

PROJECT PROFILE

St. Patrick's Cathedral New York, NY

VERTICAL
access



Photos by Vertical Access

Project overview

Over nearly a decade, Vertical Access has joined teams of architects, engineers, and conservators working to document, assess, and maintain St. Patrick's Cathedral. Vertical Access has performed both interior and exterior investigations of the cathedral, including inspection and documentation of exterior masonry at the west façade spires and gable (2004 and 2008) and investigation of attic trusses, rafters, and catwalks (2012).

Building description

St. Patrick's Cathedral is the largest Gothic-style Roman Catholic cathedral in the United States and is the center of the Archdiocese of New York. The first cornerstone was set in 1858 and after a hiatus in construction during the Civil War the cathedral was dedicated in 1879. The two west façade towers were added in 1888 and the Lady Chapel and other work at the east end of the structure were begun in 1901. After an extensive interior renovation undertaken between 1927 and 1931, the cathedral took the form and appearance that we see today. At least three different types of marble are used for the exterior cladding and the highly ornamental stonework typical of High Gothic architecture. The 330-foot tall spires on the west façade are clad mostly in Cockeysville (MD) marble; marble from Tuckahoe or Pleasantville (NY) is used at the lower portions of the cathedral including the west façade; and some of the recently replaced decorative elements surrounding the west portals are carved from Lee (MA) marble.

Scope of work

- Surveyed existing condition of exterior masonry at the two spires and gable end on the principal (west) façade.
- Collected numerical data on existing conditions to assist in the development of construction estimates, budget and work phasing plans and construction documents.
- Procured samples of possible original and replacement mortar from select locations.
- Examined and documented wood trusses, rafters and catwalks in attic of west end, determined member sizes and connection details of both truss types, and characterized bearing conditions of roof purlins.

Building owner

Archdiocese of New York

In collaboration with

- Archdiocese of New York (2004)
- Building Conservation Associates, Deerpath Construction (2008)
- Robert Silman Associates, Murphy Burnham and Buttrick Architects, StructureTone (2012)