



February 1, 2012

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Urgent Request for Evaluation of the Mary Help of Christians Church, Rectory and School, 436 and 440 East 12th Street, 433 East 11th Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Tierney:

We request that the Landmarks Preservation Commission consider for landmark designation the Roman Catholic Church of Mary Help of Christians, Rectory, and the Mary Help of Christians Parochial School at 436 East 12th Street, 440 East 12th Street and 433 East 11th Street, respectively. According to research conducted by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Rectory dates from the 1850's and is among the earliest buildings on this block, the Church and the School buildings constructed on the site of the former Eleventh Street Catholic Cemetery, are the only structures to be built on this lot. The Church, completed in 1917, and the later School building are architecturally distinct and also very much intact, retaining important defining features. The buildings are also key elements of the narrative of the Italian immigrant experience in the East Village.

Since its founding, the Church of Mary Help of Christians was administered by the Salesians of St. John Bosco, a religious order that was founded in 1859 to care for the children of the working poor in Italy. The Salesians came to the United States in 1898 and established a community ministry for Italians on East 12th Street. The Order ministered from a variety of buildings on East 12th Street until the land for the former Eleventh Street Cemetery became available in the early 1900's. Naming the parish in honor of the Virgin Mary, the patron of the Order, the Salesians constructed a lower church, designed by Domenico Briganti in 1911, until funds could be raised for a full church building.

By 1916 the construction of the upper church had begun, an inspirational Italian Renaissance Revival style edifice designed by Nicholas Serracino. Serracino, an architect trained in Naples who emigrated to America in 1906, was the architect of choice of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York at the time, lending his skilled hand to a number of church buildings, including the elaborate Baroque style Church

of St. Jean Baptiste at 184 East 76th Street (individual New York City landmark - 1969), the diminutive, Baroque style Church of St. Clare formerly at 436 West 36th Street (demolished), and the Renaissance Revival Chapel of Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary at 307 East 33rd Street, also demolished. Many of Serracino's buildings showcased his unique flair for translating the language of historic Italian architecture into the density and scale of the built environment of New York City. Though few of his churches are extant, those that do remain, like the Church of Mary Help of Christians, display Serracino's mastery of ecclesiastical architecture.

Serracino based his design for the Church of Mary Help of Christians, dedicated in 1917, on the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Italy. He deftly borrowed from that building's defining features, including its pedimented façade, Corinthian columns, central wheel window and flanking, and copper domed bell towers, transposing them for this far less monumental site on East 12th Street. Costing \$80,000 to build, the Church of Mary Help of Christians is a symmetrical composition with a painted brick façade, defined by its ornamented copper pediment with a simple entablature on Corinthian pilasters over a tri-partite door arrangement. Like the Basilica in Turin, there is also a single and simple wheel window. Flanking bell towers with copper domes add verticality to the structure.

More than merely copying from the Basilica, Serracino understood its architectural language. With the Church of Mary Help of Christians, Serracino managed to not only thoughtfully recreate elements of the Basilica in Turin, but also to create a structure that adds both gravitas and lightness to the streetscape on its own terms. Within the context of the East Village the building is truly unique.

As the parish community grew, the construction of a parochial school at 433 East 11th Street, directly behind the church, was begun. Completed in 1925, the Mary Help of Christians School was designed in the Neo-Renaissance style by architects Salvati & LeQuornik, who specialized in the design of Catholic rectories, parish halls, and schools. Salvati & LeQuornik were also noted for designing the 1924-25 addition to the Hubbard House at 2134 McDonald Avenue in Brooklyn, an individual New York City landmark (2009). The five-story Mary Help of Christians School has restrained Italianate ornament, including limestone pedimented window and arched door surrounds. Of particular note is the sculptural niche with a statue of the Virgin Mary, and the stepped, limestone trimmed parapet.

The Greek Revival style tenement at 440 East 12th Street was likely constructed in the 1850's, as reflected by historic maps. The building was purchased by the Church in 1925 to be converted into its rectory. Though modified by the Church at this time the building retains much if not all of its integrity, including its dentillated wood cornice.

The church and its buildings were in some ways the heart of the Italian community that developed in this part of the East Village. Generations of Italian families attended services, were baptized, educated, married and had funeral services in the buildings of Mary Help of Christians. Thousands of its parishioners would crowd East 12th Street in celebration of the Feast Day of Mary Help of Christians in May. Records indicate that Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, worshipped here as she found that it was "indeed what a church should be, the center of the community." As further evidence of the lasting meaning of the parish and its service to the community, the corner of East 12th

Street and Avenue A was renamed in honor of Father Virginio Mancini (1895-1988) a parish priest from 1949 until 1986.

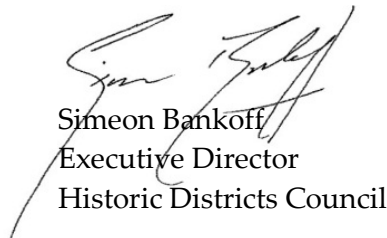
Representing an important era in the history of the Italian immigrant community in the East Village, as well as the Roman Catholic Church in New York, these buildings are architecturally, culturally and socially significant. In the East Village, where Catholic churches have been demolished or replaced with architecturally bland buildings, the very much intact Church of Mary Help of Christians, Rectory and its School are rare structures from a very special time in the history of the community. They add a commanding presence to the area's streetscape that should not be lost to demolition or inappropriate alteration. We are concerned by the threat posed by the pending sale of the buildings and ask that the LPC move quickly to prevent the loss or damage to these invaluable historic buildings.

