10th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
Celebrating All Faiths:
A Decade of Sacred Sites Open House

Exploring Interfaith
Bringing people and places together

Dear Friends,

We hope you are safe and well and adjusting to our new reality. We understand what a difficult time this is for congregations. Our annual Sacred Sites Open House is an opportunity to let your communities know about your history and your social service and cultural programs. Because of the current circumstances, this year’s Open House, our 10th Anniversary, will take place virtually, throughout the month of August, allowing us to share New York’s extraordinary houses of worship with a global audience. Please feel free to contact us at sacredsites@nylandmarks.org if you have any questions.

Conservancy staff are adjusting too. Working from our homes, we are continuing to help people and institutions who depend on our grants, loans, preservation services, and advocacy. Our Sacred Sites program is dedicated to the preservation of historic religious architecture throughout New York State. We are one of a handful of programs in the country offering financial help to religious properties and the only program covering an entire state.

Our Sacred Sites Committee met in April via Zoom and approved 21 grants totaling $337,000 to institutions across the state. The grants will help fix stained glass windows, replace leaky roofs, restore steeples, repoint masonry, and shore up sagging foundations.

Since 1986, Sacred Sites has awarded 1,547 grants totaling over $11.8 million, helping restore 824 religious buildings, regardless of denomination. Our grants have had an outsized impact, helping historic religious properties complete restoration work totaling more than $716 million. Maintaining and restoring these facilities has enabled them to continue to serve their communities with day care, senior programming, food pantries, and cultural programming. Within the last year alone, our grantees provided services to over 290,000 individuals.

We are pleased to present our latest edition of our program publication, Common Bond. In this issue you will find timely articles on virtual worship services; accessibility and fire prevention for historic houses of worship; and a feature on our Long Island funding partner, the Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation. We hope you find it interesting and useful.

Our very best wishes to you, your congregations, and families.

President

Common Bond is the technical journal of the Sacred Sites Program of the NY Landmarks Conservancy.

The New York Landmarks Conservancy offers congregations throughout New York State financial and technical assistance to maintain, repair, and restore their buildings. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of dollars in matching grants each year, the Conservancy offers technical help, workshops for building caretakers, and publications.

Editor: Ann-Isabel Friedman
Contributors: Mari S. Gold, Claire Cancilla, Chris Marion, Emily Softle, Michael Doyle & Andy Liu
Design: Travis Matts

Back issues are available in print and online at www.nylandmarks.org, Common Bond page.

For additional information about the Sacred Sites Program or Common Bond, please contact Ann Friedman at annfriedman@nylandmarks.org

The New York Landmarks Conservancy

Common Bond of the NY Landmarks Conservancy

From the President

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By Michael Doyle and Andy Liu

Sacred Sites Grants of 2019
The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, Inc. – A Funding Partnership for Long Island’s Sacred Sites

By Mari S. Gold

Maria S. Gold is a New York City-based freelance writer who contributes to several magazines and websites. Among the topics she covers are food, travel, dance, theatre and other arts. Her blog “But I Dance, Theatre and Other Arts” focuses on cultural events, travel and food at: www.marigoldonline.net

1 The Rev. Miller of Old First Presbyterian Church accepts grant check from Conservancy President Peg Breen

2 Old First Trustee President Cindy Samuels, Kathryn Curran of the Gardiner Foundation, and Gardiner Foundation trustee Judge Cohalan

“...So many organizations don’t understand the grant process,” said Kathryn R. Curran, Executive Director of the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, which primarily supports the study of New York State history. “When a site has first worked with the New York Landmarks Conservancy the staff has more insight so it makes ongoing work easier at their end and ours.”

The relationship between the Gardiner Foundation and the New York Landmarks Conservancy began in 2016 when both parties independently helped fund the restoration of the steeple at Old First Presbyterian Church in Huntington, Long Island. The Conservancy held a press event at the church, which dates from 1784, to generate more interest in, and potentially interest new funders for, Long Island projects. This event was followed by a luncheon hosted by Conservancy board member Bernadette Castro, former Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Attendees included leadership from Old First. Conservancy board members, local officials and other funders of the project, including Curran and a Gardiner Foundation trustee, Judge Peter Fox Cohalan. Curran and Ann Friedman, Director of the Sacred Sites program at the Conservancy, took the opportunity to talk about their work with historic houses of worship, and ways that both organizations might collaborate in the future.

This funding and relationship with the Gardiner Foundation has resulted in a huge jump in the Conservancy’s outreach and grant awards in Suffolk County, with the Gardiner Foundation referring nearly all inquiries from religious sites to Sacred Sites staff. In the seven years prior to collaborating with the Gardiner Foundation, the Conservancy awarded 14 grants to 13 Long Island churches and synagogues, totaling $157,500, which helped fund nearly $1.2 million in restoration work. Then, in just the first two years with funding and project referrals from the Gardiner Foundation, the Conservancy was able to exceed the totals of the prior seven years, pledging 15 grants to 10 historic religious institutions, totaling $167,500, helping to fund $1.26 million in restoration projects.

“The Conservancy’s Sacred Sites staff is so user-friendly and gentle,” Curran continued. For instance, with the United Methodist Church of Patchogue, Conservancy staffers spent hours helping church leadership step back from their impulse to rush to address urgent repairs at their site and take a more long-term view.

Beginning in 2003, the United Methodist Church of Patchogue had received several prior Conservancy grants for masonry and roof repairs but, despite having spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, the building continued to leak badly, causing huge areas of plaster in the sanctuary to become dangerously loose. The Conservancy referred the church to architectural conservator Joel Snodgrass, (who coincidentally, consults with the Gardiner Foundation, providing technical review of its other construction grants). Curran joined Conservancy staff at our site visit with church trustees, and her endorsement of our consult referral provided strong reinforcement.
After the records are understood, religious institutions can approach local high schools, where students in need of community service credits can be enlisted to help set up a database. It’s a win-win: students get the hands-on experience and organizations get the benefit of learning how to handle material and preserve valuable, old historical records.

A successful model for student-senior archives projects is one the Gardiner Foundation funded at the University of Rochester in 2018, to transcribe, annotate, and digitize manuscript archives of the family of William Henry Seward, (1801-1872), Secretary of State, U.S. Senator, state senator, and Governor of New York.

*For more information and project details, please check the link in the margins.*

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Historic sites — whether historic house museums or older houses of worship — need to learn how to market themselves. Curran points out, often by capitalizing on services they provide to their community. "If a site doesn’t practice outreach they aren’t focusing on growth as they need to." Community programs: pre-school, day care and after-school centers, senior programs, food and clothing pantries, concert series and other cultural programs serve hundreds of community residents, well beyond congregation members. Multiple community programs warrant Foundation support of these institutions, even when congregation membership numbers are small.

In evaluating Sacred Sites grant applications, the Conservancy considers the number of community members served annually by various programs. Historic houses of worship are important landmarks, and restoration investment is an investment not only for a building but also for the community programs it houses. In 2019, the Conservancy’s 46 Sacred Sites grantees provided social and cultural services to 645,000 community residents. This is an astounding number relative to congregation size — each with an average of just 100 active members, representing a multiple of at least 140x membership. The Conservancy, with the support of funders like the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, is proud to support these vital institutions, assisting them with capital repairs so that they can continue to serve their communities.

Rather than funding another repair campaign that might not be effective, the Conservancy’s initial grant helped fund a conditions assessment by Snodgrass, allowing the church to pinpoint the source of leaks. This ensured that the Conservancy could confidently award a second grant of $20,000 towards roof and masonry repairs, knowing that repairs would address specific areas of flashing, gutters, and masonry, thereby curing the leaks.

