

**Victorian Society Testimony for February 4, 2025: 138 Joralemon Street (LPC-25-05001); 132-134 East 64th Street (LPC-25-03062); 1 East 78th Street - New York University Institute of Fine Arts (formerly James B. Duke Mansion) (LPC-25-04398); 809 Madison Avenue (LPC-25-06002)**

***Approximate time: 10:50; join Zoom by: 9:50***

**LPC-25-05001 -- 138 Joralemon Street - Brooklyn Heights 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 opposes this proposed legalization for several reasons. The two-over-two wood windows that were removed at the upper floors were likely historic if not original windows, typical of the configuration of a rowhouse built in 1855. The multi-light parlor floor windows likely date from the removal of the stoop. The historic wood windows should have been assessed for condition and restored if possible.

Second, the new windows appear more like storm windows in their dimensions, having very narrow stiles and rails. They don't look anything like historic or replacement windows that would be appropriate for this building.

Finally, the finish on the new sash doesn't appear to match the finish of the painted brick moldings.

***Approved 7-0.***

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

**LPC-25-03062 -- 132-134 East 64th Street - Upper East Side Historic District –  
Manhattan**

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

This application raises some important questions concerning what constitutes a significant alteration, and when changes to the streetscape might outweigh changes to an individual building.

The public notice for this hearing omits the important fact, included in the designation report, that these buildings had been redesigned by the New York firm Boak and Paris in 1934. Commissioners, Boak and Paris was a firm which was active from 1927 through the Depression. Both partners trained in the office of Emory Roth. And they designed many buildings which are now New York City landmarks.

In Annice Alt's 2014 book on the firm, "Boak and Paris, Boak and Raad," Elihu Rose is quoted as stating "Boak was an unsung architect who was incapable of doing a bad drawing, a bad design. No one is comparable. Boak just had taste, he had class."

Looking at the current photos which show the façade of the one building in the row which retains its original 1878 façade, 128 East 64th, it's easy to see 132 and 134 as stripped boxes. But the tax photos on Board 5 show that all the important details of the Boak and Paris 1934 redesign, including the removal of the stoops, the construction of the arch-headed doors with transoms at the areaway level, the multi-light double hung windows at all the openings, and the continuous incised lines just below the parapets, are intact. The photos of the streetscape also show a microcosm of 80 years of rowhouse design, starting with James Ware in 1878, through Boak and Paris in 1934 and finally to Edward Durrell Stone's 1958 façade at 130, which itself seems worthy of preservation.

The applicant's proposed single stoop instead of the original double is a reasonable response to the problems of joining two narrow rowhouses. The other changes to the front façade are based on the best sort of historic evidence. It does not appear that the rooftop addition will be visible: restoring the historic pediments matching the one which was in place at 130 in the tax photo, would further reduce any possible visibility. And the work on the rear will leave the upper two floors intact. But if the redesign is to be based on the 1878 original design, the proposed limestone finish is not appropriate. This would not have been found on an 1878 neo-Grec house. The finish should be brownstone.

However, we believe that Boak and Paris' 1934 redesign meets the Commission's standards for a significant alteration. We therefore urge a full discussion of the significance

of these existing facades before moving on to considering the proposed extensive alterations.

***Approved 6-1 (Ginsberg); applicant to work with staff to better refine details to match those of no. 128, and the basement entrance of 132 to be elaborated to be commensurate with entrances on other buildings with removed stoops.***

***Approximate time: 12:10; join Zoom by: 11:10***

**LPC-25-04398 -- 1 East 78th Street - New York University Institute of Fine Arts (formerly James B. Duke Mansion) - Individual Landmark - Metropolitan Museum Historic District, Manhattan**

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

We're pleased to support this application for a ramp and lift to provide access to this individual landmark. The proposed work will have minimal visual and physical effects on the building. The considerable alterations to the main entrance that would be necessary to make it a universal entrance would likely have been architecturally inappropriate.

We agree wholeheartedly with the proposed approach. We suggest, however, that the materials, detailing, and lighting plan for the side entrance, ramp, and lift be of a quality commensurate with the historic building. This will help ensure that the new entrance provides an experience as close as possible aesthetically to that of the historic entrance. The presentation provides little information about the details and materials proposed except for concrete pavement. A good start would be to pave the new ramps, landings, and stairs with stone matching the pavements on the sidewalks around the mansion and at its entrance.

***Approved 7-0.***

***Approximate time: 12:30; join Zoom by: 11:30***

**LPC-25-06002 - 809 Madison Avenue - Upper East Side Historic District, Manhattan**

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

The Victorian Society is happy to support the proposed construction of a new display window on the East 68<sup>th</sup> Street façade of this building. The new opening and infill will conform to work previously approved by the Commission but not built.

The applicants have provided photographs showing that many corner buildings of this age and type, with storefronts facing Madison Avenue, have display windows on the side street. The photos also show there's already one storefront at the west end of the 68<sup>th</sup> Street façade installed after the tax photos were taken. The work will require the removal of only a small amount of minimally detailed historic masonry. The head of the new opening will align with the heads of the historic storefronts facing Madison, and the infill will match the historic infill still in place at this building.

However, we were disappointed with one portion of this presentation. The earlier approval included replacement of the modern non-conforming infill at the space closest to the corner of Madison and 68<sup>th</sup> with infill matching the historic original. This is not shown in the proposal being presented today. We urge that this restorative work be included at this time.

***Approved 6-1 (Jefferson).***