We have attached relevant photos and primary source documents from the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation's research. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society
for Historic Preservation



Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council



Richard Moses
President Steering
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative



Kurt Cavanaugh
Managing Director
East Village Community Coalition

Cc: Councilmember Rosie Mendez
Kate Daly, Executive Director, LPC
Mary Beth Betts, Director of Research, LPC
New York Landmarks Conservancy



The Roman Catholic Church of Mary Help of Christians,
above and left

Mary Help of Christians Rectory, below left and Mary
Help of Christians School, below right



Office of the Borough President of the Borough of Manhattan,
In The City of New York.

THE BUREAU OF BUILDINGS FOR THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN,
Office, No. 220 FOURTH AVENUE,
S. W. Corner 18th Street.

Plan No. 168

APPLICATION FOR ERECTION OF BRICK BUILDINGS.

Application is hereby made to the Superintendent of Buildings of The City of New York, for the Borough of Manhattan, for the approval of the detailed statement of the specifications and plans herewith submitted, for the erection of the building herein described. All provisions of the law shall be complied with in the erection of said building whether specified herein or not.

(Sign here) D. Briganti

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN,

March 29th

1911

1. State how many buildings to be erected one
2. What is the exact location thereof? (State on what street or avenue; the side thereof, the number of feet from the nearest street or avenue, and the name thereof) E. S. of 12th St. 100' West of Ave A
3. Will the building be on the front or rear of lot? front
4. How to be occupied? Church If for dwelling, state the number of families in each house
5. Size of lot? 63' feet front; 63' feet rear; 206'-6" feet deep.
6. Give diagram of same.
7. Size of building? 53' feet front; 53' feet rear; 135' feet deep.
8. Size of extension? feet front; feet rear; feet deep.
9. Number of stories in height: main building? one Extension?
10. Height from curb level to highest point: main building? 10 feet. Extension? feet.
11. What is the character of the ground: rock, clay, sand, etc.? sand mixed with clay
12. Will the foundation be laid on earth, rock, timber or piles? earth
13. Will there be a cellar? no
14. What will be the base, stone or concrete? concrete If base stones, give size and thickness, and how laid 12" brick If concrete, give thickness
15. What will be the depth of foundation walls below curb level or surface of ground? 10'
16. Of what will foundation walls be built? brick
17. Give thickness of foundation walls: front, 16" inches; sides, 16" inches; rear, 20 inches; party, inches.
18. Will interior supports be brick partition walls or piers, iron columns or wooden posts? iron columns Give size of same 12" round. 1" metal. 8 10" x 10" x 1"
19. If piers, give thickness of cap stones or plates. bond stones or plates

16. Give base course, width and thickness 5'-0" x 5'-0" x 12"
17. Will any part of front, side or rear wall, be supported on piers in cellar? no
 Give size: front _____ size of base course _____
 rear _____ " " " _____
 side _____ " " " _____
- Size of cap stones _____ size of bond stones _____
18. Of what materials will the upper walls be constructed? Brick
 What will be thickness of upper walls, exclusive of ashlar, if any?
 Basement: front 16 inches; rear 20 inches; side 16 inches; party _____ inches.
 1st story: " " " " " " " " " "
 2d story: " " " " " " " " " "
 3d story: " " " " " " " " " "
 4th story: " " " " " " " " " "
 5th story: " " " " " " " " " "
 6th story: " " " " " " " " " "
 7th story: " " " " " " " " " "
19. What will be the materials of the front? Brickwork If of stone, what kind? _____ If ashlar, give thickness _____
20. Will flues be lined with pipe or have 8 inches of brick around the same? lined with pipe
21. Will any wall be supported on iron or steel girders? no
 Front, material _____ size _____ weight or thickness _____
 Side, " " " " " " " " " "
 Rear, " " " " " " " " " "
 Interior, " " " " " " " " " "
 Will any wall be supported on iron or steel columns? _____
 Front, material _____ size _____ weight or thickness _____
 Side, " " " " " " " " " "
 Rear, " " " " " " " " " "
 Interior, " " " " " " " " " "
22. Give material of girders steel of columns cast iron
 Under 1st tier, size of girders 12" I 31 1/2; size of columns 10' x 10" x 1" & 12" round x 1"
 " 2d tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 " 3d tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 " 4th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 " 5th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 " Roof tier, " " " " " " " " " "
23. Give material, size and distance on centres of floor beams.
 1st tier, material yellow pine; size 14" x 3" & 12" x 4"; distance on centres 12" and 16"
 2d tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 3d tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 4th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 5th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 6th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 7th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 8th tier, " " " " " " " " " "
 Roof tier, " " " " " " " " " "
- Give thickness of headers 6" of trimmers 6"
24. Specify construction of floor filling wooden sheathing