The First Congregational Church of Riverhead was another project independently funded by both the Conservancy and the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation prior to their funding partnership, in 2015. Major grants helped the congregation fund urgent, $425,000 stabilization of the failing roof truss at the sanctuary, a late Victorian and Shingle Style balloon frame structure dating from 1909. Having repaired the truss and roof, the congregation needed to raise an additional $115,000 to replace the sanctuary ceiling and restore interior finishes and stained glass windows.

On their own, the congregation mounted an impressive community outreach campaign. They did some basic genealogical research to identify living relatives of those who founded the church so they could reach out to them. In some cases they were able to say to a prospect that some of the stained glass windows in need of restoration had their family name embedded in them, encouraging donors.

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Recent grants resulting from
Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation/New York Landmarks Conservancy Partnership:

01 After restoring their roof truss and sanctuary in 2014-2015, First Congregational Church of Riverhead raised an additional $20,000 in 2018 to restore the diamond-pane wood sash at their rear community wing (the original 1841 chapel, shifted to the rear of the lot and repurposed in 1909). With Gardiner Foundation funding, the Conservancy was able to provide a $4,000 grant towards this window project. Top, late 19th century diamond pane windows; bottom, detail, makeshift patch at deteriorated window muntin.

02 First Presbyterian Church, Southold, dating from 1803, requested a grant for steeple repair. Concerned that the contractor might not be addressing underlying structural issues, the Conservancy and Gardiner Foundation referred the church to consultant Joel Sondgrass, who advised on repairs to address severe rot at tower framing. Southold church leadership, Conservancy staff, and Kathryn Curran met at church to discuss project management. With Gardiner Foundation support, the Conservancy provided an initial grant of $3,500 towards this steeple assessment. The thorough assessment enabled a second grant of $30,000 towards planned $160,000 repairs.

03 The United Methodist Church of Bay Shore applied to the Conservancy mid-way through a $350,000 capital campaign, having already completed roof replacement, and repair and repainting of the church’s 1893 façades. With Gardiner Foundation funding, the Conservancy was able to provide a referral and grant of $6,000 to fund an assessment of dramatic paint failure at the pressed metal sanctuary ceiling and columns, to identify historic paint colors and a method to safely remove peeling paint and effectively repaint the sanctuary. The Conservancy also provided a second grant of $15,000 towards replacement of the flat roof at the mid-century, modern day care-nursery school wing. Top left: United Methodist of Bay Shore. Top right: A class in the pre-school wing of the church. A $15,000 Conservancy-Gardiner grant helped fund a new roof to keep pre-schoolers safe and dry. Middle left: Paint was peeling at pressed metal ceiling and walls. Bottom left: detail of failing paint at sanctuary column.
The 212-acre campus of the Sisters of Joseph Motherhouse is a National Register-listed complex constructed between 1901 and 1965, featuring a Spanish Mission Revival school, nursing-care and convent complex, and Romanesque chapel, all of buff brick with tile roofs, constructed between 1927 and 1933. The Sisters applied for a grant to help fund masonry repairs to the deteriorated brick façade of the Sacred Heart Chapel, a magnificent structure with a 90 foot campanile, and lavish sanctuary with Guastavino tiles, onyx altar, and carved alabaster windows. Conservancy staff and board members were concerned that the cause of severe step-cracking, likely foundation subsidence due to sub-surface soil conditions, was not being adequately addressed. With the help of Gardiner Foundation funding, the Conservancy pledged two grants: $10,000 for an engineering assessment and crack monitoring program, and $20,000 towards masonry repairs.

A press event at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Northport celebrated our first year of Gardiner Foundation-Conservancy grant projects. St. Paul’s received a $35,000 grant for bell tower and window restoration.
Worship in the time of COVID-19: How Some NY Congregations are Responding

By Mari S. Gold

The pandemic and accompanying social distancing have disrupted many familiar parts of life. Worship services are no exception. Many religious institutions are rising to the challenge, meeting the needs of congregants in varied, creative ways relying largely on modern technology.

B’nai Jeshurun is a Conservative synagogue on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Rabbi Felicia Sol offers a Friday evening Zoom Shabbat service which is then live streamed to the wider community. Saturday mornings there is a livestream Shabbat service for adults and a Facebook Live service for young families. Rabbi Sol is joined by Rabbi Matalong and Hazzan (Cantor) Priven. “We pray together, standing six feet apart in an otherwise empty sanctuary,” Rabbi Sol said. “We are also doing funerals and shiva minyans [home prayer services for mourners] via Zoom which is incredibly important and meaningful for families.”

The Rev. Kathleen Liles, Rector of Christ & Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, began streaming Mass on YouTube the week after Easter. “I’ve tried to do this a little differently,” he says, “by reading aloud the first part of the service and then moving to the altar. Our outreach has been especially hard by the virus. At Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts says he finds preaching to an empty church “a little difficult” but “if the spirit comes I can present the word of God.”

Abyssinian also live streams Bible study and has organized Quarantips, a seminar via Zoom, dealing with physical and mental health, navigating unemployment, financial considerations and other practical topics.

Abyssinian is one of some two dozen churches that partnered with New York City as Covid-19 testing sites. These churches are in majority-people-of-color communities, areas that have been especially hard by the virus.

The Rev. John Komas, Pastor at St. Jean Baptiste, a Roman Catholic parish on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, began streaming Mass on YouTube the week after Easter. “I’ve tried to do this a little differently,” he says, “by reading aloud the first part of the service and then moving to the altar. Our outreach has been very well received, he added, with positive comments on our website from people outside our regular area including those from New Jersey and Montana.”

Forest Home Chapel, a Methodist congregation in Ithaca, opens Zoom a half hour before Sunday morning services using Zoom. Jeffrey Guyton, a co-clerk of the congregation’s doors. At Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts says he finds preaching to an empty church “a little difficult” but “if the spirit comes I can present the word of God.” Abyssinian also live streams Bible study and has organized Quarantips, a seminar via Zoom, dealing with physical and mental health, navigating unemployment, financial considerations and other practical topics.

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of the Meeting, reports that Zoom gatherings are “warm, friendly and spiritually resonant.” Virtual services are not typical for Quaker worship, but, he observes “We are presently in a new world where personal reinforcement and encouragement is needed more than ever.”

Rabbi Sam Reinstein of Kol Israel, a modern Orthodox community in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, explained that in Orthodox practice, work, which includes the use of electronic devices, is prohibited during Saturday Sabbath worship services, and on Jewish holidays. Instead, Torah readings and other programs take place on different days via Google Meets, which the synagogue used prior to the health crisis.

“On some level, everyone is more open with the use of technology,” he says. “For instance, some members are asking religious questions.”

Virtual services are not typical for Quaker worship in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. On May 1, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Andrew C. Blum discussed this during a live-streamed Mass. “There were a few glitches to work out due to our tax-exempt status, but these were overcome,” he said. “Our present circumstance has called for a lot of quick, creative thinking.” However, Naz Georgas of Cordoba House notes “Ramadan is a time when members tend to donate generously.” Community members are asked to donate online after worship services like they would do in a mosque.

University Presbyterian Church in Buffalo sends a weekly email with prayers, bible passages and a text of the sermon. John Swaine, a church Elder, says they also provide video links to the sermon, and links to the music director playing piano or organ on Youtube. University Presbyterian’s food pantry is handing out pre-packed bags from the kitchen window and has seen the number of new clients increase. Many of the usual volunteers are in high risk groups and can no longer safely help. But new volunteers have stepped in to meet the need.

Fundraising, however, has proven problematic at many religious institutions since the pandemic shut down services. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, an Episcopal church on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, has a big yellow PayPal button on its website’s homepage. Rev. Dr. Andrew C. Blum discussed this during a live-streamed Mass. “There were a few glitches to work out due to our tax-exempt status, but these were overcome,” he said. “Our present circumstance has called for a lot of quick, creative thinking.”

