

Combined Victorian Society Testimony for June 25, 2024: 219 East 5th Street (LPC-24-08735); 374 Lexington Avenue - Chanin Building (LPC-24-10303); 243 East 48th Street (LPC-24-04790); 256 West 75th Street (LPC-24-08232); 345 Hoyt Street (LPC-24-01096)

Approximate time: 10:45; join Zoom by: 9:45

LPC-24-08735 -- 219 East 5th Street - East Village/Lower East Side Historic District, 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 nineteenth 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 supports most aspects of this proposal to construct a rooftop addition at the back house at 219 East 5th Street. The addition will not be visible from any public way, and the work will not destroy any significant architectural features of this building.

We don't think that the façade of the new floor needs to replicate floors below. However, we find that the proposed placement, size and style of the windows on the front façade, facing the courtyard, bear no relationship to and show no respect for the original building. Studying the plan, there doesn't seem any reason why the proposed two-over-two windows on the front façade couldn't align with and match the six-over-six configuration and size of the windows on the floor directly below them.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action; redesign addition for a better relationship to the building. Staff to review existing conditions at the building.

Approximate time: 11:15; join Zoom by: 10:15

LPC-24-10303 -- 374 Lexington Avenue - Chanin Building - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

Good morning commissioners, ___ for the Victorian Society New York. This testimony also represents the views of the Art Deco Society New York.

The Victorian Society would not normally testify on a building of this date, but the Chanin Building is such an important structure we feel it's imperative to do so. Also, the question of when substitute materials are appropriate to use is of broad concern.

The Victorian Society recognizes that the Chanin's exposed location makes it very vulnerable to the damaging effects of weather. Work necessary to maintain a weathertight condition of course should be done.

However, we must question the applicant's decision to install a substitute material. We believe that for work at an individual landmark, materials should meet the highest standard. In this case, that means replacing like with like. Terra cotta is still available and has a proven track record. Properly installed, it can last 100 years. And anyone who remembers previous efforts to use substitute materials at the Woolworth Building knows how badly some of these projects have gone.

It's unclear from the presentation how closely the finish of the proposed concrete material will match that of the historic terra cotta. If the terra cotta is glazed, any surface finish applied to the concrete to attempt to match it will not last and will weather differently.

In the past, the need to reduce weight or address difficult construction conditions has provided the appropriateness basis for Commission approvals of limited use of substitute materials. However, there appear to be no such extenuating circumstances at the Chanin Building. The proposed replacement would encompass a very large proportion of the terra cotta on the building.

As we said at last week's hearing on the proposed substitution of LED lights for neon lights at the Apollo, the Commission should care about and encourage the retention of historic technologies and traditional craftsmanship and materials. It's a legitimate and we think critical role for a historic preservation agency to play. Preservation is about more than appearance alone. The use of real terra cotta at this large and prominent building will help ensure that this material, which has contributed so much to American and New York architecture, does not disappear.

Approved 8-0.

Approximate time: 11:34; join Zoom by: 10:45

LPC-24-04790 -- 243 East 48th Street - Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society supports most of the proposed work to construct a rear yard addition and alter the rear façade. The proposed addition will conform to the district's covenant in terms of depth and height and will align with and be similar in massing to its neighbors.

However, we find that the proposed fenestration pattern does not conform to either the style of the existing fenestration at this building or to the other houses in the district shown in photos the applicant has provided. The existing house has multi-light windows on the front and rear facades arranged in symmetrical patterns. The other houses shown all have multi-light windows and most are in symmetrical patterns, including at their rear additions.

The applicant's fenestration arrangement, with a pair of off-center French doors and large single light windows in different sizes, flanked by multi-light windows which are so skinny that they can only be seen as a token gesture, detracts from the formal balance of this building. It is not in keeping with this house, its neighbors, or this very small district. We urge the Commission to require the applicant to devise a symmetrical window pattern using multi-light sash more prominently.

The presentation includes elevations and notes for a proposed rooftop bulkhead and HVAC addition. There is no roof plan, visibility diagram, or mockup. How is this proposed work to be reviewed?

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 8-0 with modifications: fenestration pattern to better relate to the context, including subdivisions and symmetry.

Approximate time: 12:15; join Zoom by: 11:15

**LPC-24-08232 -- 256 West 75th Street - West End - Collegiate Historic District
Extension, Manhattan**

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

The proposed replacement wood and glass doors are being copied from a house that is not part of the same row as this house but was built by the same builder at approximately the same time. We think it's reasonable to base the new doors on this design, especially as there doesn't appear to be a photograph of the historic door at no. 256.

However, the work done to resurface the stoop is inappropriate and should not be approved. The granite material is wrong as is the use of what appear to be relatively small tiles. An attempt should be made to determine the original material of the stoop—we guess limestone or bluestone—and reconstruct the stoop to match historic details and jointing. Another approach is to remove the tiles and resurface the stoop with an appropriate stucco mix, a condition found frequently on stoops in many historic districts.

It appears that the rear façade as built is not very different from what was approved, and we do not find that the appropriateness of the design is affected one way or the other by the as built condition.

Approved 8-0, except for stoop cladding, which is denied.

Approximate time: 1:30; join Zoom by: 12:30

LPC-24-01096 -- 345 Hoyt Street - Carroll Gardens Historic District, Brooklyn

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

We are pleased to support this application. The minor work on the front façade will allow it to continue to recall the historic, and possibly original, presence of a storefront at the ground floor. Adding a bit of simple trim to the entrance is reasonable now that the building is fully residential. The proposed new windows at the side façade will match others and have a pleasing and regular placement, all consistent with the building's style. The oriel is a lovely addition very typical of corner buildings of this age and style. Traditional oriels enliven building facades and add interest to streetscapes. If the details are carefully executed, we see only positives in adding this one.

The garage on Carroll Street, in its present form, detracts from the historic district. Recreating the stepped parapet and replacing the corrugated rollup doors with doors of a traditional style will help this structure fit more harmoniously with the house and street. We didn't see details of the new doors showing their material and operation. They will preferably be wood and glass, but in any event their detailing will be critical to their success.

The changes to the rear façade are modest and apparently not visible from the street.

Even the doors for the trash enclosure have been thoughtfully detailed. The proposed ironwork fencing is simpler than what would have been original to the building, but it's compatible with the building's style. All in all, this is a carefully thought out, appropriate proposal.

No action (lacking quorum in hearing room). Consensus is supportive; look at spacing between oriel and window beneath.