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**Re: Former Colored School No. 4 – 128 West 17th Street, Manhattan
Support for Individual Landmark Designation**

December 1, 2021

The Victorian Society, New York Chapter, supports designation of the Former Colored School No. 4 in Manhattan as an individual landmark. We urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to expedite its evaluation.

Depicted as a school property on the 1854 Perris map of Chelsea, 128 West 17th Street served the children of African American families who lived nearby after the Civil War. Over its 30-year lifespan, the staff at this notable institution included many influential African American educators. Examples are principal and suffragist Sarah J. Tompkins, and J. Imogen Howard, the only Black World's Fair manager, who worked at Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

Part of an important support network that included churches, societies and missions, this early example of a "model" public school building produced many notable graduates. These include musician Walter F. Craig, and James H. Williams, who organized Black college men as a work force for Grand Central Terminal. In addition to recognition of its historic and cultural significance, designation of 128 West 17th Street would contribute to LPC's stated goal of celebrating New York City's African American history through its designated places. Eric K. Washington has submitted multiple requests for evaluation.

128 West 17th Street had become a social club for the Civil War Fire Zouave veterans by 1896, after the school departed. The brick exterior of the three-story building retains multipaned double-hung windows on its upper floors. This distinctive fenestration appears in a 1908 view of the "Veteran Association" hall, dating these windows to well over a hundred years old. The structure is a remarkable survivor and will be even more striking when refurbished and converted to one of many uses it could serve.

Founded in New York City in 1966, the Victorian Society in America is dedicated to fostering the appreciation and preservation of 19th and early 20th century heritage. The New York chapter promotes preservation of our historic districts, individual landmarks, significant interiors, scenic landmarks, and civic art.

We urge designation of Former Colored School No. 4 and welcome this building as an addition to a collection of landmarks that promote understanding of the varied aspects of life in Victorian era New York City.

Sincerely,

Lynne Funk AIA, Victorian Society Board Member