- Will partitions be built? Cross 1x ft 2, Spr
27. Give material of skylights galv. iron; size 6'-0" x 9'-0"
28. What will be the material of roofing? tar and gravel Will roof be flat, peak or mansard? flat
29. What will be the material of dumb waiter shafts? _____
30. What will be the material of elevator shafts? _____
31. What will be the material of the cornices? terra cotta
32. What will be the material of bay windows? _____
33. What kind of fire escape will be provided? none
34. Will cellar be plastered? _____ How? _____
35. Will access to roof be by scuttle or bulkhead? Bulkhead If by bulkhead, how constructed? brick wall
36. With what material will walls be coped? Blue stone
37. How will building be heated? steam heating
38. Is there any other building erected on lot or permit granted for one? no
Size _____; height _____ feet. How occupied? _____
Give distance between same and proposed building _____ feet.
39. Are any buildings to be taken down? no; how many? _____

If the Building is to be occupied as a Flat, Apartment, Tenement or Lodging House, give the following particulars:

40. Is any part of building to be used as a store or for any other business purpose? If so state for what? _____

	Cellar.	Base-ment.	1st Floor	2d Floor	3d Floor	4th Floor	5th Floor	6th Floor	7th Floor
41. How many families will occupy each? - - -									
42. Height of ceilings? - - -									

43. How basement to be occupied? _____
How made water-tight? _____
44. How will cellar stairs be enclosed? _____
45. How cellar to be occupied? _____
How made water-tight? _____
46. Will shafts be open or covered with louvre skylights full size of shafts? _____
Size of each shaft? _____
47. Dimensions of water-closet windows? _____
Dimensions of windows for living rooms? _____
48. Of what materials will hall partitions be constructed? _____
49. Of what materials will hall floors be constructed? _____

- 50.
51. Of w. will stairways be constructed?
Give sizes of stair well holes
52. If any other building on lot, give size: front; rear; deep;
stories high; how occupied; on front or rear
of lot; material
How much space between it and proposed building?
53. How will floors and sides of water closets to the height of 16 inches be made waterproof?
.
54. Number and location of water closets: Cellar; 1st floor; 2d floor;
3d floor; 4th floor; 5th floor; 6th floor;
7th floor
55. This building will safely sustain per superficial foot upon the 1st floor lbs.; upon 2d floor
. lbs.; upon 3d floor lbs.; upon 4th floor lbs.; upon 5th floor
lbs.; upon 6th floor lbs.; upon 7th floor lbs.; upon 8th floor lbs.
56. What is the estimated cost of each building, exclusive of lot? \$ 20 000
57. What is the estimated cost of all the buildings, exclusive of lots? \$

Owner, Cooperation Church & Bury Address, 429 E. 12th St
Help of Christians
Architect, D. Briganti " 205 E. 17 St
Superintendent, D. Briganti " 205 E. 17 St
Mason, "
Carpenter, "

If a Wall, or Part of a Wall already built is to be used, fill up the following:

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, 190

The undersigned gives notice that intend to use the wall of building

as party wall in the erection of the building hereinbefore described, and respectfully requests that
same be examined and a permit granted therefor. The foundation wall built of
. inches thick, feet below curb; the upper wall built of
. inches thick, feet deep, feet in height.

(Sign here)

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPLICATE, and ONE copy sworn to by Applicant. If Elevator or Plumbing Applications are filed herewith, ONE AFFIDAVIT is sufficient for all. Plans must be filed on tracing Linen or Cloth.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 191 6

(Block 439 Lot 26).

LOCATION 436-438 East 12th Street and 435-437 East 11th Street

New York City April 27, 191 6.

To THE SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDINGS:

Application is hereby made for approval of the plans and specifications herewith submitted, and made a part hereof, for the ALTERATION of the building therein described,—with the understanding that if no work is performed within one year from the time of issuance, this approval shall expire by limitation as provided by law; and the applicant agrees to comply with all the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Buildings for the Borough of Manhattan, all provisions of the Building Code of The City of New York, and with every other provision of law relating to this subject in effect at this date.

(Sign here) Nicholas Serracino Applicant

When properly signed by the Superintendent of Buildings of the Borough of Manhattan, this application becomes a PERMIT as required by the Building Code of The City of New York, to perform such work as is described in the foregoing statement and the attached plans and specifications which are a part hereof.

EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL ON May 19 191 6

Jos. E. Stehman
Examiner.

APPROVED MAY 10 1916 191

Superintendent of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan

STATE, COUNTY AND }
CITY OF NEW YORK } ss. : NICHOLAS SERRACINO (Applicant)

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at Number 1170 Broadway
in the Borough of Manhattan
in the City of New York, in the County of New York
in the State of New York, that he is the architect for the

owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed hereto and made a part hereof, situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York aforesaid, and known and designated as Numbers 436-438 East 12th Street and 435-437 East 11th Street and hereinafter more particularly described; that the work proposed to be done upon the said premises, in accordance with the accompanying detailed statement in writing of the specifications and plans of such proposed work, including all amendments to the same which may be filed hereafter—and also all Elevator and Plumbing work

(if any) proposed to be done upon the same premises and specified in separate applications **filed herewith**, and all subsequent amendments thereto—is duly authorized by the Rev. Pasquale Beccaria, Rector of the Church of Mary Help of Christians, a Roman Catholic Corporation of the State of New York, and that he, Nicholas Serracino, is duly authorized by the aforesaid Rev. Pasquale Beccaria to make application for the approval of such detailed statement of specifications and plans (and amendments thereto) in his behalf.

