

**Victorian Society Testimony for November 19, 2024: 635 and 641 Avenue of the Americas (LPC-25-03725 and LPC-25-03726); 144 West 82nd Street (LPC-24-11269); 177 Montague Street, aka 134-138 Pierrepont Street - Brooklyn Trust Company Building (LPC-24-07463); 39 Sidney Place (LPC-23-09523); 20 Remsen Street (LPC-25-02304)**

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

**LPC-25-03725 and LPC-25-03726—635 and 641 Avenue of the Americas - Ladies' Mile Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society finds that most of the changes being proposed are appropriate. However, we question details of some of the proposed doors, and we believe the proposed signage is excessive.

The new doors at the south entrance, closest to 19<sup>th</sup> Street, are modestly detailed, but we see, on Board 37, that they are taller than the other doors on this façade. There doesn't seem to be any specific reason to make them taller. We urge the applicant to align them with the others on the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue façade.

The proposed canopy over the south entrance is modestly scaled for a building of this size and won't draw undue attention to itself. It appears to be easily reversible. We advise approval.

But the proposed signage must be reduced, and the signage installation details should be modified.

We counted the signs being proposed. The drawings show 4 signs at the display windows on 19<sup>th</sup> Street; 5 signs on the awnings on 19<sup>th</sup> Street; 2 signs in the transoms of the corner windows; 3 signs on the canopy; 2 flags, 3 blade signs attached to the stone columns at the ground floor; 5 vertical banners at the stone columns at the second floor, and a long track-mounted sign made up of individual metal letters centered on the main entrance to the museum, for a total of 25 signs. And we'll note, these signs are being proposed at a building whose large display windows allow great views of the interior of the museum.

The signs mounted on the display windows, in the transoms, and on the sides of the modern canopy won't do any damage to historic fabric. However, the blade signs and vertical banners will all be attached to historic stone. Doing so, even in the joints and even if some existing holes will be reused, always causes some damage to the adjacent stone.

There are no blade signs or vertical banners visible in any of the historic photos. We urge elimination of the blade signs and banners, both to reduce damage to stone and to bring the amount of signage to a more appropriate level.

Finally, we find the long, track-mounted sign above the main entrance to be very sympathetic in scale and design. But we note that it's to be secured to the masonry joints in 8 locations. We believe that using a larger metal track at the bottom, where it's concealed by the historic stone cornice, would allow reducing the number of connections into the façade. We urge this change.

***No action; problem is with quantity and diversity of signs. Reduce number and make more logical.***

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

**LPC-24-11269 -- 144 West 82nd Street, Manhattan**

We do not mind the removal of the elaborately detailed windows at the second floor rear, but we could reach this conclusion only after learning through our own research that they are not very old. The presentation did not include any contextual information regarding the age or significance of these windows, or even a decent picture. In our opinion such information should be in the presentation materials so that the commissioners and the public can properly evaluate the proposed changes. Thankfully, we were able to find the information ourselves, but it would have been helpful to have it in the presentation, as these details should not be left up to chance or interpretation.

We must comment on the inappropriate addition of the unimaginative, anodized aluminum greenhouse, which removes one of the only remaining floors of the historic facade. The applicant should look for a better design solution that does not involve creating an entirely new opening and the loss of so much 19th-century brick.

Thank you.

***Approved 8-0.***

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

**LPC-24-07463 -- 177 Montague Street, aka 134-138 Pierrepont Street - Brooklyn Trust Company Building - Individual and Interior Landmark, Brooklyn**

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

We're sorry to see the loss of these historic windows. The slender muntins and careful proportions are significant features of both the interior and exterior. The mechanisms add interest, and the beautifully designed operable hoppers provide the most sustainable form of ventilation, at least in good weather. Based on the photographs, we believe these windows could be stripped and restored to good condition.

That said, the proposal for the new steel window infill in the historic framing seems to be carefully designed and the best possible approach if new windows are required. Proportions and details are being closely replicated, and the retention of the operating hardware, no longer to be used, is appreciated. On balance, the Victorian Society supports the proposal.

***Approved 7-0.***

*lunch*

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

**LPC-23-09523 -- 39 Sidney Place - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn**

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

This is one of two applications on today's hearing for reconstructing street facades in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District. This one is not appropriate; the other one is. The two proposals illustrate clearly what historic preservation is and is not.

The façade of 39 Sidney Place was raised a story and reconstructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It's a perfect example of the architecturally important reimagining of rowhouses going on in several of the city's neighborhoods that had become tired and unfashionable 50-60 years after their initial development. Features of this building that conform to this trend are the removal of the stoop and creation of a main entrance at the basement, a stucco façade, small balconettes with ironwork railings, multilight sash, and a visible, tiled and bracketed roof. This alteration appears to be intact and must be preserved as a significant alteration reflecting an important period in the architecture and development of the city.

The proposed remodeling would create a façade that did not exist historically. It's over-scaled for its style and has neither nuance nor elegance in its details. We don't object on principle to speculative restorations when they are based on good evidence, nor to reinterpretations of historical styles. After all, the latter constitute the bulk of what we revere today as historic design. In this case, however, the proposed façade is unsuccessful in scale and detail. More importantly, the existing façade is a significant example of its type and makes an important contribution to the Brooklyn Heights Historic District. It should be left intact.

***No action; no support for proposal as is; stoop addition can be entertained with correct proportions and details.***

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

**LPC-25-02304 -- 20 Remsen Street - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn**

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

Unlike the previous application, the Victorian Society finds this proposal not only an appropriate but also a rather brilliant solution. This is the right way to address a somewhat poorly altered historic façade. The earlier attempt to help this building, which had already been altered and raised by a story at designation, was not very successful. By removing the non-conforming fourth floor addition, this proposal will restore the building's historic height and cornice design. It will again match the two houses to the west that appear to have been part of the row. It will remove the overly heavy, almost comical, applied lintels and restore the historic sill and lintel design.

Pushing back the added top floor to a point of minimal visibility and giving it the appearance of a studio window addition is a historically typical and architecturally appropriate way of adding to rowhouses. And finally, relocating some of the lost floor area to a small, well-designed rear yard addition is also appropriate. The Victorian Society urges approval.

***Approved 8-0.***