Religious institutions accept the reality of dealing with the pandemic while hoping for a more inclusive future. As Duke University sociologist Mark Chaves, director of the National Congregations Study, said in a recent Washington Post article, “research from previous recessions show that their impact is mostly negative: People have less money to give.”

Fundraising is likely to remain a challenge. As Duke University sociologist Mark Chaves, director of the National Congregations Study, said in a recent Washington Post article, “research from previous recessions show that their impact is mostly negative: People have less money to give.”

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Virtual worship is likely to continue at least in the near future. On May 1, The Rt. Rev. Andrew Dietsche, Bishop of New York, announced the continued suspension of public worship in the Episcopal Diocese of New York until July 1.

But online worship has some upsides. A Pew Research Survey conducted in April found that 42% of people now worshipping online said their faith had grown stronger.

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Reverend Sharon Codner-Walker has been the Senior Pastor of Stuyvesant Heights Christian Church in Brooklyn’s Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood since September, 2018. Among the challenges facing Rev. Codner-Walker in this new posting were many years of deferred maintenance at this large church facility, comprised of a Sunday School Chapel building, now a day care center, and a large corner sanctuary building, all dating from 1873-1874. The Victorian Gothic complex is in a New York City landmark historic district, so all exterior repairs need to be reviewed and approved by the City’s Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Two areas of great concern were a leaking roof at the day care center building – immediately above an infant changing table – and a monumental, 36’ high window overlooking a busy street, so rotted that chunks of wood had begun raining onto the sidewalk. Rev. Codner-Walker contacted the Landmarks Commission, and they directed her to the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program. After meeting with Landmarks Commission staff and Rev. Codner-Walker at the church in mid-October, the Conservancy provided referrals to roofing consultant Russ Watsky and Paul Mulcahy of PM Restorations/Right Path Construction, a custom wood window company.

In December, 2018, The New York Landmarks Conservancy awarded an initial grant of $3,500 to fund project management of urgent rear chapel roof replacement (ultimately guiding the congregation through a $43,000 project) as well as funding a hands-on investigation of the severely deteriorated, monumental wood tracery window at the Tompkins Avenue side of the building. The window investigation, performed with a hydraulic lift, confirmed severe rot requiring window replacement rather than repair, a likely $250,000 to $300,000 project. Initially, the Conservancy proposed shoring the rotted window in place to prevent a catastrophic collapse while fundraising went on. Shoring would have cost $30,000, a big number for a temporary “band-aid.” Fortunately, the congregation secured a loan from their denomination, as well as a substantial loan from a member, and was successful in fundraising. This enabled the congregation to pursue immediate window replacement instead of the costly interim measure. The Conservancy referred the church to Sunlites Stained Glass Studio for a proposal to address the original, stenciled stained glass components of the window assembly, and in April 2019, the Conservancy awarded a second grant of $30,000 towards in-kind replacement of this monumental wood window, and stabilization of the original, stenciled stained glass windows.
Proposals were finalized and authorized in June and work began over the summer.

Rev. Codner-Walker and several trustees made two visits to the stained glass studio in the summer and fall to review the condition of the original, stenciled stained glass and to discuss needed repairs with studio principal Patrick Clark. Rather than simply stabilize the most intact windows, leaving the remaining windows packed in storage for future re-installation, the church authorized an additional $64,000 for stained glass restoration, including partial re-leading and replication and replacement of missing or severely deteriorated glass sections. Altogether, window restoration costs totaled more than $295,000. In November, the window fabricator started to install the replacement window; once installed, stained glass installation followed. The goal was to substantially complete installation by Christmas, 2019; however, as with many major construction projects, it was January before window installation was complete, and this was followed by a month of plaster repairs at the window jambs. Just as now-restored stained glass panel was to have been installed in March, the Covid-19 virus emergency caused all construction to cease. Work resumed, and was successfully completed in June, as New York City began a phased reopening.

This is just one of three monumental sanctuary windows in need of substantial replacement/ restoration. It was the most dangerously deteriorated and located just above the sidewalk. A second, identical window overlooks a rear-yard alley; and the third window is at the balcony level, above the entrance porch.

“This restoration work is important far beyond the physical results,” says Rev. Codner-Walker. “It’s a message of hope to the community.”

“Bedford Stuyvesant is an area with a lot of gang violence and random shootings,” she continued. At the same time, the neighborhood is undergoing gentrification with new buildings being built, in effect making it an area that is no longer economically accessible to many. “But our church is still here,” she emphasizes. “It had been kept poorly and was falling apart. But this restoration sends a message of renewed life. It tells people that even if we have little or no means we are unwilling to allow our voices to fade and to allow meaningful worship, culture and generational memories to fade or die.”

In addition to worship services on Sundays with roughly 200 attending and Bible Study on Wednesday evenings, the church hosts a five-day per week pre-school and daycare center, housed in its former Sunday School chapel, with 40 students, as well as a weekday after-school center for students aged four to 12 with 40 students. A bi-monthly food pantry program serves 85 to 123 clients every other Thursday. A young adult outreach program serves 30 participants monthly. The church hosts monthly clothing drives for Dress for Success, with 40 participants; a semi-annual health symposium with 125 to 200 participants, and a semi-annual mental health certificate training program with 35-50 trainees. The church also hosts several annual programs, including a community outreach Thanksgiving meal with 100 attendees, and holiday coat and toy drives. Altogether, community outreach programs serve 3,500 individuals.

“I’m delighted that in the two years I’ve been here, our congregation has increased by over 65 members,” Rev. Codner-Walker said. “It’s also a point of pride that the Boy Scouts once again hold troop meetings here.”

“The church had ceased to be mission-driven,” Rev. Codner-Walker observed. “Now we have embraced several programs. The Angel Tree program helps incarcerated people connect with their children, delivering messages from parents in prison to their families, and arranging the delivery of gifts to mark special occasions. We are also connected to the Disciples of Christ Home Mission which sends funds to help rebuild houses that have been flooded or destroyed in some other way. The actual homes may be far from us geographically but the energy connects us.” The newly restored window is a visible sign to both congregation and neighborhood, symbolizing the congregation’s renewal.

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9 Historic stained glass undergoing restoration

10 Meeting with Rev. Codner-Walker (2nd from right), church board members, and stained glass studio principal Patrick Clark (3rd from left) reviewing window restoration plans

11 Window fabricator, Paul Muckle (left) and stained glass studio principal, Patrick Clark (right) discussing how restored stained glass will be installed within the newly installed window

12 Restored window
ONE OF AMERICA’S OLDEST MOSQUES

MOSLEM MOSQUE
WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN

By Claire Cancilla

Claire Cancilla received an M.S. in Historic Preservation from Columbia in May 2020. This article was excerpted from her National Register nomination for the mosque, submitted for Prof. Andrew S. Dolkart’s “National Register Nominations” class.
The Lipka Tatars, already a small group in their hometowns, comprised an even smaller group in Williamsburg, and the Moslem Mosque became an important bridge for those who immigrated to the United States. The mosque’s leadership altered the interior and exterior of the former church to reflect their memories of the European Tatar mosques they left behind, which were generally square-plan wooden structures with a hip roof and a cupola. While the original wood cornice on the gable roof, featuring pairs of elaborately carved Italianate wooden brackets, bead-and-reel molding, and a paneled frieze, remains, the original wood spire at the rooftop fleche was replaced with a cupola and crescent finial. On the interior, the first-floor entrance vestibule and social hall was re-sided with wood panels, intended to reference the wooden mosques found in Lithuania, Belarus, and Poland.

