

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Holy Trinity (Protestant Episcopal) Church

and or common St. Ann's and Holy Trinity, Brooklyn

**2. Location**

street & number 157 Montague Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Brooklyn \_\_\_ vicinity of

state New York code county code

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
___ district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity

street & number 157 Montague Street

city, town New York \_\_\_ vicinity of state New York

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Hall of Records

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date 1978 \_\_\_ x federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records National Park Service, 1100 "L" Street, NW

city, town Washington state DC

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

There is an architectural description of Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, in Jacob Landy's book on the architect, Minard Lafever. In illustrations showing the tower intact, the elaborate church remarkably resembles Upjohn's church of the same name in New York City. Somewhat more flamboyant in concept and detail, Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, was one of the most important statements of the Gothic Revival style in America.

The site selected by Edgar John Bartow for his church was on the most elevated portion of Brooklyn Heights, at the northwest corner of Clinton and Montague Streets, then a sparsely settled portion of Brooklyn consisting of unfinished streets and vacant lots. Covering eight lots of ground, the property extended 100 feet on Clinton Street and 200 feet on Montague Street and was purchased by Bartow from the executors for Hezekiah B. Pierrepont. The church faced on Clinton Street, while its south side and the fronts of the chapel and the rectory faced on Montague Street. Digging for the foundation was begun August, 1844, but there was no ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone. The chief builders were Thomas Stratton, mason, and Robert White, carpenter. Haverstraw red sandstone was used for the walls, and slate covered the roofs. The masonry work was more regularly aligned than in Lafever's other Gothic churches, a formality in accord with the impressive character the edifice was intended to have.<sup>1</sup>

Built of porous brownstone, the facade is dominated by the large-scale tower which carried a tall spire and which together rose 306 feet from the ground capped by an 11-foot bronze cross. At its base the tower was 35 feet wide, including the angle buttresses. There is a main door in the tower flanks, they open through vestibules into the nave. Over the doorways is an embattled parapet, continuing around the tower but broken by the angle buttresses. Narrow windows rise above the parapet, followed by quatrefoil windows above. The larger aisle windows light the stairways to the galleries. The tower was patterned after the English parochial church of St. Mary, Louth, Lincolnshire.

The exterior doorways are richly ornamented in the Decorative Gothic manner and the black walnut doors are paneled with elaborate Perpendicular tracery:

Much of the opulent quality of the interior is provided by the elaborately traceried windows of Holy Trinity, designed by William Jay Bolton. The main altar window, typical of Lafever's inventive fantasy, combines the characteristics of English Curvilinear Decorated and French Flamboyant Gothic. Both styles were best suited to express Lafever's taste for richly ornamented surfaces. Below the tracery, the mullions are arranged in two tiers of seven lights, each with a cinquefoiled head. In using an odd number of lights and a battlemented transom, Lafever was following English rather than French precedent. In the richly foliated ogee tracery above, Lafever's basic flame-like motive is similar to, but not copied directly from, those in typically French Flamboyant examples, one being the rose window in the west front of St. Ouen in Rouen.

## 8. Significance

Period	National Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1844-1847 **Builder/Architect** Minard Lafever (1798-1854)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Lafever's biographer, Jacob Landy, states that the most splendid, achievement of the architect's career was the Church of the Holy Trinity in Brooklyn Heights. The outstanding stained glass, designed by William Jay Bolton and his brother John was the first church glass designed in America. Minard Lafever secured his reputation with the design of Holy Trinity. He was one of the founders of the American Institution of Architects, the precursor of the American Institute of Architects. Calvert Vaux, the great landscape architect once referred to Lafever as "the Sir Christopher Wren of America."

This unusually large and fine edifice was built as the result of the driving ambition of one man, Edgar John Bartow, who had long dreamed of erecting the finest and largest church building in New York. The church, chapel, and rectory were built at his sole cost, and he is said to have hired much of the labor by the day. Although Bartow appears to have selected Lafever, he personally supervised the design of the church himself. Since both men worked closely together, there are no building committee minutes. The Parish records provide no information about the construction of the church, except a notation of its opening.

