

**Combined Victorian Society Testimony for May 21, 2024: 218 Lincoln Place (LPC-24-06516); 767 Washington Street (LPC-24-05316); 150 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street (LPC-24-05325); 175 Fifth Avenue - Flatiron Building (LPC-24-08057 and LPC-24-08093); 49 East 67<sup>th</sup> Street (LPC-24-09247); 817 Fifth Avenue (LPC-24-02524)**

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

**LPC-24-06516 -- 218 Lincoln Place - Park Slope Historic District, Brooklyn**

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.

The best part of this building's facade is its Classical, symmetrical, pedimented limestone entrance. The original paired iron and glass doors are perfectly scaled and detailed for this entrance. While the door widths may not meet modern codes, they've been in place for nearly 100 years, there is no violation on the building, and no mandate that they be changed. They appear to be readily restorable by a good metal worker and locksmith. We urge that the Commission require their preservation.

Should a new door be approved, however, it should not be the one proposed. This kind of asymmetric assembly has no historic precedent and throws the entire entrance off-kilter. A single leaf door should be as wide as possible, centered in the opening, and detailed with ironwork, paneling and glazing to replicate the design of the existing doors. Perhaps the existing decorative ironwork could even be modified for reuse.

***Approved 8-0, with modifications to include a single centered leaf with metal grille matching existing, and jamb width and details to be developed with staff.***

*lunch*

**Approximate time: 1:15; join Zoom by: 12:15**

**LPC-24-05316 -- 767 Washington Street - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

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

There are several components to this proposal. They're inappropriate individually, and the overall effect would be to degrade the character and historic integrity of this early house.

The exposed portion of the historic rear façade, above the one-story addition, is only two stories high and retains its historic window openings. The proposal would significantly alter one of the two floors. This would affect far too large a percentage of historic fabric. The most that should be allowed is to drop one of the windowsills so that a door to the terrace can be installed.

The proposed duct at the rear façade would be very visible and inappropriate.

The enlarged HVAC unit on top of the one-story addition would also be very visible and inappropriate. We question whether the unit in that location would meet noise codes even with acoustic panels, but regardless, it's visually inappropriate. Possibly screening with a garden-type trellis structure would make it visually acceptable.

Finally, once again we object to the non-historic asymmetric door proposed to replace the sliding doors on the side façade. This should be a single-leaf door or a pair of doors.

***Approved, 8-1 (Goldblum) with applicant to work with staff to explore feasibility of interior placement of the flue, and if exterior, choosing the color with care.***

***Approximate time: 1:45; join Zoom by: 12:45***

**LPC-24-05325 – 150 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street – Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society does not recommend approval of this stoop gate, which was recently installed without a permit. This row of houses retains beautifully crafted Greek Revival style iron fences. It's important to maintain the historic rhythm of areaway fences separated by unfenced stoops reaching out in welcome to the sidewalk.

Often conditions like this may be addressed with a simple chain, which can be hung in the fence opening. We note that this is a residential block, without adjacent commercial uses that can cause problems for residents. We urge the applicant to rethink the proposal.

Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved 7-1 (Lutfe), with upper scrollwork to be removed.***

**Approximate time: 2:00; join Zoom by: 1:00**

**LPC-24-08057 and LPC-24-08093 - 175 Fifth Avenue - Flatiron Building - Individual Landmark - Ladies' Mile Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Flatiron Building has been an individual New York City landmark since 1966, is a National Historic Landmark, one of the most famous buildings in New York City, the work of a major American architect, and one of the world's most iconic skyscrapers. The Victorian Society is surprised and disappointed by this proposal. We do not support any of the changes or amendments as presented. We also do not support the proposed Modification of Use until these matters are resolved.

The proposed window replacement would include all of the windows above the ground floor except for selected curved wood windows. All of the double-hung aluminum windows now in place are 20 year old replacements. They were installed after this Commission approved removal of the original 102 year old copper clad windows, which are now for sale at Olde Good Things. But new tilt-and-turn aluminum windows would be a step backward. The new windows must match the original double-hung windows in dimensions, operation, details, finish, and quality. What the material should be is an open question.

We also urge that a section of the existing flat metal panning be stripped of paint to ascertain whether it is part of historic copper framing. Assuming it isn't original or has been altered, correct framing and brick molds need to be designed.

It should be unnecessary to point out that replacing 100 year old, original copper windows was bad preservation, and that sending the 20 year old aluminum windows that replaced them to a landfill is bad sustainable design.

