

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
6 Elizabeth Street  
Utica  
Oneida County  
New York

HABS NY-6393  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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1849 C Street NW  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HABS No. NY-6393

Location: 6 Elizabeth Street, Utica, Oneida County, New York.

The coordinates for Grace Episcopal Church are 75.135040 W and 43.060379 N, and they were obtained through Google Earth in November 2011 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Grace Episcopal Church is a Gothic Revival building designed by renowned architect Richard Upjohn. The church features impressive interior design and later additions and alterations supervised by Upjohn's son and grandson.

Description: Grace Episcopal Church is a Gothic Revival structure executed in gray stone with contrasting limestone, a soaring spire, buttresses, and pointed arch openings. Architect Richard Upjohn favored Gothic Revival for church structures because of his belief that this style best expressed the spirit and faith of ancient Catholicism. The nave is 111 feet long to the choir steps. The interior of the church, designed in cathedral style, has a seating capacity of approximately 800. The plan is cruciform with nave transepts. The interior is characterized by the muted colors of the stained glass windows and the Caen stone plaster walls.

History: By the year 1838, Trinity Church, the existing Episcopal parish serving Utica, had grown so large that additional worship space was needed. An amiable decision was made that a portion of that congregation would leave the mother church to organize a second Episcopal church in downtown Utica. Established later that year, Grace Church had its humble beginning in an upstairs meeting room in a house at 215 Genesee Street. However, by 1839, the parish soon was able to move into a frame building at the corner of Broadway and Columbia Streets. This would be the site of Grace Church for the next 21 years.

However, many of the parishioners envisioned a larger, grander church to reflect its thriving community. Alfred Munson a wealthy Utica businessman and member of the church, contracted the services of Richard Upjohn, architect of Old Trinity Church in New York City. From the voluminous correspondence between Mr. Munson and Mr. Upjohn, it was clear Mr. Munson had in mind a church of cathedral proportions. Mr. Munson insisted the massive stone church be constructed at the corners of Elizabeth and Genesee Streets. With \$10,000 bequeathed to Grace Church at the time of Mr. Munson's death, the historic Eagle Tavern, which occupied that corner, was purchased and razed to ready the site for the new church.

The cornerstone for Grace Church was laid on July 10, 1856. By September 1859, it seemed the edifice might never be completed due to financial problems. However, the Reverend John J. Brandegee, third rector of Grace Church, was a

man of experience. He had previously been instrumental in building a church on the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean and St. Michael's Church in Litchfield, Connecticut. Letter after letter was written by the rector encouraging the congregation to make heartfelt donations. Through his persistence, and generosity of Alfred Munson's estate as well as his heirs (the Proctor and Williams families), Grace Church opened its massive wooden doors on May 20, 1860, to celebrate its first worship service in the magnificent new building.

In 1875, the tower and spire were completed under the personal supervision of Richard M. Upjohn, son of the original architect. The parish house, vestry room and choir room were added in 1884. The rose windows, added in 1886, are approximately nine feet in diameter and the work of notable English stained glass artist Henry Holiday. The chancel was enlarged in 1890, and new stained glass windows, mosaics and statuary were commissioned from Holiday to adorn the area. He took the great hymns of the church and the seven days of Creation as the subject for seven new windows. Evidently Mr. Holiday considered them to be his best works for he chose them as the frontispiece of his definitive book on stained glass, and copied them for the west window of the Cathedral Church of St. Savior, Southwark, London.

Since the chancel's addition also was under the watchful eye of Mr. Upjohn, he commandeered the services of Carl Bitter of New York City to sculpt the figures in the reredos (the decorated area behind the altar) in beautiful Caen stone. Mr. Bitter's fame was well known as he had recently done the magnificent bronze doors of Trinity Church, New York. The reredos depicts Gustave Dore's famous painting of the Ascension, featuring the walls and buildings of Jerusalem in the lower left hand corner. The four figures around the reredos represent the four Gospel writers. The remainder of the reredos, aside from the central figure of Christ and the Caen stone altar, were the work of Messrs. Ellin, Kitson and Co. of New York City. The mosaics in the chancel, created by the artisan Pellarin of New York, comprise six panels and represent the Rose of Sharon, the Passion Flower and the Vine.