Edgar John Bartow was born in Fishkill, New York, in 1809. In the 1830s he was residing in Brooklyn where he was a wealthy paper manufacturer. Married to a Pierrepont of Brooklyn he was active in public affairs. It has been noted that both Bartow and Lafever were of Huguenot descent. Edgar's brother, Robert, built the house in Pelham, called the Bartow-Pell Mansion which is sometimes attributed to Minard Lafever. No conclusive records, papers, or plans connected with the building of Trinity could be obtained from the relatives or executors of Bartow and the only real record was made by Minard Lafever in his last book, The Architectural Instructor.

Lafever's first plans, probably modest in conception, along the lines of his previous Gothic churches, were rejected by Bartow, who insisted upon something of "a more advanced and elaborate character." In 1845, a lithographic view showed perpendicular tracery in all the windows of Holy Trinity, which would seem to have been Lafever's original choice. In a very large lithographic view of 1846 (Holy Trinity parish house), however, the window tracery is in the decorated style, as it is in the executed building and in The Architectural Instructor (plate XCIII). Since Lafever is not known to have been bounded by ecclesiological dogma, the decision to use decorated tracery was probably again Bartow's, perhaps influenced by the exhortations of the Camden Society's Ecclesiologist and by prevailing High Church views within the Episcopal Church:

Notwithstanding the ability of the architect, it is claimed that this beautiful and impressive structure owes many of its finest points to the thoughtful and discriminating taste of Mr. Bartow. His plans were compre-

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Brooklyn Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

## UTM References

A 

1	8	5	8	5	0	8	5	4	5	0	5	1	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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H 

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## Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

## List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts, Historian

organization National Park Service, History Division date 1986

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202)343-8166

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The subject matter of this window is the Ascension. On the tower facade, the corresponding main window of four trefoil-headed lights and equally elaborate tracery depicts musical instruments and other devices. It will be noted that, as in all the other windows, there are actually two sets of glass. On the interior there is the original Bolton stained glass in Flamboyant tracery, and on the exterior the storm glass, painted brown, with schematized versions of the interior tracery.

At the bottom of the tower, the vestibule window tracery is exaggeratedly Flamboyant, retaining little of the geometric quality still apparent in the other windows. Here the flowing curvilinear forms are most flame-like in their surging upward movement. Even the cusps of the trefoiled lights are more pointed than usual. Comparable tracery in English examples, which could have inspired Lafever, are those in the east cloister of Westminster Abbey Church, and those in Magdalen College, Oxford. The side aisle and clear-story windows, of three lights with cinquefoiled heads, rather than the more common trefoil type, are strictly Curvilinear Decorated....

In an attempt at structural and visual integration, Lafever made the transoms of the aisle windows correspond with the line of contact of the interior galleries. On the exterior, dripstones appear over all the windows, while on the interior the hood-molds of the side aisle windows rest on corbels with flower pendants. The clearstory windows are true ones, and not merely illuminated through skylights. They are richly enframed with molded arches, supported by colonnettes on foliated corbels. Beneath the windows are sills decorated with square flowers. In the clearstory windows are represented Old Testament scenes, while the side aisle windows depict scenes from the life of Christ in the sections above the galleries, and the genealogy of Christ in the sections below. On the sides of the chancel the windows picture the Sacraments of the Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The keynote of the sumptuous interior is struck at the entrance of the church by the canopied doorway and the concentrated ornamentation of the tower vestibule. As noted, the window tracery is already Flamboyant, but the high point is reached in the elaborately fan vaulted ceiling, of the type which had become common in the ground stage of towers during the fifteenth century. Its ribs terminate in luxuriously foliated pendants connected by cinquefoiled arches. The floor of the vestibule is covered with light-colored freestone, laid in small squares. In one corner another contrasting note is supplied by the graceful spiral stairway of ornately carved black walnut, which disappears into a quadrant opening in the vault and emerges in the choir, or organ gallery. It then continues, hidden in one of the large false columns at the rear of the choir, to the upper

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portions of the tower and spire. To achieve symmetry, Lafever also made openings in the three remaining corners, which are filled with engaged shafts. Since the Perpendicular vault of the vestibule ceiling is of plaster, these violations of structural integrity are in accord with Lafever's free approach to the handling of Gothic detail. In any event, the nonstructural attitude of "form follows fancy" was more common at this time than in the later nineteenth century.