The Powers Street mosque connects an early Muslim community in the United States with more than 600 years of Lipka Tatar history in eastern Europe. Even before they purchased land for their own mosques, Brooklyn’s Lipka Tatars contributed funds to renovate the mosque in Iwie, Belarus, the town from which many had emigrated. The Lipka Tatar population of approximately 12,000 is now spread throughout southern Lithuania, northeastern Poland and northwestern Belarus. While there were still twenty-five mosques in Lithuania on the eve of World War I, only three remain—one in Keturiasdint Totoriu, 12 miles south of Vilnius, and the other two in the nearby village of Nemezis. Seven miles southeast of

No New York City mosque has ever been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, although there has been a Muslim community here since the 17th Century. That is about to be remedied, as the state historic preservation office is currently reviewing the nomination of New York City’s oldest standing mosque, which sits on a quiet residential block in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. A simple, rectangular, gable-fronted, two-story, wood-frame structure with vernacular Italianate and Gothic Revival elements, the Moslem Mosque was designed by Williamsburg architect O.H. Doolittle and originally constructed in 1864 as a Methodist Church. The American Mohammedan Society, the oldest Islamic organization formed in the United States, bought the building in 1931 and transformed it into a mosque that reminded its congregants of their hometowns, comprised an even smaller group in Williamsburg, and the Moslem Mosque became an important bridge for those who immigrated to the United States. The mosque’s leadership altered the interior and exterior of the former church to reflect their memories of the European Tatar mosques they left behind, which were generally square-plan wooden structures with a hip roof and a cupola. While the original wood cornice on the gable roof, featuring pairs of elaborately carved Italianate wooden brackets, bead-and-reel molding, and a paneled frieze, remains, the original wood spire at the rooftop fleche was replaced with a cupola and crescent finial. On the interior, the first-floor entrance vestibule and social hall was re-sided with wood panels, intended to reference the wooden mosques found in Lithuania, Belarus, and Poland.

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Vilnius, and Raibiai, 55 miles southwest of Vilni-
us. Four others are located in the northeastern
Polish settlements of Kruzyziany and Bohoniki,
along the Belarus border about 30 miles east of
Bialystok and 150 miles northeast of War-
saw; and the Belarusian towns of Navahrud-
dak and Iviye, 100 to 120 miles farther east.4

The Powers Street mosque resembles these
mosques, by the intention of its members, and
creates a direct link with Tatars living in Europe.

The Powers Street mosque is not just a link to
the Tatars’ homeland, however. It is also a
physical representation of how this commu-

nity socialized, worshiped, and adapted to
life in the United States. When the mosque
first opened its doors, its role as a social and
religious center was apparent – one to two
hundred congregants would typically gather
for Friday night services. While the vast ma-
jority of the congregation were Lipka Tatars,
congregants from Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Afghan-
istan, and Albania also worshipped there. The
mosque continued to grow, from about 200
regular members in 1931 to more than 400 by
the 1950s, providing a place for the commu-
nity, particularly new immigrants, to gather
and support one another. Throughout the
1960s, the mosque still buzzed with social and
religious activity.6 Immigration by Lipka Tatars
to the United States largely ceased during
the Cold War, however, and in succeeding
years, attendance at the mosque declined
as many members of the next generation of
congregants moved to other New York neigh-
borhoods or out of the city entirely.8 Although
much of the Tatar community that grew in
Williamsburg has dispersed across New York
and the country, the mosque, including its
alterations since its construction in 1886, serves
as an important physical connection to the
history of the Lipka Tatars. Today, descen-
dants of the founding families from throughout
the Northeast continue to gather here to cel-

erate major holidays and life cycle events,

and open their doors to share the story of their
community with visitors.

Footnote 4
Hussain, “The Amazing
Survival of the Baltic
Muslims,” BBC World
Magazine, January 1st,
2016.

Footnote 5
"Mohammedans to Open
Fast of Ramadan Today," The
New York Herald Tribune,
November 5th, 1937; James Simonds
Footnote 6
“A Record for the Church-
es,” The Brooklyn Daily
Eagle, May 25th, 1934.

Footnote 7
Ryan Schuessler, “They
Gave Her the Keys to
the Mosque – and Now
She Wants to Open its
Doors to the Neighbor-
hood.” The World,
December 12th, 2016,
https://www.pr.org/
stories/2016-12-12/they-
gave-her-keys-mosque-
and-now-she-wants-open-
it-doors-neighborhood.

Footnote 8
Ibid.
KINDRED OPEN HOUSES -
A Similar Sacred Sites Open House Program in Canada

By Mari S. Gold
In this 10th anniversary year of the New York Landmarks Conservancy’s Sacred Sites Open House, it was exciting to learn that there is a program in Québec similar to ours!

We were consulted by Journée du Patrimoine Religieux (Religious Heritage Days Open House), a program of the Conseil du Patrimoine Religieux du Québec (The Québec Religious Heritage Council), inquiring how we plan and manage our event. The Religious Heritage Council is a Québec-wide non-profit organization with a mission of supporting and promoting the conservation and enhancement of Québec’s religious heritage.

The Canadian open house was launched in 2018 with 25 sites, increasing in 2019 to 70 sites. In both years all sites were located in Montréal. In 2020, the 25th anniversary of the parent organization, the plan is to expand to the entire province of Québec.

In 2019 approximately 10,000 visitors participated, drawn by the organization’s Facebook page, website and publicity via traditional media such as newspapers and television news through which they garnered “lots of positive press,” according to Cameron Piper, Conseiller en Patrimoine (Cultural Heritage Advisor). A brochure was designed, printed and inserted on a paid basis into selected editions of local newspapers and distributed to libraries and cultural centers in Montréal.

Québec’s religious buildings have been repurposed in various ways. The Église Saint-François-de-Sales in Neuville outside Québec City was converted into a library, the Bibliothèque Félicité-Angers; Église Sainte-Élisabeth-de-Hongrie in Warwick is now an artisanal cheesemaker, Le Fromagerie du Presbytère; and the former St. James Church in Trois-Rivières was converted by the city into an artistic and cultural center.

*For more information and project details, please check the link in the margins.

01 Before Église Saint-François-de-Sales, Neuville
1.1 - Before
1.2 - Before
1.3 - After

2 Guided Tour, 2018, The Church of the Gesù, Montréal, 1864-1865, Patrick Keely, architect
Photo Credit: Québec Religious Heritage Council

3 Guided Tour, 2019, Temple Thiru Murugan, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Montréal, 1995, enlarged 2003-2006, designed by 9 Indian architects
Photo Credit: Québec Religious Heritage Council

02 Before Église Sainte-Élisabeth-de-Hongrie, Warwick
2.1 - Before
2.2 - Before

1.1 - Before
1.2 - Before
1.3 - After

* Project Link: https://www.cultur3r.com/lieux/eglise-st-james/

1.1-2.2 Photo Credit: Québec Religious Heritage Council
The Council’s new program to facilitate adaptive use provides grants to municipalities and nonprofits to fund up to 75% of the costs of conditions assessments, business plan development, and other preliminary planning costs in an initial, incubator phase; and provides grants to fund up to 50% of both architectural fees and construction costs to adapt religious buildings to new community uses in a second phase of funding.

Québec ranks its historic (45 years old or more; currently, pre-1975) sites as A (essential), B (exceptional), C (superior), D (average) or E (low). To be eligible for grant funding, a place of worship must have been built before 1945 and be classified as an A, B, or C; be built before 1975 and be classified as an A; or listed as a heritage site at the provincial level, in which case it is eligible regardless of its score. Ranking takes into account scores assigned to the interior, exterior, historical significance and other factors including population density and how many houses of worship are in a region— even so, scores alone do not determine how grants will be distributed but play a role in prioritization.

The Québec grant program differs from the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites Program in several ways. The source of Council funds is public, while the Conservancy’s grants are funded via individual donors and foundations. The Council funds restoration on both the interiors and exteriors of religious buildings while the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program, with a regranting budget much smaller than the Québec program, funds only exterior restoration and structural repairs. The Council also funds restoration of church organs and has done so since 1995, while the Conservancy can only advise and refer on organ projects [http://nylandmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CommonBondv28.pdf]. To date, 63 organ restorations have been made possible with two more in progress. Funding for organ restoration work thus far totals $5,205,117 (Canadian).