Deponent further says that the full names and residences, street and number, of the owner or owners of the said land, and also of every person interested in said building or proposed building, structure or proposed structure, premises, wall, platform, staging or flooring, either as owner, lessee, or in any representative capacity, are as follows:

NAMES AND ADDRESSES

Owner Congregation of the R.C. Church of Mary Help of Christians,
Rev. Pasquale Beccaria, Rector, 429 East 12th Street, N.Y. City.
His Eminence, John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York,
462 Madison Avenue, New York City

Lessee

Architect Nicholas Serracino, 1170 Broadway, New York City
Superintendent Nicholas Serracino, 1170 Broadway, New York City

The said land and premises above referred to are situate at, bounded and described as follows, viz.: BEGINNING

at a point on the southerly side of East 12th Street

distant 100 feet westerly from the corner formed by the intersection of

Avenue A and East 12th Street

running thence southerly 206'6" ~~xxx~~ thence westerly 63 feet;

thence northerly 206'6" ~~xxx~~ thence easterly along the

southerly side of East 12th Street 63 feet

to the point or place of beginning,—being designated on the map as Block No. 439 Lot No. 26

Sworn to before me this 27th day of April 1916

day of April 1916

Nicholas Serracino

Notary Public

ALTERATION
PERMIT

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTE: All elevations and grades for
walls and structures must be
checked and approved by the
Bureau of Buildings, New York City.

Approved
april 16 Researcher



BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

MATH. BLDG. BUREAU

APR 28 1916 A.M.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 1116 1916

LOCATION 436/438 East 12th St - 435/437 East 11th St

REFERRED TO INSPECTOR 4/27 1916, FOR IMMEDIATE REPORT AS TO
OCCUPANCY:

Basement..... 6th Floor.....
1st Floor..... 7th Floor.....
2d Floor..... 8th Floor.....
3d Floor..... 9th Floor.....
4th Floor..... 10th Floor.....
5th Floor.....

Is Building Fireproof?

Remarks:

105th St. - 1 Story brick vacant Not fireproof
106th St. - 2 Story Concrete Not fireproof

(Dated) May 14 1916

(Signed) [Signature]

Inspector [Signature]



BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPLICATE, and ONE copy sworn to by Applicant. If Elevator or Plumbing Applications are filed herewith, ONE AFFIDAVIT is sufficient for all. Plans must be filed on tracing paper or Cloth.



ALT. APPLICATION No. 532 191

MAR 26 1917

LOCATION 436-38 E. 12th St. and 436-37 E. 11 St. BLOCK 439 LOT 26

When properly signed by the Superintendent of Buildings of the Borough of Manhattan, this application becomes a PERMIT as required by the Building Code of The City of New York, to perform such work as is described in the foregoing statement and the attached plans and specifications which are a part hereof.

EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL ON

July 9th 1917
L. M. Benfield
Examiner

APPROVED 191

Superintendent of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan

New York City, March 26, 1917.

TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDINGS:

Application is hereby made for approval of the plans and specifications herewith submitted, and made a part hereof, for the ALTERATION of the building therein described,—with the understanding that if no work is performed within one year from the time of issuance, this approval shall expire by limitation as provided by law; and the applicant agrees to comply with all the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Buildings for the Borough of Manhattan, all provisions of the Building Code of The City of New York, and with every other provision of law relating to this subject in effect at this date.

STATE, COUNTY AND }
CITY OF NEW YORK }

SS.: NICHOLAS SPERANTINO
Typewrite Name of Applicant

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at Number 1170 Broadway

in the Borough of Manhattan

in the City of New York, in the County of New York

in the State of New York, that he is the architect for the lessee and that the trustees of the St. Patrick Cathedral of New York are the owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed hereto and made a part hereof, situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York aforesaid, and known and designated as Number 436-38 East 12th Street and 436-37 East 11th Street and hereinafter more particularly described; that the work proposed to be done upon the said premises, in accordance with the accompanying detailed statement in writing of the specifications and plans of such proposed work, including all amendments to the same which may be filed hereafter—and also all Elevator and Plumbing work

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

City of New York, Oct 29 1926

(Signed) W. Marshall Inspector 600 District

CHARACTER OF CONSTRUCTION (Mark Cross X under appropriate heading):

OCCUPANCY (See other side of this report)

18-

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS**BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK**

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPPLICATE.
“SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A” [Form 152] must be filed with EVERY Alteration Application.
“SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET B” [Form 158] must be filed, in addition, in case the building is to be raised in height or occupancy changed so as to increase floor loads, or if building is to be enlarged on one side.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 1917

LOCATION 436-438 West 12th Street and 435-437 East 11th Street

Examined 191

Examiner

SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A

- (1) NUMBER OF BUILDINGS TO BE ALTERED One
Any other building on lot or permit granted for one? No
- (2) ESTIMATED COST OF ALTERATION: \$ 40000.
- (3) OCCUPANCY (in detail):
Of present building as a church
Of building as altered as a church
- (4) SIZE OF EXISTING BUILDING:
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|------------|--------|-----------|
| At street level | 53 | feet front | 146'8" | feet deep |
| At typical floor level | | feet front | | feet deep |
| Height | basement | stories | 10 | feet |
- (5) SIZE OF BUILDING AS ALTERED:
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|------------|--------|-----------|
| At street level | 53 | feet front | 146'8" | feet deep |
| At typical floor level | 53 | feet front | 135'0" | feet deep |
| Height | one | stories | 40 | feet |
- (6) CHARACTER OF CONSTRUCTION OF PRESENT BUILDING: Ordinary
[Frame, Ordinary or Fireproof]
- (7) STATE GENERALLY IN WHAT MANNER THE BUILDING WILL BE ALTERED:
- Upon the present basement walls and first floor beams now in place, all as shown on plans and applications now on file under N.B. application #160 - 1911, the upper portion of the church will be constructed as shown on plans filed herewith.

