

## Combined Victorian Society Testimony for April 25, 2023

***Approximate time: 9:30; join Zoom by: 9:30***

**LP-2659**

### **(Former) Colored School No. 4 - 128 West 17th Street, Manhattan**

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

This 3-story survivor embodies so much of the social history of the City of New York that it seems impossible that it shouldn't be designated as a landmark. It must be one of the earliest extant school buildings in the city. We can imagine any number of possible future uses that could incorporate the many stories it has to tell: the history of school buildings and public education, of African American history, of conflict and conciliation, of its notable graduates and their inspiring stories.

The brick re-facing of the façade has not fatally affected the building's integrity. It's still recognizable as the building it was originally, and judicious restoration could easily return some of its missing features. We believe the 8 windows with 16-over-16 sash at the second and third floors are very likely original to the building's construction. They are remarkable survivors. They should be called out as significant in the designation report and protected from further weathering as soon as possible.

The Victorian Society New York strongly supports designation of Former Colored School No. 4 as an individual landmark.

***Approximate time: 11:30; join Zoom by: 10:30***

**LPC-23-06201 -- 118 North 11th Street - Hecla Iron Works Building - Individual Landmark, Brooklyn**

Good morning, commissioners, \_\_\_\_\_ for the Victorian Society New York.

The Victorian Society supports most of the proposed work at this important and impressive individual landmark. The new ground floor windows appear to match exactly the material, proportions, and details of what appear to be original windows at the upper floors. This is a welcome change from so many approved window applications that vary significantly in materials, details, and operation from the originals. We think the applied translucent film on the glazing will have a minimal effect.

The new infill at the far-right bay is a reasonably close interpretation of the historic infill, and we find it to be harmonious with the building's architectural character. We're less enthusiastic about the two left-hand bays. While the proposed changes do no harm to the building's architectural character, neither do they improve it to any extent. We hope that in the future the masonry infill at these bays will be removed and the bays restored in similar ways to the others.

Regarding signs, we recommend conserving rather than replacing the office sign band, which seems to retain historic lettering. The large, illuminated sign box proposed is appropriate because of its location against this non-historic infill. Its muted colors, metal material, and minimal cut-outs for lighting will result in a subdued presence despite its size.

***Approved 9-0, look with staff at retaining historic sign band and sign.***

***Approximate time: 12:00; join Zoom by: 11:00***

**LPC-22-07227 -- 345 Decatur Street - Bedford-Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights  
Historic District, Brooklyn**

Good morning commissioners, \_\_\_\_\_ for the Victorian Society New York.

We commend the applicant for the clarity of the presentation, especially slide 14 which helpfully shows original, existing, and proposed conditions side-by-side. We wish all proposals were presented with such clarity.

We are not going to assess the proposed façade design as a work of contemporary architecture or as a design for a new infill building in this historic district. That would be the wrong basis for making an appropriateness finding. This is a *historic* house, clearly documented and retaining its historic siding material, original fence, and most original window and door openings. It's part of a historic row of four, with the three houses to the east retaining more of their original features. The missing wood features wouldn't be unusual or difficult to replicate. Restoration, or a design moving in that direction, is the only approach we feel is appropriate for this historic house.

***No action; revisions needed.***