Despite the difference in program scale, it was gratifying to learn that Québec’s Religious Heritage Days program had much in common with the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites Open House. We were pleased to learn that the Conservancy’s Sacred Sites Open House attracts a similar number of visitors, and it was an honor to share technical advice on how the Conservancy’s sites are identified, and how our sites register their participation. We look forward to collaborating with the Council program in the years to come.

For more on the Conseil du Patrimoine Religieux du Québec, visit http://www.patrimoine-religieux.qc.ca/
Brooklyn Tabernacle
The historic Loew’s Metropolitan Theater transformed into the Non-Denominational Brooklyn Tabernacle Church with paint and prayers. (L) Lobby mural being created in studio, and (R) completed lobby. (2002)

Christ Church United Methodist
The restoration of this Park Avenue treasure is currently underway! (L) Interior before (Credit: Jeremy Seto), and (R) restoration of Guastavino tile ceiling (2020)

Evergreene Architectural Arts
is the nation’s largest specialty contractor for architectural arts, and a long-time supporter of the Sacred Sites (Open House contributing annually to the Common Bond magazine).

All photos in this article are credited to the Evergreene Architectural Arts Team.

For more information on their work, follow this link: evergreene.com

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Temple Emanu-El
The exquisite Temple Emanu-El on East 65th Street in Manhattan, (L) mosaic undergoing restoration, and (R) fully restored (2006)

Trinity Episcopal Church
Restoration of the historic Trinity Wall Street, (L) photo of gilding restoration, and (R) restoration complete at reredos (2019)

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church
Comprehensive restoration of the plaster, paint murals and marble at St. Francis Xavier where over 100 years of incense, candle soot, and dirt had darkened Patrick Keely’s stunning interior, (L) mural undergoing restoration, and (R) completed ceiling restoration (2010)

CELEBRATING ALL FAITHS:
Highlighting Diverse Restorations for NYC Sacred Sites

“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.”
- Exodus 25:8-9

Courtesy EverGreene Architectural Arts
Christopher Marrion is the Founder of Marrion Fire & Risk Consulting and specializes in protecting our Sacred Sites and cultural heritage from fire and disaster. Chris holds a Master’s Degree in Fire Engineering. He is a Special Expert for NFPA, a Board Member of the National Fire Heritage Center, past Board Member for ICOMOS US, and an SFPE Fellow.

For over 30 years he has worked with numerous private and public entities including UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, ICOMOS, etc. His work focuses on providing risk-informed, cost-effective prevention/mitigation, emergency response, and recovery strategies to protect our Sacred Sites, with projects often taking him from New York to India to South America to Mongolia and the outer reaches of Blaion.

Overview
Our sacred sites have always been vulnerable to fire. Throughout New York, fires have devastated our sacred sites over the centuries, and continue to this day, including fires in recent years at the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St Sava, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Kehilath Jeshurun, and Beth Hamedrash Hagodol Synagogue to name a few.

The recent fire at Notre Dame Cathedral reminds us of how vulnerable our Sacred Sites are to fire, and offers an opportunity to reflect on the many measures that can be implemented to limit the potential for fires to start, and b) how devastating these fires may become once started. A number of these safety measures are quite low cost yet are very effective and have a significant impact to help improve safety and protect and preserve our Sacred Sites.

Fire Related Challenges
To help in creating effective solutions to protect our Sacred Sites, it is helpful to understand the issues surrounding these fires, including how they start, and why they become so devastating. In researching past fires, common themes begin to emerge regarding what went wrong and how these fires were able to create so much damage. These common themes include:

- **Numerous ignition sources are typically present:** these include:
  - open flames (i.e., candles, incense, etc.)
  - electrical systems, (i.e. old wiring, short breakers, junction boxes, etc.)
  - lighting systems (i.e. high temperature lights, old wiring/sockets, etc.)
  - appliances (i.e. space heaters, cooking equipment, etc.)
  - temporary electrical equipment (e.g. high intensity lights, multiple extension cords, etc.)
  - external (i.e. lightning, combustion vegetation, etc.)
  - intentionally set fires

While it is not the intention to limit such items as open flames and incense, it is important to recognize the hazard they can present, so they can then be safely managed.

- **Significant Quantities of Combustible Materials are Present** – this includes combustible interior finishes (i.e. wood, fabrics, etc.), furnishings, and exposed combustible structures, as well as storage of combustible materials (i.e. papers, furniture, etc.), which can build up over time.

- **No Early Detection** – early detection of a fire is critical to successfully combating a fire due to how rapidly fires grow. However, fires frequently grow undetected since there is often no detection system to help detect a fire, detectors are not located throughout all areas, and/or the system is not designed to automatically call emergency responders once it detects a fire. This leads to significant delays in notifying occupants, site managers and fire department personnel, while the fire continues to grow exponentially and spread throughout the site.

- **No Automatic Suppression Systems. Automatic fire suppression systems [i.e. sprinklers, water mist systems] help keep a fire very small and limit rapid spread prior to the fire department being notified, and during the time for them to arrive, locate the fire and begin putting water on it. Fire suppression systems also help protect remote and difficult to access spaces (i.e. attics, cellars, etc.) where firefighters may be putting their lives at risk if they were to enter these confined, high challenge spaces that can be filled with significant quantities of smoke and heat, and cannot be readily ventilated. This often results in requiring the fire department to fight the fire from outside, rather than inside.

- **Limited onsite resources to support firefighting efforts** – it is important the fire department is notified immediately, and before the fire gets too large, so they can rapidly get to the site and into the building to locate the fire. Hopefully within a protected, fire rated hallway. On site equipment including enclosed stairways, standpipes, fire hoses, fire pumps, and adequate water supplies are not often available though, and adversely impact firefighters’ ability to reach and rapidly extinguish a fire. Delays in notification, access to the site and determining the specific location of the fire can allow the fire to grow and force the firefighters to fight the fire from outside, rather than from within.

Fires and Vulnerabilities During Restoration/Renovation/Construction
Restoration, renovation, and construction-related work at Sacred Sites create numerous additional fire safety issues beyond those noted above and lead to a significant amount of fires during these efforts. During this period, new ignition sources are typically introduced within the building (e.g. welding, sanding, electrical work, stone cutting, blow torches to remove paint, roof-rolling, temporary equipment, temporary high temperature [i.e., tarp, plastic bags, etc.], as well as potentially significant quantities of combustible materials, including scaffolding, plywood barriers, paints, cleaners, and other construction related materials and debris. This increasing chances for ignition, as well as more rapid spread of fire due to the additional combustible materials.

During these times fire safety systems including the fire alarm and sprinkler systems may be undergoing installation or upgrades, or may be turned off while they are being renovated, so detection may be delayed. Furthermore, doors which help slow fire/smoke spread may have been removed to be restored or blocked open to facilitate the site access. Holes are often made in walls to introduce new HVAC and piping, creating additional pathways for smoke and fire to readily spread not only on the floor, but to floors above and below as well. Response of the fire department can also be further delayed onto the site and getting their equipment near the building due to construction related fencing, material storage, dumpsters, and equipment. Protected exit stairways to provide safe access to upper floors may not be available due to blocked doors, or open doors or may contain construction materials and temporary wiring or piping. All of these add up and further increase the time to start putting water on the fire, while the fire spreads exponentially every minute.

Additionally, fire safety awareness that includes education and on-going training of all workers on site, undertaking on-going detailed risk assessments, providing appropriate prevention and mitigation measures even on a temporary basis, are limited during this time, and thus further increase the vulnerability of the site while this work is undertaken.