Above the vestibule, the choir story of the tower projects slightly into the nave, its open character intended by Lafever to make the nave more effective by creating an impression of greater length. A large arch on lofty piers separates the upper part of the choir from the nave, while the lower projecting section of the choir is faced with a screen of black walnut carved with tracery. In 1881 this choir gallery was widened to engage the nave walls on either side, for the purpose of accommodating more singers. At the same time the vestibule stairs to the organ gallery were closed, and a new entrance made from the north stairway through an opening in the wall.

The choir ceiling is finished as a fan vault with a single pendant, repeating the similar motive in the vestibule below....

The spacious interior is lofty and grand. Here the profusely carved plaster decorations and the furnishings carved in wood and stone contribute to the general magnificence. The elaborate lierne vault, rising from lofty arcades, is literally its crowning glory. The nave, 42 feet wide, is comparatively broad in relation to the narrow transverse bays and is separated from the aisles, which are 15 feet wide, by stone columns in the Decorated style. The clustered piers, consisting of slender engaged shafts separated by rounds, are quatrefoil in cross-section and are subdivided into three almost equal parts by horizontal bands. The center division is slightly shorter to coincide with the height of the gallery screen....

There is no denying, however, the Gothic spirit of the magnificent vault, which rises to a height of 63 feet and flares out from the vaulting shafts in a series of transverse and diagonal ribs....

The one-bay chancel, originally 42 feet wide and 12 feet deep, was raised three steps above the floor of the nave, but in a later remodeling was increased to five steps. At the north end of the chancel a door led into the Vestry room or sacristy, which also had entrances into the chapel and into the side aisle of the church.

The new chancel rail, as well as the altar, the brass pulpit, and the reredos are all memorial additions of 1899. The reredos, altar, and chancel tiling were designed by Frank Freeman. Originally, the pulpit,

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reading desk, and altar, as well as the pews, were of elaborately carved black walnut, while the altar screen was adorned with buttresses, canopied niches, and tracery, all finished to resemble stone. In 1856, in preparation for the coming consecration:

A neat wooden railing, stone color, and sanded, is to be placed around the Church.... Two large black walnut chairs, corresponding with the architecture of the Church,... are in progress for the chancel. A font and lectern, from designs, and under the direction of Frank Wills, Esq., are in preparation for the south end, and two at the north, are ordered from the same architect.<sup>2</sup>

There has been a vigorous new program to clean and restore the important stained glass.

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hensive and munificent, including not only Church, Chapel and Rectory, but also a building for a Church day school, for Sunday schools, and for charitable uses.

As mentioned earlier, it was also Bartow who imported "architectural works of approved merit... from England, and among others a costly collection of original drawings of King's College Chapel in Cambridge, which were carefully studied and furnished many suggestive thoughts and tastful adornments."<sup>3</sup>

The chapel, also designed by Lafever, was ready for public services on June 7, 1846. Visitors were able to inspect the church interior for several days before the official opening on April 25, 1847. On the latter occasion, the church was completed only to the third stage of the tower, and the gallery windows, still without glass, were boarded up. Also lacking were part of the organ and most of the chancel furniture. Nevertheless, Dr. Lewis, in a sermon preached at the opening of the church, felt it necessary to defend and justify the amount of money spent on the building, particularly its elaborate decorative style and highly colored windows, then a great novelty.

The foundation was laid in August 1844, and was expected to be enclosed before the approaching winter. It is by far the largest edifice in the city, being 145 feet long, (including the tower of 27 feet,) and 80 wide. Besides this, a vestry and lecture room attached to the rear, make the whole structure 170 feet in length.

Including the rectory, the total length was 195 feet. In height, the ridge of the nave roof was 77 feet, the top of the cornice 60 feet, and the top of the aisle cornice 34 feet. The tower and spire, when completed, were to be 275 feet.