BLOCK 439 LOT 26.

12TH STR.

60

100 0

COURT

R. C. CHURCH
ONE STY & BASEMENT

COURT

REAR YARD
EXTENSION

YARD

NEW LIGHT
CONCRETE

COURT

NEW 4 STY & BASEMENT BLDG.
FIREPROOFED

11TH STR.

AVE 'A'



- PLOT PLAN -

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

SALVATI & LEQUIN
ASSOCIATE ARCHT'S
809 10TH ST
BRONX, N.Y.

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORKHYD **CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY No.** **11863** **192**

Supersedes Certificate of Occupancy No.

To the owner or owners of the building:

New York Dec. 13, 1928.

THIS CERTIFIES that the building located on Block 439 . Lot 26

known as 438-57 East 11th Street

under a permit, Application No. 63, front 120 N.Y. of 1925 conforms to the approved plans and specifications accompanying said permit and any approved amendments thereto, and to the requirements of the building code and all other laws and ordinances and to the rules and regulations of the board of standards and appeals, applicable to a building of its class and kind, except that in the case of a building heretofore existing and for which no previous certificate of occupancy has been issued and which has not been altered or converted since March 14, 1916, to a use that changed its classification as defined in the building code, this certificate confirms and continues the existing uses to which the building has been put; and

CERTIFIES FURTHER that the building is of **fireproof** construction within the meaning of the building code and may be used and occupied as a **public** building as hereinafter qualified, in a **business** district under the building zone resolution, subject to all the privileges, requirements, limitations, and conditions prescribed by law or as hereinafter specified.

STORY	LIVE LOADS per Sq. Ft.	PERSONS ACCOMMODATED			USE
		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	
Basement	75			100	
1st Story	75			85	
2nd "	75			137	PAROCHIAL SCHOOL
3rd "	75			142	
4th "	75			100	

This certificate is issued to **Am. Kennedy Constr. Company**
215 Montague St. Bklyn., for the owner or owners.

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPLICATE, and ONE copy sworn to by Applicant. A copy must be kept in plain view on the work at all times until completion.

PERMIT No. 1194 192 ⁵ } Application No. 549 192 ⁵.
 N.Y.B. ALT. P&D. ELEV. SIGN

LOCATION 440 E. 12th St., BLOCK 439 LOT 27

New York City April 30th 192 ⁵

To the Superintendent of Buildings:

All

Application is hereby made for a **PERMIT** to perform the work described in the above numbered application and the accompanying plans. If no work is performed within one year from the time of issuance this permit shall expire by limitation as provided by law; and the applicant agrees to comply with all provisions of the Building Code of the City of New York and with the provisions of all other laws and rules relating to this subject. Compensation insurance has been secured in accordance with the requirements of the Workmen's Compensation Law as follows:

The Fidelity and Casualty Co. of N.Y.

Policy ~~2227882~~ Exp- June 27th, 1925.

#6155268

Marcello Coppo, for

STATE, COUNTY AND CITY OF NEW YORK } ss.: Rev. Fr. Paul Zolin and or Marcello Coppo

Typewrite Name of Applicant

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at Number 429 E. 12th St.,
 in the Borough of Manhattan in the City of N.Y., in the County of N.Y.
 in the State of N.Y., that he is Contractor for the

owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed to the approved application and made a part thereof, situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York aforesaid, and known and designated as Number 440 E. 12th St.,

and therein more particularly described; that the work proposed to be done upon the said premises, in accordance with the approved application and accompanying plans is duly authorized by Church of Mary Help of Christian

(Name of Owner or Lessee)

and that Rev. Fr. Paul Zolin and or Marcello Coppo is duly authorized by the aforesaid Owner.

to make application for a permit to perform said work set forth in the approved application and accompanying plans, and all the statements herein contained are true to deponent's own knowledge.

(SIGN HERE)

Sworn to before me, this 30th
 day of April 192 ⁵

Marcello Coppo
Ella S. Schuman
 Commissioner of Deeds, New York City

Satisfactory evidence having been submitted as indicated above that compensation insurance has been secured in accordance with the Workmen's Compensation Law, a permit is hereby issued for the performance of the work described in the above numbered application and the accompanying plans.

EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL ON April 30th 192 ⁵

Examiner

Approved April 30th 192 ⁵

Superintendent of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPLICATE.
“SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A” (Form 152) must be filed with EVERY Alteration Application.
“SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET B” (Form 158) must be filed, in addition, in case the building is to be raised in height or occupancy changed so as to increase floor loads, or if building is to be enlarged on one side.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 549 192 BLOCK LOT 27
LOCATION
DISTRICT (under building zone resolution) Use Height Area
Examined 192 Examiner

SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A

(1) NUMBER OF BUILDINGS TO BE ALTERED
Any other building on lot or permit granted for one?
(2) ESTIMATED COST OF ALTERATION: \$ 15,000.
(3) OCCUPANCY (in detail):
Of present building
Of building as altered
(4) SIZE OF EXISTING BUILDING:
At street level feet front feet deep
At typical floor level feet front feet deep
Height stories feet
(5) SIZE OF BUILDING AS ALTERED:
At street level feet front feet deep
At typical floor level feet front feet deep
Height stories feet
(6) CHARACTER OF CONSTRUCTION OF PRESENT BUILDING: brick [Frame, Ordinary or Fireproof]
(7) NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS (in each story of building as altered, giving males and females separately in the case of factories):

(8) STATE GENERALLY IN WHAT MANNER THE BUILDING WILL BE ALTERED:
[PAGE 2] [CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE]

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

HVC CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY No.

11881

192 G

Supersedes Certificate of Occupancy No.

To the owner or owners of the building:

New York Sept. 8, 1926

THIS CERTIFIES that the building located on Block 439 , Lot 27

known as 440 East 12th Street

under a permit, Application No. 549 Alt of 19 25 conforms to the approved plans and specifications accompanying said permit and any approved amendments thereto, and to the requirements of the building code and all other laws and ordinances and to the rules and regulations of the board of standards and appeals, applicable to a building of its class and kind, except that in the case of a building heretofore existing and for which no previous certificate of occupancy has been issued and which has not been altered or converted since March 14, 1916, to a use that changed its classification as defined in the building code, this certificate confirms and continues the existing uses to which the building has been put; and

CERTIFIES FURTHER that the building is of **non-fireproof** construction within the meaning of the building code and may be used and occupied as a **residence** building as hereinafter qualified, in a **business** district under the building zone resolution, subject to all the privileges, requirements, limitations, and conditions prescribed by law or as hereinafter specified.

STORY	LIVE LOADS Lbs. per Sq. Ft.	PERSONS ACCOMMODATED			USE
		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	
1st to 4th Story					Dwelling, rectory

This certificate is issued to **D. Salvati,**
369 Fulton Street, Bklyn.

, for the owner or owners.

HISTORY OF OUR PARISH

BEGININGS

1898 marks the beginning of our parish and the beginning of the Salesian work in the Eastern United States.

Three Salesians, Fr. Ernesto Coppo, pastor and director, Fr. Marcellino Scagliola and Conductor Bro. Faustino Squassone made up the first Salesian community. They arrived in New York harbor on November 28th 1898, the day before Thanksgiving. Archbishop Corrigan of New York had called the Salesians to his diocese and Msgr. G. Edwards, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church on East 14th Street, welcomed the Salesians in the name of the Archbishop. Aided by Msgr. Edwards the first Salesian community settled in the first floor and basement of 315 East 12th St. On December 8th 1898 the Salesians celebrated the Mass of the Immaculate Conception in their new house. Immediately they began their efforts to get in contact with the members of the Italian community of the area. Msgr. McSweeney, pastor of St. Brigid's on East 8th St. offered the use of the basement of his church for services in Italian.

Christmas 1898 was to be the grand opening of the basement-church of the Italians. The conferees had visited homes and distributed numerous leaflets announcing the coming event. Their expectations were high. "Our great concern was that the basement could only hold 800 people", wrote Fr. Coppo years



315 East 12th Street
In the basement and first floor of this building the Salesians Fathers established the first Salesian house in the Eastern United States.



429-31-33 12th Street
The first Mary Help of Christians Chapel was housed in the first floor of the building in the middle. The building on the left served as rectory and residence for the Salesian Fathers. Later the whole complex was used as a Day Care Center run by the Missionary Helpers. At present the Salesian Sisters reside in the first building on the left.

later. On Christmas day only 12 people showed up. "It is said that twelve Apostles initiated the Universal Church...", comments the chronicler, philosophically. Daily mass was scheduled for 10:00 AM. On January 29th 1899 Feast of St. Francis de Sales, the first baby was baptized. Her name was Concetta Sterace of 404 E. 11th St.

In March of the same year the first mission was preached and on Easter Sunday 600 people attended the Mass.

In May, "Month of Mary" devotions were introduced "with consoling results", writes the chronicler. On that same month the Society of Mary Help of Christians was founded.

Fr. Paolino Sapienza was accepted as an aspirant in June of 1899, the first U. S. candidate for membership in the Salesian Con-



Transfiguration Church located on 29 Mott Street.
The Salesian Fathers served this Church
from 1903 to 1949.

gregation. On New Year's Day 1900 things looked more promising by far, than the previous year when only seven people had come to the Italian services.

Two English speaking confreres were added to the community at the beginning of 1900. They were Fr. Vincent Bertolino and Clerical Brother John Ferrazza.

The building on 341 East 12th St. was rented as a "Club room" for the society of the "Luigini" and for CCD classes. And still in the year 1900 an Italian journal was initiated: "L'Unione Italo-Americana" later to be fused with the publication "L'Italiano in America". The year closes with the arrival from Mexico of Fr. Joseph Villani who was appointed Prefect of the community.

Move to Transfiguration Church.

