

**Victorian Society Testimony for April 8, 2025: 153-10 Jamaica Avenue - First Reformed Church of Jamaica (LPC-25-00387); 114-18 179th Street (LPC-24-11713); 140 West 18th Street (LPC-25-04871)**

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

**LPC-25-00387 -- 153-10 Jamaica Avenue - First Reformed Church of Jamaica - Individual Landmark, Queens**

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.

We're pleased to see this proposal for sensitive and harmonious alterations to the landscape around this important and early Romanesque Revival style church. It appears that any historic design or features of the landscape around the church have long since disappeared. The two main features to be altered—the pavement and handrails—are not currently historic or supportive of the building's architectural character.

The proposed maintenance of the open green space, addition of a discrete accessible walk, restoration of the pleasant pool and fountain, and use of compatible materials for pavements, fences, and railings are all appropriate. The new design will improve the setting and ensure that it continues to support the historic character of the building.

It's interesting to note that it took the Commission two attempts to designate this church. The first designation, in 1979, was overturned by the Board of Estimate. Even at a time when the Commission was designating at a rate exponentially higher than it is today, the elected officials in the Borough of Queens were blocking most designations in that borough. The church was almost lost to the urban renewal project whose modernistic buildings now surround it. However, in 1996 the Commission again designated the building, and this time the more enlightened officials in power in Queens allowed the designation to stand. Jamaica, and the city, are better for it.

***Approved 8-0.***

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

**LPC-24-11713 -- 114-18 179th Street - Addisleigh Park Historic District, Queens**

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

We comment on this application for work on a post-Victorian house because it's a textbook example of the various types of destructive work which diminishes a building, a street, and an historic district. All of the work, with the exception of the rear deck, should be denied.

The historic tax photographs show that the building was originally clad in a mix of materials typical for Tudor Revival buildings. These included brick for the body of the house; stained shingles for the gable-ends; dark slate at the roof; and gutters, downspouts and windows with a dark finish. These materials, all in a muted color range, helped unify the building. By the time of designation, several of the multi-light double-hung windows on the front façade had been replaced with white-finished casement windows. All other historic materials remained intact.

The stained wood shingles have now been replaced with what appears to be vinyl siding. The pictures show that the siding, which you can see on slide 6, is already peeling off the gable end. It doesn't match the historic stained shingles in color, texture, or the overlap. The vinyl siding has a much narrower reveal like nothing ever seen on a Tudor Revival building.

All of the dark-painted wood windows, gutters and downspouts have been replaced with bright white material which breaks up these facades in a distracting manner. The bright white trim added to the bottom of each gable end, and the bright white conduit running under the gable shown on slide 6, are especially egregious additions which have no place on this building.

Finally, the removal of the historic slate was a destructive act which should not occur in any historic district.

We recommend that the failing siding on the gable ends be removed and the shingles restored; that the white-finished windows, gutters and downspouts, and the small piece of trim running under the gable ends, be replaced with proper materials or at least painted dark brown; that the white finished conduit under the large gable end be removed; and that new dark gray slate be installed at the roof. Thank you, commissioners.

***Approved (roof replacement and garage siding) with modifications 9-0; vinyl siding on front and sides of house to be removed and replaced with something resembling the original siding.***

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

**LPC-25-04871 -- 140 West 18th Street -- 140 West 18th Street Stable - Individual Landmark, Manhattan**

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

This row of nine stable buildings is considered so important that the Commission designated them as individual landmarks despite significant alterations, especially to the ground floors. For the most part, this proposal is restorative. This work includes the appropriate restoration of the entrance door and masonry in the left bay and the recreation of the masonry piers flanking the original carriage entrance in the center bay.

However, the proposed infill at the center and right bays is not appropriate. It doesn't reflect the historic design of these bays in materials, details, or configuration. In a small building, installing such a large area of non-conforming, modern infill will detract from its character and is a missed opportunity. Using wood framing with the appropriate proportions and heft for a Romanesque Revival building, and giving the center carriage bay a symmetrical configuration, would be a good start towards an appropriate design.

***Approved 9-0, and applicant to work with staff to enhance detailing of the garage bay storefront insert to harmonize better with historic details of the building.***