The original cost of the church had been almost \$200,000, but when Bartow could no longer afford to continue his personal financial support it was purchased from him by the Vestry, March 27, 1856, for some \$102,000, and was consecrated on September 23, 1856. Before relinquishing the church, Bartow was in effect its owner, while the Vestry and congregation were merely tenants. On June 14, 1864, the Committee on the Church Tower and Spire decided to complete the tower according to the original plan. The estimated cost was \$21,000 to finish the tower and \$13,000 to add the spire. In March and April 1865, attempts to secure papers and plans connected with the spire from the Bartow family proved unsuccessful. By March 6, 1866, the building committee had employed Patrick C. Keely to build the tower spire; his fee for the plans and specifications was \$600, and the cost estimate was \$52,000. Keely's design raised the height of the tower and spire to 306 feet from the street to the top of the 11-foot bronze cross. The spire, built of Rockland County sandstone at a final cost of about \$60,000, was commemorated December 19, 1869. On January 18, 1870, the committee announced the completion of the spire but in a letter to incoming committees it cautioned them to "remember that there is a radical defect in the stone from which our whole church is built and recommended "careful watching of every part of the outward structure."<sup>4</sup>



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The spire was later removed due to subway excavations beneath the church foundations and because it cost \$1,000 a year to maintain the spire.

The small chapel (84 x 25 feet) and the rectory which is Tudor-Gothic in style, were also designed by Lafever. There were subsequent changes until the church was closed as the result of internal strife between 1957 and 1962.

The glory of the church is the Gothic-revival windows which have been called the finest early 19th century stained glass in America. There are 59 windows, originally 60. The large (12 feet wide x 25 feet tall) window of Musicians was originally hidden by the organ and was given on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1985.

The "new" Gothic style must have been startlingly modern in 1844 as most Americans had never seen a stained glass window. Bartow had. The rector at Christ Church in Pelham just outside the city was the Reverend Robert Bolton. At Christ Church there was a window made by Bolton's two sons, William Jay and John. In 1845, Lafever commissioned the Boltons to design the windows for Trinity. The Boltons had lived and studied abroad and must have known the glass at Kings College Chapel in Cambridge, England. The colored sheet-glass needed for the Holy Trinity windows had to come from England as such glass was not yet available in this country. In 1842, these two young men still in their 20's, had set up shop in Pelham, and built a small kiln to fire the painted glass. To begin the great commission of creating 60 windows with such primitive equipment was incredible and accomplishing the work in five short years, even more so.

We know something of how the windows were made. William drew the designs, several of which still survive in his sketchbook. The mathematical precision required by John's craft probably enabled him to lay out the full-scale cartoons. Both brothers apparently painted the windows, for there is evidence of two distinct hands in the work. It is hardly likely that they would not have hired glaziers to assist in the leading of the glass, its installation in the wood frames, and its mounting in the window openings. Glaziers were distinct from designers and painters of stained glass, and window glazing was a common craft in America.

William Bolton conceived of the unique Tree of Jesse series that fills the openings in the aisles. Traditionally, the theme requires a vertical format, with the tree growing upward and supporting Christ's ancestors on its branches. Here, at Holy Trinity, it is uniquely a horizontal arrangement, culminating with the image of Christ significantly placed above the baptismal font. Old Testament scenes fill the clerestory windows, but the sequence begins not with the Creation, but with Man's Expulsion from Paradise. The series ends with the unusual scene of the discovery and reading of Deuteronomy, the Book of the Law and King Josiah's subsequent reform of the Temple.

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The Life of Christ, the last of the windows to be installed, occupies the openings on gallery level. This sequence begins with the adoration of the Shepherds and culminates in the great window of the chancel the Te Deum, the universal hymn of praise to God....

Each of these windows is composed like a vignette in space, as though we stand before the window opening and gaze through it at the scene behind the frame. This pictorial approach derives from Italian Renaissance painting and from Flemish stained glass of the sixteenth century, both of which had a profound influence on Bolton's style....

Later, Bolton was to write: "We cannot return to the past for our art and we need not. We must create something fresh and adapt it to our time." The words are prophetic, for, in spite of time, the windows of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity are today as fresh in spirit as the day of their creation. Neither William nor John Bolton ever again equaled this achievement in glass. The year following the completion of these windows, William Bolton returned to England to study for the ministry. He spent the rest of his life there as a humble preacher. Ten years later, John Bolton became an Episcopalian priest.<sup>5</sup>

The current program at the revitalized church now called St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity to restore the windows and rehabilitate the church is partly financed by a varied and fascinating series of concerts and theatre performances. The major effort to bring the church back to life began in 1979 through the efforts of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council for the Arts.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Landy, Jacob. The Architecture of Minard Lafever. New York, 1970. Columbia University Press. p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-122

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>Contributions to the History of the Parish of the Church of the Holy Trinity. p. 31. This collection of drawings by William Wilkins was exhibited by Bartow at a meeting of the New York Ecclesiological Society, May 12, 1851 (New York Ecclesiologist, III, July 1851, p. 130).

