

St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church

Individual Landmark

147-149 West 123rd Street

Designation Date: March 8, 1994



St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church. Photo by Lorraine Colbert

An embodiment of the cultural life of Harlem during the 19th century, from its period of great urbanization through its physical and demographic changes, the (former) St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church was constructed in 1897-1898 by a German-American congregation, and for over 50 years has been occupied by two African American churches of different denominations.

The present building replaced St. Paul's earlier frame church on the same site, which was built in the mid 1860s to serve a community of German immigrants settling in the area. In 1940, the building was purchased by the 12th Church of Christ, Scientist, founded in 1927 as the first African American congregation of the Christian Science faith in New York City. After a longtime presence by that institution, the building was acquired in 1985 by the Greater Metropolitan Baptist Church, which had separated from one of Harlem's oldest African American congregations, the Metropolitan Baptist Church (founded in 1915).

The church building was designed by Ernest W. Schneider and Henry Herter, architects who established their partnership in New York City in about 1887, and developed a thriving practice in residential and commercial buildings, primarily for clients of German descent. Prior to receiving the commission for St. Paul's, Schneider & Herter had designed at least two

other religious buildings of note, the Park East Synagogue on East 67th Street (1889–90, a designated New York City Landmark), and the (former) Congregation Col Israel Arshi on Forsyth Street (1892).

Faced in bluish-gray Vermont marble, the church building is a distinguished example of late 19th century neo-Gothic church design. The symmetrical tripartite facade, featuring projecting corner towers with prominent spires, is enriched with gabled arches, lancet windows, finials, and an impressive rose window of leaded opalescent glass with jewel work. After nearly a century of use, the church's grandeur and architectural integrity are very much apparent.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)