



THE
VICTORIAN
SOCIETY
NEW YORK

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Victorian Society testimony for September 10, 2024: 50 West 13th Street proposed individual landmark (LP-2658); 144 Lafayette Avenue (LPC 24-09546; 122 Washington Place (LPC-24-11905)

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

Proposed Individual Landmark

LP-2658- Jacob Day Residence - 50 West 13th Street, Manhattan

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 New York testifies in enthusiastic support of the designation of the Jacob Day Residence at 50 West 13th Street.

Besides its architectural significance as a remarkably intact example of a 19th-century Greek Revival style row house, it holds significance for its ties to both African American and theater history.

There is no need for us to repeat an enumeration of the features and history that make this house worthy of designation. Others will surely do so in their testimony, and the Commission must be aware of the house's importance, or it would not have been calendared for designation.

We recommend that the designation report incorporate a description of significant architectural features that have recently been removed from the building. These include notable ironwork that was present during the period of significance and may possibly date to the original construction of the house. Such a description will assist the Commission and the Preservation staff when reviewing future proposals for restoration of the house. See our written testimony for illustrations

Three illustrations follow:



Historic ironwork recently removed from 50 West 13th Street.



1940 tax photo showing the same ironwork.



Designated landmark at 130-132 MacDougal Street, 1852, with ironwork called out in the designation report as original. Note that the corner brackets are identical to those on the ironwork at 50 West 13th Street, and the overall character is the same.

Images courtesy of Village Preservation.

Approximate time: 10:00; join Zoom by: 9:30

LPC-24-09546 -- 144 Lafayette Avenue - Fort Greene 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.

A question is raised by this application that we have addressed before, more commonly in historic districts in Manhattan, especially Greenwich Village. The trend of fashionable makeovers of old rowhouses in the early 20th century, done for both multifamily conversions and single family homes, is important to the history of housing in New York and the evolution of historic districts. We have testified in the past for preserving these changes.

The features of 144 Lafayette Avenue which reflect this architectural trend include the removal of the stoop and creation of a ground floor entrance, installation of multi-light and leaded glass windows, removal of brownstone trim at the parlor floor and creation of keystones, and addition of small iron balconies. It's worth noting that the design of the ironwork balconies matches that of the leaded glass transoms.

We believe the Commission should consider whether the changes made to this building are sufficiently comprehensive that they deserve retention as a significant alteration. In our view, in this case, they do not. We find the work was literally half-hearted, extending only to the lower half of the façade, and it doesn't include some of the other key features usually found on full-blown examples of these conversions.

The proposed façade restoration appears to be based on historic precedent at the matching adjacent buildings and on details typically found on buildings of this age and style. We support this work. Unless there is some significance that we are unable to discern to the very unusual areaway pavement, we think its replacement with the more typical areaway design proposed is also appropriate.

Approved 9-0.

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

LPC-24-11905 - 122 Washington Place - Greenwich Village Historic District, Manhattan

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

When we first looked at the presentation photographs, we were struck by the fact that we couldn't see any stoop gates. We couldn't tell from the presentation how many rowhouses with stoops there are on the block. And, because several of the photos showing the adjacent houses were taken on the diagonal, we found it difficult to discern individual stoops. So, we made a site visit.

When we did so we found out there are nine rowhouses with stoops, built between 1832 and 1834, on the south side of this block. There are none on the north side, which is lined by small apartment buildings, stripped rowhouses and St. Joseph's Church.

We also found there are **NO** existing stoop gates among these nine rowhouses. And we were pleased to discover that the owners of three of them, including number 128, the house closest to 7th Avenue, have chosen to close their stoops with simple chains hung between the newel posts. This is exactly what the Commission and the Victorian Society have recommended for years. We've attached photos taken last Friday.

The Victorian Society has testified against the installation of stoop gates at 19th century rowhouses many times. They are a significant change to both the historic appearance of an individual house, and to the streetscape. They introduce a very 21st century "Fortress New York" feeling which is the opposite of the open, welcoming character of historic stoops.

This is especially important on this block, where there are now no stoop gates. We all know how one such change can create a domino effect – "You gave it to them, now give it to me." We urge the Commission, in the strongest way possible, to deny this stoop gate, and recommend the applicant to follow the path taken by three of their neighbors and install a chain closure.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 8-0.

