

**The essay presented below, taken from the parish's application for admission to the National Register of Historic Places, outlines the history and significance of the parish and its buildings.**

Designated as an independent parish in 1899, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church is significant under Criterion A and Criteria Consideration A for its relation to the history of the City of Albany and the local diocese. St. Andrew's reflects the growth of the city in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and the response of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany to meet the spiritual needs of the growing community. The parish was established as a mission of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1897 and has been a fixture in the neighborhood of Main, Madison and Western Avenues since that time. The present structure is also significant under Criterion C built in 1930 for the parish as its second house of worship and is a highly intact example of an early-twentieth century Tudor Gothic structure reflecting the Anglo-Catholic tradition championed by Ralph Adams Cram. In Albany, St. Andrew's is one of a small number of examples of the style, designed by a former Cram associate. The building's cruciform plan, decoration and fine materials are highly representative of the style as practiced in the 1920s and 1930s.

Albany is one of the oldest European settlements in the New York State, settled by the Dutch in 1624 and taken over by the English in 1664. It received a municipal charter in 1686, serving as a prominent frontier outpost crucial in establishing diplomatic relations between Europeans and Native Americans. This diplomacy resulted in the first documented Anglican presence in the Albany area when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent missionaries in response to a request by five Mohawk Chiefs. Throughout the eighteenth century, additional parishes and missions were established, including St. Peter's, the oldest Episcopal parish in Albany, founded in 1708. St. Peter's present structure was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1980.

After the American Revolution (1775-1783), parishes that were formerly part of the Church of England were reorganized into dioceses and eventually the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States (1789). The Diocese of New York formed in 1785 to provide direction to the Episcopal churches of New York State and expand its missionary activities. In this case, the definition of mission shifted from efforts solely directed to Native Americans toward establishing new parishes in communities throughout the state. By 1810, the Diocese of New York multiplied from a handful of scattered churches to twenty-five parishes.

Continued growth in the Diocese of New York resulted in the creation of three new dioceses in 1868 from its holdings: Long Island, Central New York and Albany. William Crosswell Doane, the rector of St. Peter's was elected as the first Bishop for Albany, who was described as "visualizing and demanding dozens of new missions in places, which the church was not yet reaching."<sup>(1)</sup> It was during this wave of missionary zeal under Bishop Doane that St. Andrew's Church began. Encouraged by the Bishop's vision, St. Paul's Church on Lancaster Street in Albany established a mission in 1892 known as the St. Andrew's Chapel on Madison Avenue in a former savings and loan building, but moved that same year to the rear portion of School No. 4 on Ontario Street. By 1894, the mission outgrew its space, a new site was selected at North Main and Western Avenues, and a new chapel was built in 1897. Part of the funding for construction came from the St. Martha's Guild, a service group organized by the women members of the St. Andrew's Chapel.

In spite of its long association with St. Paul's, St. Andrew's Chapel petitioned the diocese to become a separate parish in 1899. According to the Chapel's minister who later became St. Andrew's first rector, the movement was inevitable since "the gains made in the neighborhood of St. Andrew's Chapel were among those who had no association with the history of St. Paul's Church. Nearly every addition to the congregation, which rapidly increased, was in the nature of the case, an added strain upon the ties, sentimental and ecclesiastical which connected St. Andrew's Chapel and St. Paul's Church."(2) After agreeing to meet certain financial obligations regarding the construction of the chapel, the new parish was incorporated in May 1899. Legal negotiations delayed the transfer of the property until October 4, 1899 and St. Andrew's Church was officially admitted to the Diocese of Albany at its Convention that same year.

As St. Andrew's continued to grow, the need arose for a larger worship space. In 1901, the chancel was enlarged, and under the leadership of The Rev. Frank Whittington Creighton (Rector 1916-1923), the parish began making plans to build a new, larger church. In 1920, St. Andrew's purchased the adjacent lot to the south at the intersection of North Main and Madison Avenues and began a funding campaign that would raise sufficient funds to cover the planning, construction and furnishing of a new sanctuary. After seven and one-half years, the church was able to lay the cornerstone of the new building on St. Andrew's Day (November 30) 1930 and dedicate the church the following Easter.

Several churches in the City of Albany entered into building campaigns during the years of the Great Depression in order to provide work for the unemployed. Although St. Andrew's building campaign predated the Stock Market Crash of 1929, the Vestry and Building Committee insisted that much of the work on the new building be done locally.(3) The architect selected for the project was Norman Sturgis from the Albany firm of Strickland, Blodgett and Law. The Blakeslee Lumber Company of Albany made all the chancel furniture and two local wood carvers were hired for additional work in the chancel. Henry Klinger produced all the carving on the pulpit, lectern, communion rail and reredos. Ernst C. Wiegleb carved the angels on the chancel rail and the altar front panel.

