

Combined Victorian Society Testimony for May 7, 2024: 1100 Albemarle Road (LPC-24-08873); 301 Canal, 419-421 Broadway, and 423 Broadway (LPC-24-08399); 40 Wooster Street (LPC-24-05697); 41 East 74th Street (LPC-24-05668); 1115 Fifth Avenue (LPC-24-07956)

Approximate time: 11:00; join Zoom by: 10:00

LPC-24-08873 - 1100 Albemarle Road, aka 101-113 Stratford Road - Prospect Park South 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 Victorian Society is happy to support the proposed alterations at 1100 Albemarle. Removing portions of the brick-clad additions added to the south façade in the 1950s will not destroy any significant historic material. These demolitions will also allow for reconstruction of the original wrap-around porch at the south-west corner, noted in the Designation Report, bringing the street façade closer to its original appearance. The proposed construction of the new porch at the south-east corner of the building, rear, will help unify the various additions on this façade.

We wouldn't usually support creating the wide window openings the applicant is proposing for the south façade in a house built in 1905. However, the way they've been detailed, with small panes, multi-light French doors, and transoms, will recall the historic detailing in this and other houses of the period. Also, their locations, partially hidden by the new porches and perpendicular to the street, will minimize their impact.

But we do have problems with this proposal. There are very few notes giving materials, details, or dimensions for the new materials. There are no dimensions given on the one window detail drawing, and while it's drawn as if it were wood, it doesn't actually say if it's wood, aluminum clad wood, or metal. We couldn't find any notes calling out the materials, dimensions or finish of the new porch columns. The new porch railings are also drawn as if they're wood, but again, no notes, and we don't know where the design came from. The phrase, "Original window to be replaced" is on several drawings, but replaced with what?

All details, dimensions, materials and finishes must be documented and appropriate to this historic house before the permits are issued.

Approved 10-0.

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

LPC-24-08399 -- 301 Canal, 419-421 Broadway, and 423 Broadway - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

The Victorian Society is happy to support the proposed work at 423 Broadway. The planned restoration will bring this important early 19th century building significantly closer to its original appearance, especially as seen from Canal Street. While the rear yard addition will be visible above the new building, it does not appear to be obtrusive in this context.

We also support the demolition of 301 Canal Street and 419 and 421 Broadway. At the time of designation there was so little intact historic material at 419 and 421 that the designation report simply states “419, 421 Restaurant and shop, 1 story.” 301 is described as a 1955 taxpayer.

And we support, in theory, the construction of an obviously 21st century building if that building is designed in a manner which supports the specific character of the adjacent buildings, the streetscape, and the district.

In many ways we feel that the proposed building does. However, we have two concerns.

The first is that the architects have made no provision for reusing the two remaining cast iron columns which they’ve carefully documented on Board 10. These are smart architects. This is the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District. It’s not unreasonable to require them to incorporate these historic elements into their exterior design. We were surprised that this wasn’t part of the proposal after seeing in the presentation the photo of the dismantled, stolen, and lost historic cast-iron Bogardus Building.

The second is the overall scale of the new building. If you look at the elevations of the building approved in 2017, Board 3, you’ll see that the combined height of the ground floor display windows and sign-band on that building was shorter than the display windows alone at 423. The new building deferred to the historic buildings.

The display windows in the 2024 design have grown approximately three feet taller. We believe this change in height and scale will allow the new building to dominate this corner in a way which is inappropriate. In fact, many elements on the building seem over-scaled, including the show windows, sign band and signs, and “entablature.” We therefore urge the Commissioners to require that the design be modified to replicate the proportions of the ground floor approved in 2017.

No action: look at scale and proportion of both signs and show windows.

Approximate time: 1:00; join Zoom by: 12:00

LPC-24-05697 -- 40 Wooster Street - SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

Fire escapes in the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District are considered character-defining features of the district. They reflect its historic industrial functions and episodes in the city's history leading to their widespread installation. The fire escape on this building is of the type—early and ornate—that we typically urge to be retained.

However, this case may be an exception. The building has a fine and carefully ornamented, symmetrical façade. This façade is thrown off balance and partially obscured by the fire escape, which has damaged the brick and terra-cotta.

Should removing the fire escape be found appropriate, we believe that a condition is required. The Commission should require that all embedded iron remnants be removed from the façade and that the damaged masonry be properly restored to return it to its original appearance and to prevent deterioration.

The rooftop addition is modest in size and well set back, and we think its visibility over a secondary façade is not significant.

Approved 9-1 (Goldblum) (restoration of masonry included in proposal)

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

LPC-24-05668 -- 41 East 74th Street - Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

The Victorian Society often testifies in favor of preserving comprehensive, early 20th century alterations to rowhouses. These alterations can include stoop removals; creation of picturesque features like iron balconies, window boxes, and shutters; studio windows, and so on. We think the Commission does not always recognize these changes as significant alterations worthy of preserving. The case for their preservation was articulated clearly at the last public hearing by Professor Andrew Dolkart of Columbia University.

We are testifying on this proposal because, as far as we can determine, the 1941 alteration to this rowhouse does not fall into the category of a significant alteration worth preserving. It's a late example. And while it was more than a simple stripping of the façade, we don't think the addition of the arched stucco lintels with their somewhat streamlined keystones is enough to warrant its preservation.

If any of the original facades from this row remained, we would urge that this new façade replicate that design. As a stand-alone design, however, we find that the proposal appropriately looks to the historic styles of buildings on this block. The traditional details of the proposed façade will make a coherent, pleasant, and compatible addition. We urge approval.

No action; review proportions of stoop and relationship to new façade; general concept OK.

Approximate time: 2:45; join Zoom by: 1:45

**LPC-24-07956 -- 1115 Fifth Avenue - Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District,
Manhattan**

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York.

We are testifying on this proposal because of the extreme visibility of the penthouse from the Central Park Scenic Landmark. Because the glass penthouse extension was a very early addition to this building, we will not argue against its presence. Its redesign, however, should be directed towards making it as unobtrusive from the park as possible.

A comparison of the existing and proposed elevations as shown on slide 3 illustrates that the proposed penthouse facade is more visible and obtrusive than the existing. This appears to be due to the very large panes of glass and the dark color of the framing and cornice. We recommend smaller window divisions (more in keeping with the other windows on the building) and a neutral tone for the framing.

Approved 9-0.