Helping Protect Our Sacred Sites from Fire
By Chris Marrion, PE

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over 12+ stories up, high-neighboring buildings and through windows of coming from roof decks has been discharged onto the Synagogue, including most of the ATF system at roof level. (See Ref 2) Unfortunately, the roof was destroyed, along with the choral loft, organ, prayer books and nume rous other valuable and permanent items of significance. Note the substantial quantities of fire hose streams and water being discharged onto the Synagogue, including most coming from roof decks and through windows of neighboring buildings over 12 stories up, higher than most fire ladders.

3 Central Synagogue, New York, NY - A fire occurred at Central Synagogue on August 28, 1998 during a period when the Synagogue was undergoing restoration/renovation, apparently caused by a blowtorch used during installation of an air conditioning system at roof level. (See Ref 2) Unfortunately, the roof was destroyed, along with the choral loft, organ, prayer books and numerous other valuable and permanent items of significance. Note the substantial quantities of fire hose streams and water being discharged onto the Synagogue, including most coming from roof decks and through windows of neighboring buildings over 12 stories up, higher than most fire ladders.

Photo Credit: Stu Honzik
AFP via Getty Images

Misconceptions

There are numerous misconceptions around fires and protecting Sacred Sites and historic buildings. It is beneficial to further understand these and helpful in making informed decisions to protect one’s Sacred Site:

- “Our building meets code and is adequately protected from fire” - building code requirements typically focus on life safety (i.e. occupants, firefighters), and limiting fire spread to adjacent buildings so city-wide fires and conflagrations do not occur as they have in the past. This includes 3 substantial fires in New York City in 1776; 1833 and 1845. Therefore, codes may not address the specific challenges nor unique needs often associated with Sacred Sites, including protecting not only the unique structures, but also the contents and unique and sacred artifacts within, especially if the building is often desired and that may not be addressed per code. Additionally, vulnerable conditions that may have been pre-existing, or were accepted decades ago when the building was built, can also be “grandfathered”, and at times not required to be upgraded. Hence, new fire safety systems and upgrades may not always be retroactively required. Hazard assessments to determine specific issues and needs are thus not typically undertaken, though are often needed and beneficial in understanding what is needed to reduce fire risks.

- “We never had a fire before” – fires occur typically when something hot is in close proximity with something combustible. It may be years, or even centuries, before such an occurrence happens, but when it does, the fires will be substantial, causing extensive, irreversible damage (e.g. Windsor Castle was over 900 years old, Notre Dame Cathedral over 650 years old, when fires occurred in their premises). If there has not been a fire, please note it does not mean a building is “fireproof”, nor that there will never be a fire there.

- “Early Detection is Provided by the Existing Fire Alarm System” – when fire safety systems are required, they may not provide the level of protection assumed or desired (i.e. codes often only require smoke detectors in specific spaces/rooms, rather than providing smoke detectors throughout to help protect the overall building, etc.). If a building “meets code”, or systems were installed “to code”, the remaining questions include: where are these detectors located, how long will it take them to detect a fire in that location, and are there spaces not protected with smoke detectors that will result in substantial delays in notifying emergency responders. Additionally, it is important to confirm if the fire alarm system automatically reports an alarm to the fire department, or just sounds a local beeping at the fire alarm panel in the building, awaiting someone to even
tually hear this beeping and then call the fire department after potentially significant delays.

- “Sprinklers will cause significant damage” – sprinklers automatically detect and suppress fires early, before fires can grow too large. All sprinklers do not go off at once as seen in the movies. Sprinklers operate by heat, not by smoke. Therefore, only the sprinklers exposed to the higher temperatures near the fire may activate (approximately 170 degrees F), and not all sprinklers. Each sprinkler that operates discharges approximately 20 gallons per minute (GPM) of water (a shower head discharges approximately 2.5 GPM). Water mist systems use much less water and create a mist/ fog through high pressure that suppresses fires and helps limit the amount of water used (less than 1GPM). These automatic suppression systems require quantities of water which are significantly less than the 250 GPM discharged from each fire hose. Additionally, oftentimes there are hundreds or even thousands of 5-10” hoses discharging water into/onto the building at this rate, and for significant periods of time on the order of several hours, significantly more than sprinklers, and at much higher pressures creating more damage than sprinklers.

- “There will be more water damage than fire damage from sprinklers” – the comparison in this scenario is typically made between no water damage and the impact of sprinkler water on the building and contents. However, the comparison actually needs to be made between: a) water and fire damage in a sprinkler controlled fire, versus b) water and fire damage from a non-sprinkler controlled fire that would allow the fire to spread throughout the building and needs to include the tens of thousands of gallons of water discharged from firefighters over hours of firefighting efforts. Water related damage is often repairable/recoverable, however, damage from fires is typically not repairable. It is noted also that there are substantial fire and misconceptions regarding sprinklers leaking. Sprinkler systems have very specific design and testing standards. They must pass strict pressure tests and are monitored for water leaks so if there is a leak, one would readily know. It should be noted that there are significant quantities of other pipes that carry water throughout these buildings (i.e. pipes for plumbing, toilets, drains, etc) that actually pose a greater risk to water damage and are often not addressed, but should be if there are concerns regarding potential water damage.

- “Emergency responders will put a fire out before it gets too large” – emergency responders are experts in what they do and will put the fire out eventually, however, there may be extensive damage by the time the fire starts and grows, is detected, emergency responders are notified and respond, and eventually set up their equipment and begin to extinguish it. Fires are not extinguished immediately upon detection, nor upon the arrival of emergency responders, unfortunately. Due to the risks and challenges to life from fighting fires from within historic buildings, fires often in remote and difficult to access locations, exterior fire extinguishing efforts are usually preferred. Due to weatherproof roofs and walls, fighting a fire from the outside also results in challenges, but is safer for firefighters.

- “Fire safety is expensive” – cost comparisons for fire safety are unfortunately typically made between “doing nothing” versus “doing something”. However, the comparison needs to incorporate: a) the significant damage that often results from doing nothing, versus b) the significantly reduced damage that results by providing fire safety measures. There may be reduced insurance costs due to reducing risks that should be included in the comparison as well. In terms of costs, rebuilding after a fire is very expensive, especially when compared to fire significantly lower cost of providing fire safety. There is also the permanent damage and loss of the structure and numerous items of religious significance, ornate interiors, original construction, artwork, and items of unique value and significance. Additionally, there are environmental impact costs, as with...
On February 10, 2018 South Korea’s National Treasure No. 1, the melting/vaporization of the lead roof of Notre Dame Cathedral. Hundreds of tons of lead from the roof of Notre Dame were vaporized into the air, and deposited into the Seine when the cathedral burned in 2019. Fire safety should be considered an ‘investment’, rather than a ‘cost’, in protecting these structures and their invaluable and irreplaceable contents.

Helping Identify Next Steps to Protect One’s Sacred Site from Fire

There are a few important initial steps that should be undertaken, including to help understand the current fire risks, and to be able to make informed, logical decisions around alternatives that are available, and through these steps develop a logical, comprehensive, and risk-informed strategy to prioritize and address the risks:

- Undertaking A Fire Risk Assessment
  To assist in developing and being able to make risk-informed decisions to protect one’s Sacred Site, a fire engineering expert with specific expertise in protecting Sacred Sites and historic structures from fire and addressing their unique needs should be engaged. They should initially evaluate the fire hazards throughout the site and what currently exists to mitigate these hazards. This includes assessing ignition sources, combustible materials, fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, fire separations, exits/evacuation means, and resources for local firefighters, as well as any fire prevention procedures, evacuation plans, and training programs already developed. The consultant should also be fully aware of details and locations of all items of significance that need to be specifically protected, including items of religious significance, artwork, and artifacts. This first step greatly assists in understanding the site-specific hazards, vulnerabilities that exist and potential opportunities to address these.