<sup>5</sup>Jane Hayward. Stained Glass in Brooklyn. Brooklyn Heights Press. Thursday, June 16, 1983. p. 14.

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\_\_\_\_\_ "Minard Lafever," in Dictionary of American Biography, XXI (New York, 1944), pp. 479-81.

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Old Brooklyn Heights, 1827-1927; to Commemorate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the Brooklyn Savings Bank. Brooklyn, 1927.

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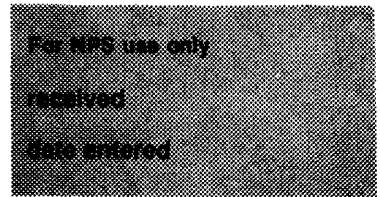
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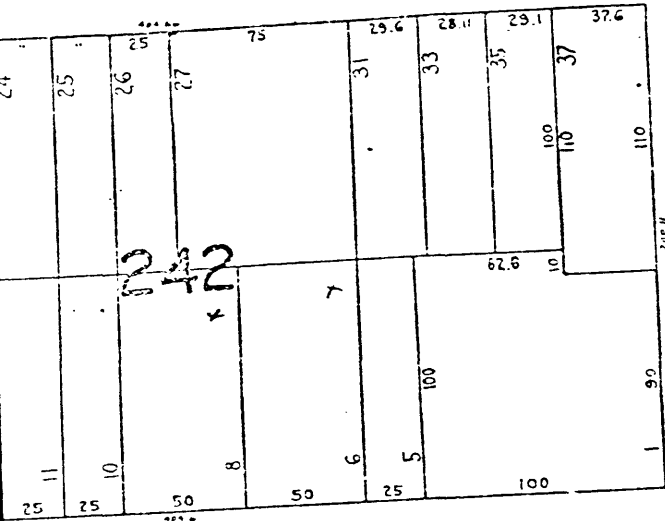
Page 1

Verbal Boundary

Beginning at the corner formed by the intersection of the westerly side of Clinton Street with the northerly side of Montague Street; running thence westerly along the northerly side of Montague Street, 150 feet; thence northerly parallel with Clinton Street, 100 feet; thence easterly parallel with Montague Street, 150 feet to Clinton Street; thence southerly along the westerly side of Clinton Street, 100 feet to the point or place of beginning.

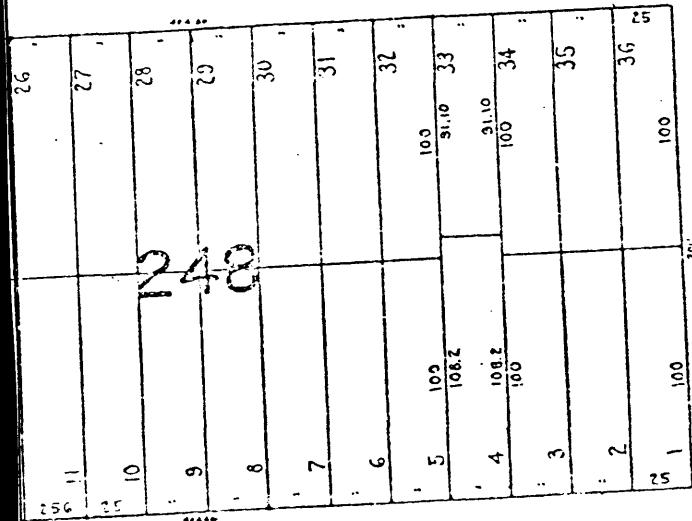
The boundary includes the church and surrounding garden but not the old parish hall.

