evans & Co., both master firms of Boston. Cram also designed two more domestically-scaled, French Chateausque style residences on the Cathedral Close, the Deanery (1913), which served as home of the dean of the Cathedral, and the Bishop’s House (1912-14), for the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York.