- Making Informed Decisions
  To assist in making informed decisions incorporating the above findings, the fire expert should work closely with those at the Sacred Site in further understanding issues and concerns, objectives, intended uses of spaces and maintaining their functionality (i.e. ceremonies, numbers of people, use of open flames, etc.) and understanding the maximum acceptable loss/extent of damage allowed to the structure as well as its contents should a fire start. Appropriate fire safety measures and options available can then be developed and evaluated. Measures should be evaluated on their effectiveness in addressing fires, as well as their ability to achieve the intended objectives, limit impacts on the historic fabric and aesthetics of the space, and their overall cost-effectiveness. This process will help to determine how to effectively and efficiently protect one’s Sacred Site, and how to prioritize next steps through this risk-informed decision process.

- Developing a Fire Strategy
  A Fire Strategy helps consolidate all of the information and risk-informed decisions into a tailored, logical, and focused strategic plan to effectively address fire safety issues. This Strategy provides details of all fire safety systems and features, including: design criteria and how systems are to be designed and integrated to effectively work together to limit the fire risk; how the aesthetic and visual impact to the historic fabric will be minimized; and how they meet the intent of the prescriptive codes. This Strategy also serves as a roadmap in relation to identifying fire safety procedures, evacuation management procedures, testing and maintenance plans, and training programs to support the overall Strategy and to ensure that it is sustainable and effective on a long-term basis. Phasing plans may be developed if needed depending on needs and resources. The Fire Strategy is intended to be a dynamic document that is reviewed and updated as necessary.

- Engaging with Local Emergency Responders
  Local emergency responders have a significant amount of beneficial knowledge. Additionally, working with them and familiarizing emergency responders with access into and throughout the Sacred Site (including remote and hard to reach areas), existing fire safety systems, items of religious and artistic significance that should be protected, locations of high hazard areas, and possible venting locations can help in their pre-planning efforts and strategizing how they would respond to a fire.

- Creating Awareness
  Through bringing together various stakeholders including those on site, community members, contractors, and emergency responders, it is possible to create further awareness around challenges and misconceptions and introduce fire prevention measures and opportunities to reduce fire risk. By collaborating, everyone can play a role in and help in protecting these Sacred Sites from fire.

Photographic Evidence

The following sets of photos provide visual evidence of the common causes for fire in sacred sites. Each of the following examples were gathered from an array of sacred sites both in the United States and abroad.
Ignition Sources: Open Flames

Ignition sources in Sacred Sites include open flames that are often part of religious services and ceremonies. As noted, it is not the intention to prevent their use, but rather to help manage them safely so they do not become an ignition source.

Ignition Sources: Lighting

It is important to identify potential ignition sources, including lights as some types of bulbs can produce extremely high temperatures. This includes permanent and temporary spot lights and work lights. Wiring, light sockets and interconnections to lighting fixtures are all possible sources of ignition. Ensure lights are not in close proximity to combustible materials including curtains, drapes, furnishings, etc.

Ignition Sources: Electrical Systems

Electrical wiring presents additional sources for ignition, including old wiring, poor connections, hidden cabling in concealed/unvented areas, underrated fuses, multiple extension cords, and temporary wiring and electrical equipment.

Combustible Materials

There are often numerous items that are combustible, including the structure and its contents. Oftentimes, over the years, significant quantities of combustible materials, flammable/combustible liquids, etc. accumulate. It is also important to consider exterior materials that can burn and further expose our Sacred Sites to external fires, including combustible debris and vegetation that should be properly managed.
Fire Separations

It is important to detect and notify occupants and emergency responders as early as possible. Fire alarm panels should be operational and automatically notify local emergency responders. Detectors should not be covered over, and should ensure they are still connected to the fire alarm panel and are operational, and required periodic testing and maintenance are undertaken. Providing detectors throughout should be considered for early detection and notification to emergency responders.

Detection + Alarm Systems

Fire and smoke need to be contained to the area of origin and not allowed to spread, which creates more damage and challenges for firefighters. Open stairways, propped doors, and breaches in fire rated separations facilitate the rapid spread of fire, heat and smoke throughout a building.

Firefighting

Delayed notification due to no/limited smoke detection, no automatic connection between the fire alarm panel and the fire department to indicate an alarm has occurred, no automatic suppression systems, locked gates/fences, no fire rated steel enclosures of appropriate width and challenges with venting roofs due to various roofing materials (i.e. slate, copper, lead, etc.) lead to larger fires upon arrival that are much more challenging to fight, often requiring extinguishment from the exterior rather than from inside.

Summary

Sacred Sites are susceptible to fires that can quickly become quite devastating. There are, however, opportunities to reduce the probability of fires starting, as well as opportunities to limit the extent of the fire further developing and spreading throughout the site. Through awareness of fire related challenges and misconceptions, working closely with fire experts to undertake hazard assessments and developing a fire strategy based on risk-informed decisions, fire risks will be reduced in an informed and cost-effective manner. Fire risk during restoration and construction at a site can be reduced through training, and use of appropriate safety measures.

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Additional Resources:

- Como Podemos Ajudar a Proteger Ainda Mais Nosso Patrimônio Cultural de Fogo e Desastres, Instituto de Estudos Avançados da USP, US Embassy, ICOM, 2019, C Marrion
- ‘More Effectively Addressing Fire/Disaster Challenges to Protect Our Cultural Heritage’, Journal of Cultural Heritage (2016), C Marrion
- ‘Disaster Risk Management Overview for Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites’, IberMuseos, Risk Management Training Institute Proceedings, Brazil, 2011, C Marrion
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OPENING DOORS:
Accessibility in Historic Houses of Worship

By Michael Doyle and Andy Liu

This past November, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, with program host the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, the NYC landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and the firm of Acheson Doyle Partners sponsored a program called “Opening Doors: Accessibility in Historic Houses of Worship” in the historic undercroft of St. Ignatius Loyola. The event was well attended, and the presentation can be found on YouTube (https://youtu.be/DFnu-BIX-298).

Acheson Doyle Partners has guided many New York congregations through restoration projects, including St. Bartholomew’s on Park Avenue, Beth Eshrim in Park Slope and St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral in Soho. For Common Bond, we will highlight three projects presented, all with different scales and architectural challenges, to further our awareness of approaches to historic compatibility with accessibility improvements.

A simple corbeled 1888 brick church on a park-like corner in Sugar Hill, Harlem: An imposing limestone edifice on Park Avenue with a 1888 Bohemian gothic anomaly on East 74th Street, all with a common issue to be addressed: How to integrate accessibility and “welcome” to these historic and beloved local and civic landmarks.

In the Preservation Community had the opportunity to interact with these diverse faith communities in their plans for a more welcoming presence for not only the different abled community, but also the elderly and parents with young children. Each congregation required a different and unique architectural response to address their needs.

Mount Zion Lutheran Church

The fence restoration and planting will facilitate the corner park presence of this neighborhood treasure and “gateway” building to the long stretch of the historic Sugar Hill brownstones along Convent Avenue. The work has been supported with an award of a $50,000 grant from the Sacred Sites Program. The staff of both the Landmarks Conservancy and the Landmarks Commission have been integrally involved with their ongoing guidance and advice.

The program size, congregation need, and most importantly, the condition of Mount Zion Lutheran church called for immediate steps to correct cellar structural settlement and restore the brick exterior before proposing and erecting an enhanced entry to the nave. The solution was to add a new door in the entry vestibule, augmenting it with a new entry level. The three existing entry steps slam into the out-swinging doors, making entry difficult for all congregants. Lula Urquhart, as project manager and church council member, is guiding these improvements. She emphasized that the restored façade, the accessible entry, and the newly fabricated bracketed door would contribute to a renewed presence that says, “Mt. Zion is Here! and will be for the community.” A sloped walkway from the new gate opening on the upper end of the front fence allows for an easy walk or wheelchair access to the automatic door entry into the vestibule, while reconstructed steps and railings of the existing entry allows for better use and access than the existing cramped outward door swing.