PIERREPONT



242

MONTAGUE



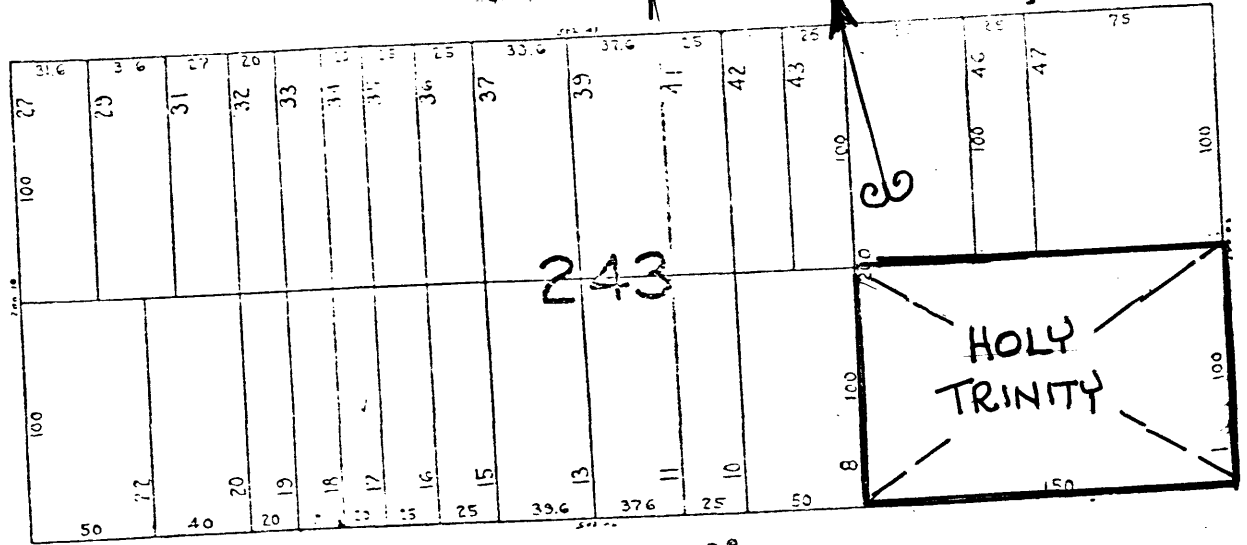
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REMSEN

SEE PAGE 7

Pierrepont ST.

ST.

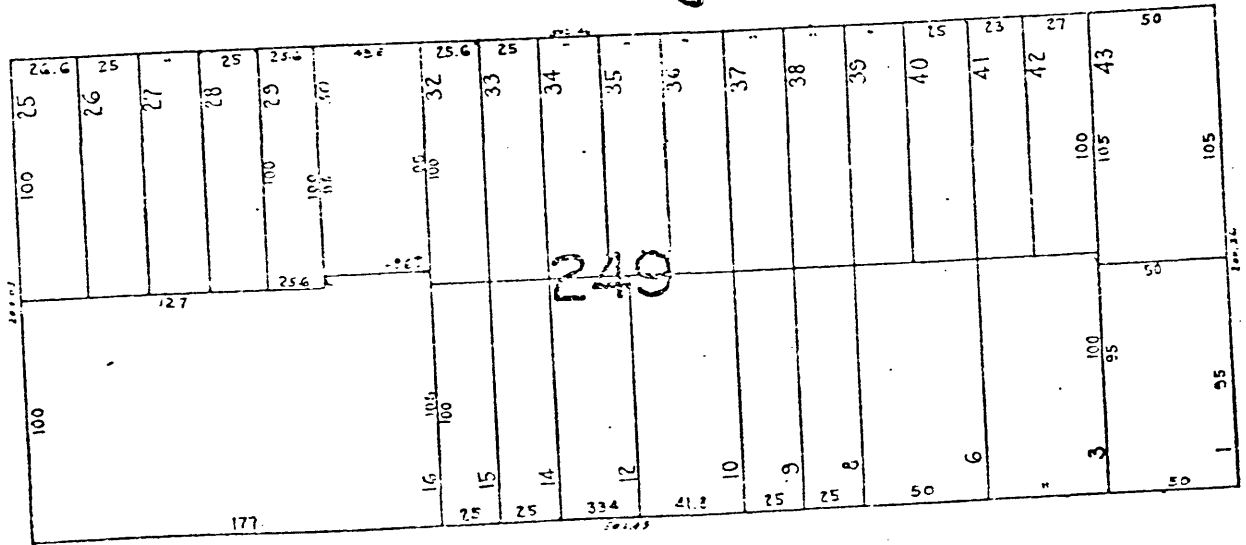


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HOLY TRINITY

Montague ST.

