



**Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation**

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TESTIMONY OF THE GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
REGARDING PROPOSED INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF
ST. NICHOLAS OF MYRA CARPATHO-RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
288 East 10th Street, Manhattan
October 28, 2008

Thank you Commissioners for the opportunity to testify before you today. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation strongly supports the proposed designation of St. Nicholas of Myra Orthodox Church, located at 288 East 10th Street, as an individual landmark. St. Nicholas of Myra was designed in 1882-83 by James Renwick, Jr., one of New York's great 19th century architects. If designated, the church would join the ranks of nearly ten other Renwick buildings deemed by the Commission as worthy of landmark status.

Like several of Renwick's other masterpieces, such as St. Patrick's Cathedral and Grace Church, St. Nicholas of Myra is designed in the Gothic Revival style, for which the architect is best known. The stately, stepped archway at the entrance, the intact arch-headed Gothic stained-glass chapel windows, and the exuberant use of terra-cotta to complement the church's matching red brick all speak to Renwick's ability merge playful details into a cohesive whole. Other features, such as the Romanesque tower, display a departure from the strict Gothic style and speak to Renwick's versatility.

Yet St. Nicholas of Myra is not simply a splendid building by a prominent architect. The church's history also reflects the greater cultural history of the East Village. It was constructed by Rutherford Stuyvesant as a memorial chapel and parish house for St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery - itself one of the East Village's most iconic landmarks - following the death of his wife, Mary Pierrepont Rutherford Stuyvesant. A relative of both Hezekiah Pierrepont and Peter Stuyvesant, two of early New York's most influential men, Mary represented a wealthier class of residents who inhabited the East Village in the 19th Century.

From circa 1909-1911, the church came to be occupied by the Holy Trinity Slovak Lutheran Church, which served the flourishing, local immigrant community. Finally, as has been the case with many East Village and Lower East Side Churches, St. Nicholas of Myra changed denominations once again when it was rented in 1925, and purchased in 1937, by the present Orthodox Christian Congregation.

At the September 16th public hearing on the designation of the Public Bank of New York on East 6th Street, Commissioner Vengoechea spoke of the "East Village trove that's yet to be discovered". We commend the Commission for its recent attention to the wealth of unprotected historic buildings in this neighborhood. With this in mind, we urge the Commission to landmark St. Nicholas of Myra Orthodox Church, a distinguished part of the East Village "trove", both for its ties to the neighborhood's cultural history and for its remarkable design by an acclaimed architect.

Thank you.