The applicant is also asking for changes to the approved Storefront Master Plan, including changes to the transom grills at the entrances to the building, and doors to individual storefronts. We support the installation of the transom grilles in theory, based on the 1911 photograph, but there are no notes or details to explain the materials, finish or dimensions of the members of the transoms. We are also concerned about the proposed installation of paired doors at one storefront facing Fifth, #8, and one facing Broadway, #17. These storefronts both have historic bay window framing adjacent to the entrances to the retail space. These bays are an original feature of the Fifth Avenue and Broadway facades. There's no explanation how the historic bays will be altered to increase the width of the entrance from a single door to a double door. This detail must be clarified.

We think that introducing louvers to every show window is a mistake and will compromise the storefront design integrity and possibly historic material as well.

The proposed changes at the penthouse and the installation of the mechanical equipment will be visible from numerous locations up and down Fifth Avenue, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and the adjacent blocks. This is unacceptable for an Individual Landmark of this importance.

We urge the applicant to step back and rethink all aspects of this application. The special permit request introduces a further mandate to make this an exemplary restoration. We expect the Commission to demand better of this owner and architect and, not incidentally, take steps to correct a 20-year old mistake.

***Approved 6-0-1 (abstain) (Goldblum)***

***Modification of Use Approved 7-0***

***Approximate time: 3:30; join Zoom by: 2:30***

**LPC-24-09247 -- 49 East 67<sup>th</sup> Street – Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society cannot support replacing the existing front door at 46 East 67<sup>th</sup> Street. Landmarks Commission permits often refer to “bringing the building closer to the original design.” The historic photographs the applicant has provided show that the original design of this front door has never been lost.

Frederick Sterner, the architect of the 1919 redesign of this old rowhouse, was an extremely important figure in the history of rowhouse redesign in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Andrew Dolkart extensively documents his work in the Upper East Side and elsewhere in the city in “The Rowhouse Reborn.”

Board five has a wonderfully clear photo from the collection of the Museum of the City of New York. Taken in 1920, one year after this façade was redesigned, it shows a painted wood front door which is identical to the existing door in terms of proportions, details, materials and painted finish. We don’t know if the existing door is original, or if it is a perfectly fabricated replica installed in an earlier renovation, but we feel strongly that a design which has survived for 105 years should remain intact.

Commissioners, please deny the proposal to change this door.

Finally, we’ll note that the appendix describes a proposal to restore the original design of the iron balconettes at the parlor floor. This change wasn’t advertised so we assume it’s being done at staff level. This restoration approach is exactly right. We urge that the same preservation ethic be applied to the front door. By denying the door replacement, and restoring the balconettes, East 67<sup>th</sup> Street will have an intact Sterner and Wolfe façade, an outcome we support as an example of preservation at its best.

***Approved 6-1 (Goldblum)***

**Approximate time: 4:15; join Zoom by: 3:15**

**LPC-24-02524 - 817 Fifth Avenue - Upper East Side Historic District – Manhattan – May 21, 2024**

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

The Victorian Society is testifying about this building, built slightly after the period which normally receives our attention, for several reasons. First, the architects, George B. Post and Sons, active between 1867 and 1930, were trained and worked in the Beaux-Arts tradition. 817 Fifth Avenue is designed in this tradition, as are dozens of the 15-story limestone clad, classically detailed apartment buildings which line Park and Fifth Avenues. As such, it falls comfortably within our focus.

But more importantly, we want to applaud the applicant for their decision to create a Master Plan for Window Replacement. The building is now a hodge-podge of one-over-one and single pane tilt-and-turn sash. This ill-sorted group of replacement windows diminishes the overall unity which the original architects created. Implementation of the window Master Plan will, over time, recreate that lost unity.

However, the original windows were 6-over-6. The tax photos show how the multi-light sash enhanced the façade and were stylistically appropriate to it.

We urge the Commission to require windows matching the original 6-over-6 configuration, but there are two other options. One is for 6-over-1 windows, which would restore some of the missing detail and texture to the façade. The other is an option put in place by the LPC in the 1990's for this type of building.

At that time, some Beaux-Arts style masonry-clad apartment buildings, with facades divided into base, shaft and crown, created Window Master Plans which allowed multi-light windows on the lower floors and one-over-one on the upper floors. 817 has rusticated stone cladding on the lower four floors, stone with a smooth finish above that, and a prominent string course dividing the two types of cladding. It would be an excellent candidate for the use of double-hung windows with this sort of configuration change. See the photos with our written testimony for examples of this solution.

Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved 6-0, but work with staff to refine the color to harmonize with the façade, and explore possibility of wood-clad aluminum windows.***

*See next two pages for photos.*





**956 Fifth Avenue**



**920 Fifth Ave., aka 2 East 73rd Street**