Architect Norman Sturgis was influenced by the ecclesiastical designs of Ralph Adams Cram, having served as a draftsman for Cram and Ferguson after his graduation from Harvard's School of Architecture in 1913.(4) Like Cram, Sturgis believed that it was imperative to follow the strict form of the Gothic style but in a modern interpretation. He stated in 1931 that the Episcopal Church in America owed its form and ritual to the Church of England, therefore the basic architectural forms of the English Gothic parishes were the proper model for Anglican churches in America. He also stressed that the churches be more than slavish copies and that "houses of worship must express new materials, new methods, new thoughts, new aspirations ... St. Andrew's Church, like many other buildings of all types now appearing throughout this country, is an attempt to express fundamental truths in a new way to tell an old, old story in new words."(5)

Sturgis' design for St. Andrew's Church became one of Albany's most distinctive examples of twentieth century ecclesiastical Gothic Revival architecture that differed significantly from the Gothic Revival style of the mid-nineteenth century.(6) Proponents of gothic architecture in the early-twentieth century were influenced by the English Perpendicular style and the availability of new structural and decorative materials, particularly cast stone. The style is often referred to as the Collegiate Gothic style due to its popularity in the design of college and university campuses based on the English prototypes of Oxford and Cambridge. Campuses at Princeton and Duke and

churches designed by Cram and his partners were among the leading examples of the style in the United States.

In addition to the Sturgis-Cram connection, Wilbur H. Burnham Studios (1922-1982) of Boston that received its early commissions from Cram and produced the majority of the stained glass windows in St. Andrew's sanctuary. Burnham and his son Wilbur H. Burnham, Jr., who joined the studio in the late 1930s after his graduation from Yale, advocated the medieval stained glass tradition, harmony in primary colors and believed that windows should maintain a high degree of luminosity under all lighting conditions.(7) Burnham Studios created the large windows in the chancel, transept and south wall, and the windows in the chapel and along the side aisles, many of which were signed and dated. All windows in the sanctuary were memorials, paid for by members of the congregation, as were many of the furnishings and the items in the chancel.

In 1956, St. Andrew's began another building project when the 1897 church and an adjacent rectory were demolished for a new, modern parish hall designed by Morrow, Woods and Cadman Architects of Albany. This portion of the building was designed as an addition rather than a free-standing structure and is basically a non-contributing addition to the church. The architects used light colored brick in the parish hall addition to blend with the colors of the granite of the main sanctuary. The parish hall was completed in 1957 and since that time has provided space for fellowship activities, Sunday school classes and other secular functions of the church.

Like most urban churches, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church has changed from being a neighborhood church to a congregation that reflects the diversity of the city and surrounding suburbs. The church continues to be an active member of the neighborhood by offering worship opportunities and outreach activities, such as its Thrift Shop. It is currently expanding its role as a community gathering-place by offering non-religious oriented family activities for the neighborhood and by opening the sanctuary to the adjacent College of St. Rose for musical performances. Listing St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in the National Register of Historic Places will give it added recognition and reinforce its role in the local community as well as recognize a rare example Cram and Ferguson-influenced Gothic Revival style architecture in the city of Albany.

## Notes

1. George E. DeMille, *Pioneer Cathedral: A Brief History of the Cathedral of All Saints, Albany*, (np) 1967, 7.
2. The Re. Ralph Birdsall, "History," *St. Andrew's Church, 1897-1922*, 11.
3. Norman Sturgis, "The New Church," *Dedication Day Services, The New St. Andrew's Church*, The Second Sunday after Easter, 1931, 3.
4. Sturgis moved to Albany in 1917; Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 581.
5. Sturgis, "The New Church," 2.
6. Other leading examples by other architects include St. James' Roman Catholic Church on Delaware Ave. (1929), and Trinity United Methodist Church on Lark St. (1932). These examples feature richly modulated exteriors with bold buttresses, complex entrance compositions and richly decorated interiors.

7. Burnham Studios got their first commissions from Ralph Adams Cram; Urban Center, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University, "The Wilbur H. Burnham Studios," *The Urban Center's Sacred Landmark Series*, 31 March 1999, online at [http://urban.csuohio.edu/sacredlandmarks/monograph\\_series/trinity/how4.html](http://urban.csuohio.edu/sacredlandmarks/monograph_series/trinity/how4.html).