Wallace Hall is used for worship, ceremonies, public gatherings, celebrations, and school assemblies. The formerly dark entry has been refreshed as a loggia, with daylight and historic stained glass through a generous gift of a parish family.

Imposing monumental granite steps made for a “big climb” up to the sanctuary level and down almost two flights to the undercroft. With this circulation impediment, the architects found that an exterior elevator location at a point of no impact to the art filled interior was the most prudent solution.

An elevator was proposed to the LPC which could access the main sanctuary of the church as well as the Wallace Hall undercroft from the sidewalk level. This small addition

1 St. Ignatius Loyola rendering of new exterior elevator and accessibility updates Image Credit: Acheson Doyle Partner Architects

2 Mount Zion Lutheran Church historic tax credit rendering of new exterior elevator and accessibility and restored historic fence Image Credit: Acheson Doyle Partner Architects

3 Mount Zion Lutheran Church historic fence updating front entrance accessibility and restored historic fence Image Credit: Acheson Doyle Partner Architects
was clad in the same tooled limestone which predominates, similar windows, and a copper roof. Simple sensitive ramping at the school and the Parish House within the existing iron gates solved access for these structures which both have interior elevators.

Episcopal Church of the Epiphany

The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany with a strong and active congregation has been located on the corner of York Avenue and 74th Street in a Norman Gothic Style Church since 1944. The church was founded in 1833.

With a substantial financial offer from the adjacent hospital complex for their current property, the Vestry purchased the former Jan Hus Presbyterian Church Building around the corner between York and First Avenues, whose congregation has also moved on. The congregation was the oldest Czech Presbyterian congregation in the United States having been founded in 1877. The church portion was opened in 1888 and the parish house, gymnasium and residential portion was completed in 1915.

The style has been referred to as Bohemian Gothic. The historic neighborhood of Yorkville was home to many German and European communities over the years. While the building is not a designated landmark, local voices were concerned about possibly drastic changes to the historic structure.

The vestry with its Pastor Roy Cole and its architect, Acheson Doyle Partners, met with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to review the planned alterations as a courtesy to assure the local stakeholders that the new Episcopal owners had every intention of curating and preserving this neighborhood’s landmark.

Presentations were made to the Landmarks Conservancy and the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District to share the church’s intentions.

While the work was mainly restorative, the route into the existing building was totally inaccessible to a different abled person, as well as difficult for the able-bodied, with 9.5” risers on the existing stoop steps, and no elevator access to the newly programmed pre-school and parish house uses. In addition, the Burden Center program drop-in and lunch feeding program, in place for many years, would now be fully accessible. The entry stair was reconfigured for one exterior entry to the nave and sanctuary with an accessible entry from the sidewalk through the removed stoop location. One strategically placed programmable and secured interior elevator facilitated total building accessibility to the many different levels. Existing stonework and decorative iron fencing could be re-used and duplicated as required to complement the historic nature of the complex. No further easement beyond the existing stairs was required and in fact, the sidewalk area was slightly increased. Construction is underway and completion is expected in fall of 2022. The existing program of the church from the York Avenue location will be fully incorporated with a new Track organ, pre-school program, and the continuation of the Burden Center for the Aging.

Mick Doyle, Principal of Acheson Doyle Partners Architects remarked, “Throughout this work the leaders of these faith communities, Fr. Yeslonia, Ms. Lula Urquhat, and Rev. Cole, saw the accessibility requirements as vital to their communities. Although their spiritual mission is their prime charism, they were acutely aware of their religious and civic landmark presence.”
The Conservancy awards matching grants to congregations that are planning or undertaking the restoration of historic religious properties. In 2019, the Sacred Sites program pledged 48 grants totaling $622,500 to 45 religious institutions throughout New York State, leveraging over $8.7 million in repair and restoration projects.

To be eligible for our grant programs properties must be located in New York State, owned by a religious institution, actively used for worship, and listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places or designated pursuant to a local landmarks ordinance. Eligible properties include churches, synagogues, meetinghouses, masques, and temples.

2019 Grantees include: (listed by County, then City or Borough)

**Bronx**
- Highbridge Community Church, Bronx
  - $6,000 — Roof Evaluation & Scope of Work for Replacement

**Broome**
- Temple Concord, Binghamton
  - $30,000 — Portico, Terrace, & Chimney Restoration
  - $8,000 — Conditions Report, Masonry Scope, & Construction Documents

**Chenango**
- Broad Street United Methodist Church, Norwich
  - $30,000 — Tower Restoration
- First Baptist Church of Norwich
  - $9,000 — Roof Replacement

**Clinton**
- Peru Community Church
  - $5,000 — Steeple Repair & Masonry Restoration

**Delaware**
- First Congregational Church, Walton
  - $14,000 — Window Restoration

**Erie**
- St. John’s Grace Episcopal Church, Buffalo
  - $10,000 — Construction Documents for State & Masonry Restoration

**Genesee**
- First Baptist Church, Batavia
  - $17,500 — Roof/Bell Tower Repair, Stained Glass Restoration & Masonry Work

**Greene**
- Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Athens
  - $5,000 — Steeple Restoration, Brick Work, & Roof Repair

**Hamilton**
- Church of the Transfiguration, Blue Mountain Lake
  - $4,000 — Structural Repair & Restoration of Log Cladding
- Mountain Community Church, Lake Pleasant
  - $5,000 — Shingle Repair & Stained Glass Restoration
- First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn Heights
  - $10,000 — Window Restoration
- South Bushwick Reformed Church, Bushwick
  - $10,000 — Structural Conditions Assessment & Attic Access

**Kings (Brooklyn)**
- Citadel Cathedral of Praise and Worship, Cypress Hills
  - $8,000 — Conditions Report for Tower & Roof Restoration
- First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn Heights
  - $10,000 — Window Restoration

**Lewis**
- Forest Presbyterian Church, Newburgh
  - $12,000 — Window Repairs & New Protective Glazing
- First Baptist Church, Chester
  - $6,000 — Roof, Steeple & Stair Repair

**New York (Manhattan)**
- Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Morningside Heights
  - $10,000 — Repair & Preservation of Great Bronze Doors and Surrounds
- St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church, Rochester
  - $15,000 — Roof Replacement
- St. Paul and St. Andrew, United Methodist, Upper West Side
  - $30,000 — Roof Repair & Masonry Repointing

**Onondaga**
- Plymouth Congregational Church, Syracuse
  - $9,000 — Stained Glass Window Restoration

**Orleans**
- Christ Episcopal Church, Albion
  - $3,000 — Stained Glass Window Repair & Replacement

**Otsego**
- First Baptist Church, Cooperstown
  - $2,000 — Site Drainage Improvements

**Rensselaer**
- Christ Church United Methodist, Troy
  - $6,000 — Slate Roof Repair & Repointing
- Christ Episcopal Church, Duanesburg
  - $7,000 — Conditions Survey
Suffolk
Congregational Church of Patchogue
$2,500 — Project Management
$17,500 — Roof Repairs

First Presbyterian Church, East Hampton
$2,500 — Conditions Report

First Presbyterian Church, Southold
$30,000 — Facade & Steeple Restoration

Mt. Sinai Congregational Church, Mt. Sinai
$3,500 — Conditions Report

Sisters of St. Joseph Chapel, Brentwood
$30,000 — Window, Masonry, Bell Tower & Roof Repair

United Methodist Church of Bay Shore
$6,000 — Project Management for Roof Repairs & Sanctuary Paint Failure
$15,000 — Roof Replacement

Sullivan
Hebrew Congregation of Mountaindale
$10,000 — Roof Replacement

Westchester
St. John’s Church, Getty Square, Yonkers
$25,000 — South Clerestory Window Restoration

Yates
Garrett Memorial Chapel, Keuka Park
$15,000 — Bell Tower Repairs
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