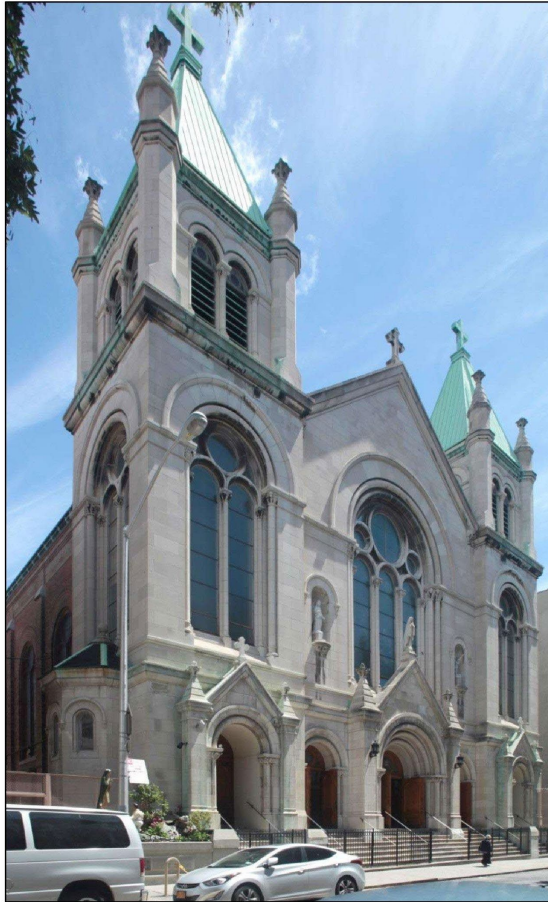


St. Paul Roman Catholic Church

Individual Landmark

121 East 117th Street

Designation Date: June 28, 2016



Saint Paul Roman Catholic Church
Borough of Manhattan
Tax Map Block: 1645, Lot 7 in part
121 East 117th Street
(Photograph: Sarah Moses, 2016)

St. Paul Roman Catholic Church, completed in 1908, is significant as an excellent example of the late Romanesque Revival style. Designed by the firm 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 St. 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 St. 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.

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

[Read testimonies supporting the designation here.](#)