

## Victorian Society Testimony for October 31, 2023

### LPC-22-08821 - 398 Pacific Street - Boerum Hill Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society supports this proposal to construct a new building at 400 Pacific Street joined to the historic rowhouse at 398 Pacific. Filling this gap in the street wall, which has left the demising walls of both 398 and 402 exposed to the weather, will aid in the long-term preservation of both. We also support the decision to base many elements of the new façade on their historic neighbor, which will help to unify this block.

However, we don't support the applicant's plans to include a garage at 400 Pacific, finding it will diminish the unity they are trying to create. Construction of the garage will make it impossible to recreate the historic areaway fence or to align the parlor floors or windowsills at 398 and 400 and will introduce an atypical element to this street.

Drawing A-201 shows that the parlor floor at 398 Pacific is at elevation 42.3, and that the parlor floor at 400 will be set at 45.10. This difference is caused by the need to locate the floor of the new garage just below the sidewalk level, pushing the elevations of the lower two floors at 400 above those of its neighbor. Because the new building's parlor floor level is three feet above the existing's parlor floor level, the parlor floor windowsills can't align.

While there is some historic precedent for early garages added to rear extensions or freestanding in backyards of corner houses, they are historically unprecedented on the main façade of a building in the middle of a row.

We recommend eliminating the garage, aligning the floor levels at the two buildings, and creating new parlor floor window openings at 400 matching the height of those at 398. Since the parlor floor windows at 398 are to be replaced, as noted on drawing D-100, both sets of parlor floor windows should be four-over-four wood windows with a black-painted finish.

In addition, the applicant should install a new areaway fence at 400 and preserve the top floor of the rear façade at 398.

Finally, we point out that the proposal calls for demolishing everything behind the façade of the existing building. This extreme level of intervention is highly problematic. There may be cases where facadism is a necessary approach, but not for an intact rowhouse in a district of rowhouses.