



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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FORMER MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MANHATTAN GIVEN LANDMARK STATUS

Neo-Gothic St. George's Church, Now a Restaurant, Recalls Lower Manhattan's Syrian-American Past; Upper West Side's Dutch Renaissance-Style Mickey Mantle School/P.S. 811M, Is One of New York City's Oldest Extant Public Schools

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the designations of the former St. George's Syrian Catholic Church in Lower Manhattan, and the Mickey Mantle School/P.S. 811M on the Upper West Side as New York City landmarks. The Commission also voted to hold a public hearing on a proposal to landmark the Look Building, at 488 Madison Ave. between 51st and 52nd streets, one of Manhattan's earliest Modernist office buildings by the noted firm of Emery Roth & Sons. It was completed in 1950.



The five-story, neo-Gothic style former church, featuring a vibrant white terra cotta façade, is located at 103 Washington St. between Carlisle and Rector streets, and housed the nation's first Melkite Greek Catholic parish from 1925 until 1966. It was located in a neighborhood known in the early 20th century as "the Syrian Quarter," because it attracted thousands of immigrants from the former Ottoman province of Syria, which include present-day Syria and Lebanon.

"This intact, vibrant former church is the City's most vivid reminder of the time when Washington Street was the Main Street of Syrian America," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "Its history is as fascinating as its architecture is extraordinary."

The building that housed St. George's was originally constructed around 1812, and was three stories in height, with a peaked roof. It was used as a boarding house in the 1850s, and was raised to five stories in 1869. In 1929, four years after the Melkite Catholic parish moved into the building, the church hired Harvey F. Cassab, a Lebanese-American draftsman, to design a new façade, which was completed in 1930. Melkite Catholics recognize the primacy of the Pope, but worship using the Byzantine Rite and follow other Eastern customs.

The chief highlight of the white façade is a polychromatic terra cotta depiction of an armor-clad St. George on a white horse slaying a green dragon. The first three stories are separated into three bays by narrow buttresses, and the ground floor features a recessed main entrance, which is decorated with foliate



ornament and grapes. The façade is crowned by an angular parapet and a central belfry, and is framed by pilasters with pinnacles.

The building is currently occupied by Moran's Restaurant and Bar.



The **Mickey Mantle School/P.S. 811M**, originally opened as Grammar School No. 9 in 1896, at 460-466 West End Avenue, at the corner of 82nd Street. It was designed by C.B.J. Snyder, an architect who served as the City's superintendent of school buildings from 1891 to 1923, and oversaw the construction of nearly 200 new school buildings during that time, as well as numerous alterations and additions to existing school buildings.

Grammar School No. 9 was built as part of a sweeping school construction program launched to meet the City's rapidly expanding population in the late 19th century. The five-story building, designed in the Dutch Renaissance Revival style, has two major facades, and is clad in yellow ironspot Roman brick with grey limestone trim above a limestone base. It has stoops on both the West 82nd Street and West End Avenue facades and a picturesque roofline composed of stepped gables, finial-topped dormers and chimneys. It replaced a wooden school on the same site that may have been built as early as 1829.

“The school's stepped gables and stoop are reminiscent of the 16th and 17th-century public buildings of the Netherlands, which influenced many architects working in 19th-century New York,” said Chairman Tierney. “I am grateful to the New York City School Construction Authority, and its president, Sharon Greenberger, for supporting this important designation.”

Grammar School No. 9 originally opened as a school for girls, and had more than 1,100 students by 1898, the year it was renamed Public School 9. In 1916, it was named the John Jasper School, after a former teacher and principal of the old school that occupied the site who became superintendent of the City's school system. In 2002, it was renamed for the famed Yankees slugger Mickey Mantle, and currently educates children with special needs.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to more than 25,000 buildings, including 1,235 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 96 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.