

# Save Grace Buildings, Landmark Groups Ask

By ROBERTA GRATZ

National and state organizations concerned with the registration and preservation of landmarks have asked officials of Grace Church to save a row of Gothic Revival buildings it owns.

In communications to the church, the National and the State Historic Trusts urged that the buildings not be demolished. Grace Church has announced its intent to raze the buildings to make room for new school facilities.

The Gothic facades, according to the groups, are "part of an architectural heritage, as well as environment, rapidly disappearing in New York City."

At the same time, a coalition of civic and preservation groups — the Joint Emergency Committee to Save the Grace Church Houses — was formally organized yesterday in an ef-

fort to raise funds for the preservation. With offices at 41 East 65th St., the Committee has established a telephone (628-4500) for fund pledges and is contacting several foundations in search of substantial commitments. It also will ask the city Landmarks Commission to hold a hearing to consider declaring the structures landmarks.

Members of the Joint Emergency Committee and architectural students from Columbia, Pratt and Cooper Union plan a demonstration tomorrow in front of the church before the 11 a.m. service.

#### Rated Finest

Although the Gothic row is not a designated landmark, it is considered by architectural historians as "the country's finest Gothic Revival blockfront in an urban location." Built after the church, the Fourth Av. buildings form an architectural unit with the church.

The entire church complex was designed by James Renwick, then a vestryman of Grace Church, who is credited with sparking this country's 19th century Gothic renaissance. He was the designer of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Church plans call for replacing part of the Gothic row with a two-story structure providing a gymnasium and classrooms. The facilities have long been needed

by the church's elementary school.

Several alternative plans have been offered to the church that would preserve the building facades and behind them. Church leaders argue, however, that such plans would be above the limited financial resources of the church. The church estimates that cost at more than \$300,000. Although estimates were received that contradict that figure, the fund-raising group has set a goal of at least that amount.