



Post Photo by Richard Gorman

As townhouses being razed by the Calhoun School on West End Av. at 81st St....

## School, Church Plan West End Av. Changes

By ROBERTA R. GRATZ

Two new projects may dramatically alter the nature of West End Av.

One is already under construction and will bring the first concrete, glass and steel edifice to the residential area of that old-world thoroughfare.

The other, still in the preliminary planning stages, would bring low-income housing to the middle of a section of the avenue distinguished by high-rent apartments and expensive cooperatives.

One has already root the neighborhood a familiar architectural landmark. And the other one may also.

The Calhoun School, a pri-

vate institution founded in 1896, is now demolishing its distinguished architecturally unified 19th century townhouses to make way for an ultra modern \$17 million facility on the west side of West End Av. at 81st St. Across the street, the leaders of the All Angels' Episcopal Church—an elaborate stone-carved Gothic building with stained glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany—are considering tearing the building down to put up low-income housing for the aged.

Neither is the result of the usual real estate speculation that has changed the face of many a neighborhood. But money is at the heart of both.

The church is broke, and

Calhoun has decided that demolishing its present buildings and building a new one is the cheapest way for it to make necessary adjustments.

Both institutions have been developing plans in recent years aimed at better serving the surrounding community. In neither case, however, was community concern translated into involving the local planning board in the decision making process. Legally, there was no requirement to do so.

In 1969, Calhoun's board of trustees rejected an opportunity to move to the East Side, says board president Robert L. Blair. "Commitment to the West Side," he says, "was one of the principal reasons we decided to stay here and we feel our building will give the West Side a shot in the arm. Other schools are building here too. . . . We believe the West Side is coming back."

### Innovative Program

Calhoun's six-story building will accommodate 450 students from nursery through high school. It was designed to accommodate the innovative educational program that the once conservative institution has developed over the past few years.

Little consideration was given, says headmaster Eugene D. Roth Jr., to the possibility of renovating the six townhouses instead of demolishing them.

"There was some hesitation," he says, "but no long, involved debate.

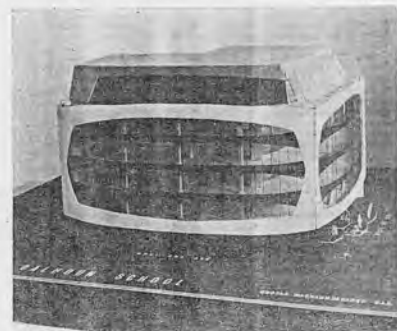
"We were avidly interested in developing an alternate school system and it couldn't be done this way with those buildings. And we

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Post Photo by Frank Leonard

All Angels' Church across the street. . .



And the building that will replace the houses.

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 would have had to spend more money."

Much of the educational innovation that the new school is designed to accommodate was set in motion by Ruth, a 32-year-old former public school teacher and curriculum specialist who became headmaster this June. In 1970, Ruth established a prototype learning center for 19 sixth graders that was

so successful that Ruth's approach was adopted throughout the school.

"This building also demonstrates," Ruth said, "that you don't need to spend \$4 million for a new school. We will have 45,000 square feet with an 85 to 95 per cent educational utilization rate. We're spending \$40 to \$45 per square foot where public schools spend about \$80—and they never get that kind of

utilization of their space." The plans at All Angels' are a direct outgrowth of a dedication to community service that dates to the parish's mid-19th century beginnings. Those plans are also the result of hard economic reality.

The diagonally placed church built in 1890 in the shape of a cross seats 1200 but has a communicant list of approximately 120 and av-

erage Sunday attendance of not much more. Richly adorned with mosaics, marble and stone carvings, brass and rare linen-fold wood paneling, All Angels' was once a fashionable seat of worship.

With dwindling membership and funds and increasing community use of its facilities, the church finds it increasingly difficult to meet its minimum \$30,000 yearly maintenance budget.

"We're always wrestling with the question of how we can best serve the community," explains Father Eric Whiting, who has been rector for four years. One answer they've found is letting a host of community groups use the facilities — the West Side Tenants Union, a day care center, a Head Start program, St. Ann's Church for the Deaf, a Italian church congregation and emergency

relief programs for housing crises. They also support cultural activities like used the facilities — theater groups, choral programs — but none has brought the church into needed funds.

Three years ago the church surveyed the community to determine the greatest need and found that housing for the elderly primarily for single room occupancy tenants and welfare hotel residents — was in desperate shortage.

"We haven't really gotten much farther than that," Whiting says, "because of all the complications and red tape with government programs. But if it were to be the answer, the present church buildings would have to come down and a new facility would be included in the new building."

Demolishing the church complex, which includes four smaller structures on 80th and 81st St., is not Whiting's preference.

## Two Approaches

At least two approaches were made to the Landmarks Preservation Commission over the past several years to have the church designated an official landmark, Whiting says, although now that a new building is being contemplated he's unsure of what designation could mean. The feeling at the time, he says, was that with government and community help viable new uses for the church could be found.

Frank Gilbert, executive director of the Landmarks Commission said he had no recollection of discussions with church representatives but added that the commission would like to work with them with a view toward preserving the building.

The Calhoun School was founded in 1890, six years after All Angels' Church was consecrated. When first established as the Jacoby School for Girls — named for its founder, Laura Jacoby — it accommodated mostly wealthy Jewish girls who couldn't get into exclusive East Side schools. "All the girls from 'Our Crowd' came here," a trustee once recalled.

The school was renamed in 1921 for its second headmistress, Mary Edwards Cahoun, and has since undergone many changes. It is now coeducational. Until the new building is completed, the school is housed in a townhouse it owns at 200 W. 92d St. and space rented at the Young Israel of the West Side community center at 210 W. 91st St.