Please see photos on the following pages.



114 Washington Place - No Gate
Close up of stoop with chain closure

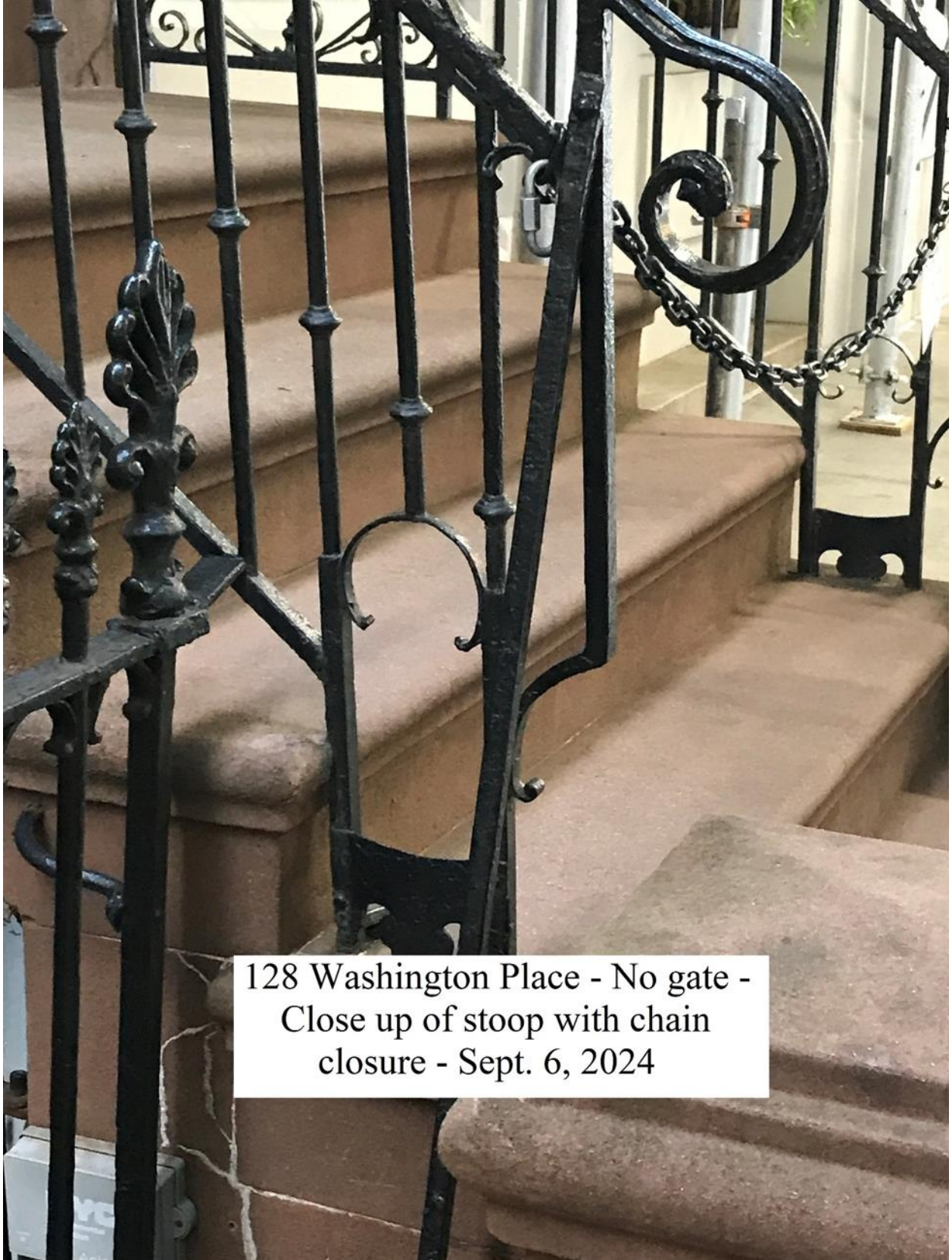
114 Washington Place - No Gate - Stoop
with chain closure - Sept. 6, 2024

 Tuesday
Friday
9am - 10:30am






126 Washington Place
No Gate - Stoop
with chain closure



128 Washington Place - No gate -
Close up of stoop with chain
closure - Sept. 6, 2024