In May 1902 the Salesians left their living quarters on 315 E. 12th St. and moved to 29 Mott St. to take care of Transfiguration Church, an old Lutheran Church later sold to the Episcopalians and acquired by the Roman Catholics in 1870. In 1902 Fr. Coppo obtained the Church and with it a \$50,000 debt. The basement church at St. Brigid's was entrusted to the care of a secular priest, Fr. Mauro Michelangelo who on Sundays received help from one of the priests from Transfiguration Church.

The Italian people of East 12th Street area were not agreeable to this arrangement and in 1903 presented a petition for the return of the Salesians to Rev. Paul Albera who visited the U. S. on that year. Two other important events took place in 1903. On June 6th. deacon Ferrazza was ordained a priest by Bishop Farley and in August the Salesians opened their first school in the US in Troy, N. Y.

RETURN TO EAST 12th ST.

As had been promised by Fr. Albera, the Salesians returned to East 12th St. in February of 1904. This time they were ready to settle down and build up a church. With this purpose in mind they acquired the building on 431 E. 12th St. The operation was carried out in May-June 1905 and it involved



1906 Altar Boys Club
At the time Church Services were being held
at St. Brigid's Church basement.

an expense of \$23,250. It can be safely stated that this was the beginning of the financial strains that have characterized the development of our parish to this day. The next step was a year later to acquire a new building, 429 East 12th St., at an added "strain" of \$25,500.

THE FIRST CHAPEL OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

There was enough building space now for living quarters and for a chapel. The ground floor of building 431 E. 12th St. served as a chapel. There is a note of optimism and joy reflected in the chronicle: "Good-bye St. Brigid's besement!.. we converted the old house number 431 into a chapel. In July the altar area was built and we set up an altar table given to us by Transfiguration Church. Later we decorated it, put in a new floor, the communion railing, a tabernacle, 24 benches and 3 confessionals. Finally we put in the poor box and our first chapel was finished!" Msgr. Edwards blessed the chapel of Mary Help of Christians on Sept. 16, 1906.

Reorientation trials and tribulations marked the period of growth and development from 1907-1910. In July 1907 a fire broke out in the ground floor of building 429 E. 12th St., (20 worth of damage of which \$15.00 were reimbursed): extortionary letters were received; (the police was notified. Fortunately nothing happened) there was another fire and there was also a bomb explosion in a building next to the residence of the Salesians 429 E. 12th St. (The apparent motive for this dramatic event was the wish that one of the members of the Salesian community should leave the area.) "The devil was at work; a good sign!" comments the chronicler.

PLANS FOR A CHURCH BUILDING.

At the same time, religious services, baptisms, confirmations and marriages were on the increase and the possibility of acquiring lots of land from a cemetery located in front of the chapel building, on the south side of

the street, was becoming a necessity. Plans for such a building operation began to crystallize late in 1908 when it was learned that 5 lots would be made available by the Diocese for the building of the church.

The last entry for 1908 has a somber ring: "The financial crisis, regrettably, tayed with us all year long!"

The perspective of building a new church gave impetus to a social service much needed in the community, a Day Care Center. It was decided that the upper section of the building 431 E. 12th St. would be used as a Day Nursery. In March of 1909 the Nursery was opened to the public. Otherwise all the energies of the Salesians and the people were directed to the construction of the church. On Feb. 1911 it was learned that Archbishop Farley had ceded five lots of the old cemetery area for the building of the church of Mary Help of Christians. In March 1911 Mons. Edwards blessed the corner stone of the church basement.



**Mary Help of Christians Church
Constructed in 1918**

The construction of the basement was completed by the fall of that same year and in Sept. 24, 1911 it was solemnly blessed and dedicated.

Construction of the Upper Church.

Services were held in the basement church from 1911 to 1917. A choir loft was added and these years were particularly active for the Church of Mary Help of Christians. More than one thousand baptisms and about 500 marriages were being recorded annually during this period. In 1914 more than one thousand children attended CCD classes. The Archdiocese encouraged the updating of the Day Care Center. In response to the diocesan wishes the Salesians did their utmost to bring an Order of Sisters to staff the Center. In 1916 the "Mission Helpers" came to E. 12th Street. They took care of a renovated Day Care Center located in the 429-431 buildings. In January 1917 permission to build the upper church was obtained and in June 1917 construction began. The church was completed and dedicated on February 10th 1918. A major milestone had been reached. The Italian community had build its own church. Much work and many expenses were still ahead (main altar, picture of Mary Help of Christians, church bells, — at the dedication of these, Hon. LaGuardia was one of the speakers —, church decoration). Efforts and sacrifices were not spared and financial strains were ever present. The Day Care Center functioned officiently and satisfied a main need of the community. Again it had to be updated and made "fire proof". On Sept. 26 1920 Mons. Lavalie blessed the renovated Center.

A census taken in September 1923 indicated that only 5% of the Catholics living within the parish area attended Church. Great ignorance and religious indifference were given as reasons for such poor showing. That same year marks the acquisition of the 440 East 12th St. building which has served since then as the parish rectory.



Altar of Mary Help of Christians

Construction of the School.