The magnificent choir door located in the east transept of the church is the work of two gifted craftsmen. The door itself, completed in 1886, was crafted by H.W. Congdon. The central panel immediately above the door, inspired by early works of Donatello and representing choir boys, was sculptured by E. McCartan in 1914.

The statue of the Good Shepherd, which graces the north transept wall, was given as a memorial to Rev. Brandegee by a grateful parish. Designed by Frederic Hubbard of Utica, the statue was from architectural drawings by Richard Upjohn. John Moffitt of New York City was commissioned to create the sculpture.

Several noteworthy marble pieces are found within the church. A marble bust of the Reverend Brandegee, sculptured in 1866 by G. Bennetti of Geneve, sits in the north window of the vestibule. It was a gift to the parish from Mrs. Martina Brandegee, the beloved rector's daughter who died in 1937. The baptismal angel

font, located near the choir door, is a replica of Thorvalsen's creation found in the Lutheran Cathedral in Copenhagen. The first memorial gift to the church was the Grace Elizabeth Munson Williams Monument, honoring the first-born grandchild of Alfred Munson, member and benefactor of the church. Another memorial monument shows the reposed adult figure of Rachel M. W. Proctor, another granddaughter and major benefactor herself.

In 1934, the 160 foot spire of the church was rebuilt under the personal supervision of Hobart Upjohn, grandson of the original architect. At the time of reconstruction, three 1864 Indian head pennies were found embedded in the steeple. Also, it was discovered the cross atop the spire weighed 500 pounds.

The Lady Chapel, built during the addition of the parish house in 1926-1928, was the generous gift of the Proctor family. The small chapel seats 50 people and is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was styled after Old World churches where it was the custom to dedicate the chapel immediately behind the high altar to the mother of Christ. The chapel's walls are Indiana limestone, the floor Italian marble, and the altar Sienna marble. The delicate triptych was designed by Cram and Ferguson. The panels are of carved oak with a gold and polychrome finish. The Virgin Mother, presented in vivid blue against the golden carved background, was executed by Irving and Casson of the A.H. Davenport Co., Boston. Created at a cost of \$6,000, it was first exhibited in the Boston Museum prior to its delivery to the church. The chapel windows on either side of the triptych are medieval in design, the work of Charles J. Connick, Boston. The large, stained glass window on the north wall, depicting the parable of the lilies in the field, was created by renowned artist Louis C. Tiffany and bears his signature. The limestone credence table was added in 1958 as a memorial to Fred C. Krebs, Jr. Because much of the artwork in the Lady Chapel was donated by the Proctor family, the chapel was designated as a memorial to Mrs. Proctor 10 years after her death.

In 1994, Calvary Church joined Grace Church to become one parish family. The Calvary baptismal font, credence table, Bishop's chair and other liturgical items were incorporated into the worship space of Grace. The Calvary Room, located on the second floor of Grace Church, houses many other items of memorabilia, reflective of Calvary's history.

Two other Utica churches would later merge with Grace Church—St. Paul's Riverside Drive in 2003 and St. George's, Genesee Street in 2004. One legacy of St. George's is the Emily Clark Bink Organ Scholar Fund, which supports the training of young musicians. A statue of Jesus with outstretched hands, a gift from the Eannace family to St. George's, now welcomes parishioners walking the pathway to Grace Church's side entrance. Our exquisite worship space and beautiful buildings bear testimony to the vision and faithfulness of countless members who made Grace Church their spiritual home during the past 172 years.

Sources: Galpin, W. Freeman. *Grace Church: One Hundred Twenty-five Years of Downtown Ministry*. Grace Church, Utica. 1963.

Mackey, Jeffrey Allen. *A Diary of Three Decades: A History of Grace Church, 1964-1996*. Grace Church, Utica. 1996.

Sawyer, Harold E. *Grace Church, Utica: The First Hundred Years, 1838-1938*. Grace Church, Utica. 1938.

Historian: G. Wescott Storm, Jr., Grace Church Archivist, submitted for the 2011 Holland Prize competition