HENRY



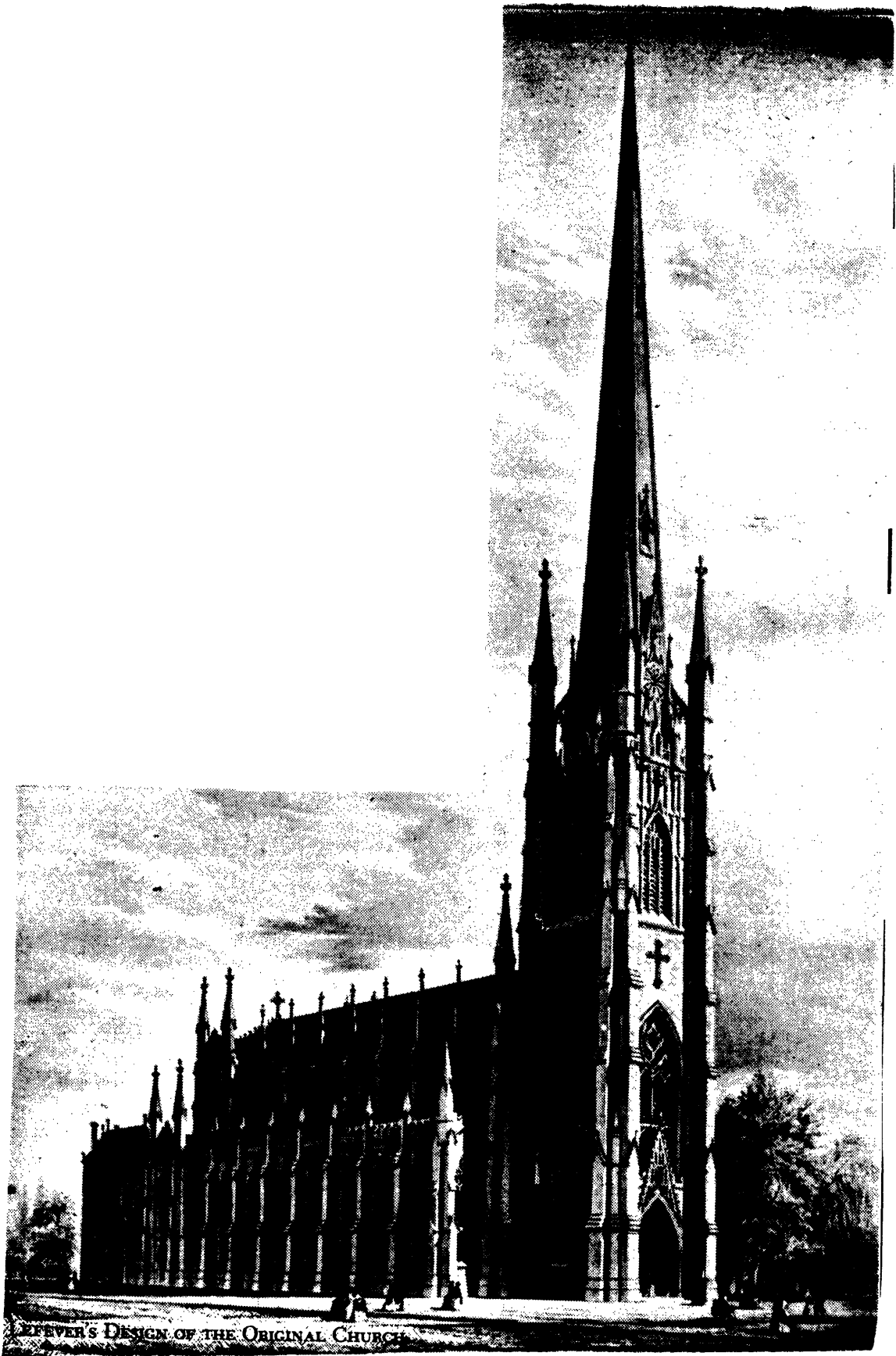
240

ST.

CLINTON

2

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LEFEVER'S DESIGN OF THE ORIGINAL CHURCH



FIGURE 50. Church of the Holy Trinity. Transverse section (Lafever, *Architectural Instructor*, pl. XCVI).



FIGURE 42. Church of the Holy Trinity. Side elevation and plan (Lafever, *Architectural Instructor*, pl. XCV).