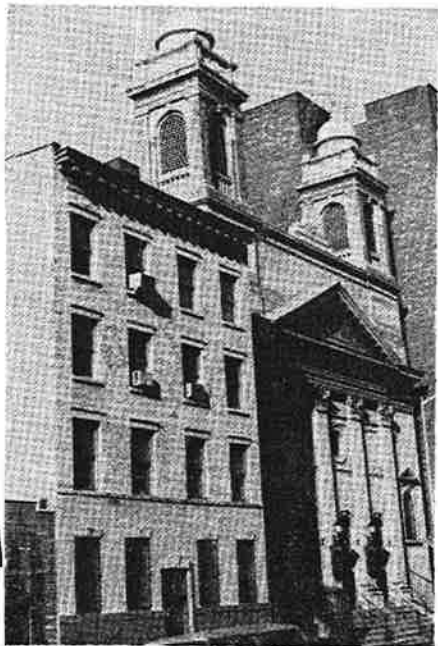
In an effort to respond to the educational needs of the people in this area and counting on the zeal of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the parish embarked on a mejour project, the construction of a parochial school. 1925 saw the beginnig of the construction effort and found the Church deep in dept. The buildings housing the Day Care Center were sold to the "Mission Helpers" (Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart), to cope up with the financial strains.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians arrived in our parish in 1926. In April a house was bought on 502 East 11th Street. They moved into this house in October 1926 and left that residence in 1949.

On May 9, 1926 Cardinal lHayes blessed the new School. In the fall of 1926 the first school year at Mary Help of Christians School began.

The Church debt for 1926 is given by the chronicler at \$110,000. A census conducted in connection with the Catholic Charities Campaign of that year indicated that there were about 3,700 adults and 1,500 children inscribed in our parish.

The Salesians also dedicated much of their attention to the youth of the area. Their efforts were courageous and untiring; the results alas, were meager. In July 1935 the building on 519 East 13th Street became



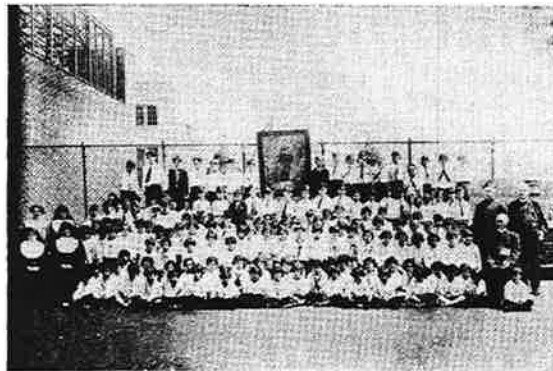
440 East 12th Street
Acquired in 1923 this building has served as rectory and has housed the Salesian community ever since.

the property of the Church and the "Don Bosco Community House" was opened. Staffed by lay people and by the priests of the parish, the community house was opened to the boys and girls of the area. This project was short lived but in 1939 and through the efforts of Miss Margaret McCare the project was restarted. This time the community house moved to 413 East 12th St.



Mary Help of Christians School
Completed in 1926

Five rooms were used. It was open to Boys on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and to girls on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Msgr. Lavalley came to bless the new project in July 1939. Fr. Pellegrino recalls how difficult it was to make a go of it. Acts of vandalism against the building and the furniture eventually advised the closing of the project.



1926 First Group of Students to attend
Mary Help of Christians Church,



509 East 11th Street
The Salesian Sisters resided in this building
from 1926 to 1949

A Period of Evolution and Transformation.

Through the 30's and the 40's the Church of Mary Help of Christians continued her services to the community but the signs of change and transformation were all too clear. There were an average 550 baptisms per year between 1920 and 1929. The average for the next decade 1930-1939 was 279 baptisms per year. For the decade 1940-1949 the average was 149 baptism per year.

There was an obvious exodus of Italian families reflected in those figures. During this period the Manhattan Lower East Side was being subjected to one of its many processes of transformation. This time it was the Italians who were moving up. Physical changes in the area also account for the exodus and transformation. The building of Stuyvesant town and P. S. 19 are two good examples. Those projects caused the relocations of many Italian families. Through all of those changes the Church of Mary Help of Christians continued her presence of service. The chronicle diligently kept year after

year, reflects the steady work of the priests and sisters, the religious societies, the Parochial School, the Day Care Center, and of course, it also reflects the financial strains of the parish.

In 1949 the Day Care Center was discontinued partly because this need was being filled by the City. From 1950-1959 an average of 133 baptisms per year were recorded. This figure doesn't indicate a radical change in the parish. Yet in the early 50's and through the cooperation of the Knights of Columbus, Bingo in a grand style was introduced. This activity reversed a continued tradition of financial strain. Debt were cancelled, improvements were introduced both in the parish and in the school. It is said that the parish was able to help the development of other work of the Salesian Eastern Province.

The Appearance of the Spanish Community.

The parish records show a sprinkling of Spanish names around the mid 60's. Between 1960 and 1969 there were an average 77 baptisms per year. More than 90% of the baptisms recorded in 1973 are Spanish surnamed. This change in the composition of our community has been recognized by Mary Help of Christians who is trying to respond to the new needs without forgetting her traditional commitments.

The service for youth is well represented by our school by our Savio club, Savio camp projects, and by our Boys Scout Troup.

Conclusion.

75 years after its foundation the Church of Mary Help of Christians is still committed to the service of the community, not only in the religious-sacrament area but in the educational and social areas as well. This pledge of service is well backed by the tradition of service and dedication established by the priests, sisters and lay people of the parish who served before us and whose work these pages record.