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Grace Church Houses Drive Halfway to Goal

By ROBERTA D. GRATZ

The future of the Grace Church Houses, the row of mid-19th century Gothic Revival buildings on Fourth Avenue, is still in doubt although church and community leaders hope to preserve the facades and build a new church-school facility behind them.

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About half of the fundraising goal has been reached — \$250,000 out of \$450,000 necessary to allow the church to proceed with a plan to preserve rather than demolish the elaborately detailed facades.

In the meantime, the Municipal Arts Society is sponsoring a free walking tour this Saturday of Grace Church and its environs. "We hope to call attention to the fact that the area has astonishing historical integrity," says Brendan Gill, board chairman, who will lead the tour along with landmark historian Henry Hope Reed.

"One can read that whole

area as a chapter in New York City history," added Gill, "and to lose part of it would be like losing a page of the story."

Highlights of the tour include Colonnade Row at 428 Lafayette St., Cooper Union at Astor Place and the former Astor Library that is now the New York Shakespeare Festival Theater at 425 Lafayette St.

Four of the original nine private residences of Colonnade Row—also known as La Grange Terrace—are still standing and are designated city landmarks. John Jacob Astor and Warren Delano, Franklin D. Roosevelt's grandfather, lived in the 1833 Corinthian-columned houses until New York society started to move uptown.

The Astor Library, built and enlarged between 1849 and 1881, was the city's first free library and began the public library system. When the library moved its headquarters to 42d Street, the

building became the home of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and in 1967 was remodeled for the Shakespeare Theater.

The 1859 Cooper Union Foundation Building is also a designated landmark. This structure housed one of the country and is currently unearliest free schools in the dergoing extensive renovation.

The entire area, says Gill, represents "150 years of the ambitiousness of New York. Because such a variety of things were built within the same period, it represents one of the most interesting neighborhoods in the city that is currently undergoing renovation and renewal."

Grace Church at Broadway

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and 10th Street, was built by architect James Renwick who in 1846 and designed by the later designed St. Patrick's noted Gothic Revival architect. The facades on

the Fourth Avenue houses, which were added after the church's completion, were designed by Renwick to form an architectural unit with the church.

THEIR BEST BUYS