

Victorian Society Testimony for October 22, 2024: 375 Vanderbilt Avenue (LPC-24-10667); 116 Pierrepont Street (LPC-25-02798); 177 Montague Street, aka 134-138 Pierrepont Street - Brooklyn Trust Company Building Individual Landmark (LPC-24-07463); 164 Hancock Street (LPC-24-08215); 309 Carroll Street (LPC-25-02053); 63 Nassau Street - 63 Nassau Street Building - Individual Landmark (LPC-25-00381); 233 Park Lane (LPC-24-09103)

Approximate time: 10:15; join Zoom by: 9:30

LPC-24-10667 -- 375 Vanderbilt Avenue - Clinton Hill Historic District, Brooklyn

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

Although we are pleased to see that this renovation does not disturb any historic material on the exterior of 375 Vanderbilt Avenue, we must point out that the new design is inconsistent with the original facade design shown in the 1930s tax photo, which clearly has only one carriage bay.

The proposal implies that there were originally two bays for carriage storage. While it is an attractive design, we would prefer to see something that recalls the original facade, which had two windows and a door to the right. The windows in this redesign correspond to a living room, and there's no reason why it must be expressed on the facade as a garage door. If a full restoration of the original design does not make sense here, then we would at least like to see the history of this building—as opposed to the histories of neighboring carriage houses—influence this new layout.

Thank you.

Approved 7-0.

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

LPC-25-02798 -- 116 Pierrepont Street - Brooklyn Heights Historic District, Brooklyn

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

This early, 1844 rowhouse appears to be intact except for its replacement windows. It's mostly Greek Revival in style, but with Italianate tendencies as evident in the design of the paired front doors. Originally, this house would have had multilight sash. To respect the building's stylistic integrity, the new windows should be multilight. Whether they were six-over-six, four-over-four, or two-over-two we can't say, but any of those would be appropriate. Perhaps further research will determine which is most correct.

The one-over-one configuration has been in place for a long time, but we don't view that as a significant alteration to be protected. Once the existing windows are removed, they have no grandfathered status. Multilight wood windows should be required.

Approved 7-0.

lunch

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

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 proposed design 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.

Laid Over.

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

LPC-24-08215 - 164 Hancock Street - Bedford Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society supports the construction of a new building at this historically empty lot, just as we did for the new house at 162 Hancock heard in 2023. We found that design to be excellent in terms of materials, details, and scale. However, we feel that the proposed building could be more responsive to its neighbors and to the streetscape.

The applicants have provided photos of the block showing that this is not one of those streets which retains long stretches of identical rowhouses. However, even in this context, we believe that it would improve the streetscape if the facades at 162 and 164 matched in width and were more closely aligned in detail. Reducing the width of the new building would also allow more “breathing room” around the unique mansion at 168 Hancock. And, since the applicant is proposing lot-line windows at the rear apartments in the new building, leaving more space between 164 and 168 would also benefit those tenants.

We also have no objection to the demolition of the minimally detailed garage building at the rear.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action; reduce depth of new building and modify rear façade design.

Approximate time: 2:30; join Zoom by: 1:30

LPC-25-02053 -- 309 Carroll Street - Carroll Gardens Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society supports this modest proposal. The rear façade masonry will be minimally altered, and the visible balcony is typical and will not be distracting. We think the change to the garden wall is positive. It breaks up the expanse of blank masonry. Perhaps the door itself can incorporate additional detailing, such as recessed or open ironwork panels. Such detailing may be used to help minimize the slightly awkward condition of the door being taller than the wall.

Approved 6-0.

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

LPC-25-00381 -- 63 Nassau Street - 63 Nassau Street Building - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society supports the proposed changes at this very important example of cast-iron architecture.

We are happy to see that the work at the ground floor will include the restoration of the two cast-iron pilasters which flank the ground floor opening. The proposed painted wood storefront infill is well proportioned and detailed and appears to be very similar to the examples shown in the LPC Storefront Guidelines. The paint colors are appropriate, and the concealed lighting above the entrances is quite unobtrusive. However, we must object to the applicant's proposal, on Board LPC-25, concerning lighting and signs for the two storefronts, which states:

“Separate applications will be submitted by the individual commercial tenants for the installation of lighting fixtures and signage.”

This opens the door for different exterior light fixtures and incompatible signs for each of the two tenants. This is not appropriate for a building of this size with identical adjacent storefronts. The applicant should work with staff to pick one light fixture design and develop sign parameters for both.

We also support the construction of the roof bulkhead. It will be visible from the street in certain locations but will be pushed back to the rear of the building as far as possible from the street. It's also modestly scaled and appears identical to historic roof bulkheads seen in this district.

However, we question the use of Liquid Rubber Waterproof Sealant on brick. Waterproof sealant on brick can trap moisture and lead to spalling. If there's a desire to match the color of the existing wall, the new bulkhead can be painted with breathable masonry paint.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 6-0, with bulkhead to be painted to match, not coated with waterproofing.

Approximate time: 3:15; join Zoom by: 2:15

LPC-24-09103 -- 233 Park Lane - Douglaston Historic District, Queens

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

We support this proposal for a modestly scaled addition. The original 1911 drawings which the applicants provided show that the rear, north-facing elevation was always an asymmetrical facade. The demolition of the existing mudroom extension will not destroy any significant amount of historic material. The proposed addition will be minimally visible from the street, and will use painted cedar shingles, wood trim and multi-light windows matching the historic materials. And the new extension will not significantly diminish the open “garden suburb” character of the district.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 6-0.