

Victorian Society Testimony for July 15, 2025: 128 Pierrepont Street - Long Island Historical Society Building (LPC-25-12287); 43-49 Bleecker Street (LPC-25-11807); 89 South Street (LPC-25-11238); 257-263 Washington Avenue and 230-236 Hall Street (LPC-25-11198)

Approximate time: 9:45; join Zoom by: 9:30

LPC-25-12287 -- 128 Pierrepont Street - Long Island Historical Society Building, 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.

Although the Victorian Society has great appreciation for the mission of the Long Island Historical Society and the Center for Brooklyn History, we believe that this proposal will result in sign overload.

The many signs already here include a large flagpole and banner on both the Pierrepont and Clinton Street façades. There are two bronze plaques attached to the brick pier at the corner of Clinton and Pierrepont. And you can see that the applicant has found a way to use their areaway fence for additional signage. We couldn't find any permits for this sign.

We also feel that the locations of the existing and proposed signs are too random. This is a very formal building. Signs scattered like raisins in a cookie do not respect its historic character.

We do not believe it is appropriate to cover the historic glass transom of the central doors with a sign. We also think that any sign affixed to the fine brick façade will damage it: the joints are too narrow to accept anchors without damage. The signs on the areaway fence are very distracting and inappropriate to the fence, the building, and the district. Even excluding the fence signs, if this proposal is implemented, there will be three signs with the name of the institution within a few feet of each other. This is unnecessary. Any signs approved for this building should respect its formal character and should be kept to an absolute minimum. This building advertises itself.

The branch library sign program, presented as a justification for this proposal, is not relevant to it. And in any case, we think the branch library signs, consisting of a panoply of banners, fixed signs, and freestanding signs, are also excessive, especially when installed on the historic branches.

Finally, commissioners, we must note that when beloved institutions appear at public hearing, it often seems to become a referendum focused on the good the institution does rather than the appropriateness of the proposed change. We hope that today the focus will remain on the proposed signage.

Approved 8-0.

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

LPC-25-11807 -- 43-49 Bleecker Street - Noho East Historic District, Manhattan

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We support most of the elements of this proposal. The rooftop addition is modest in scale. While quite visible from the side, its design and materials allow it to fit seamlessly into the existing side wall. It will not be an obvious or obtrusive change.

The storefront restoration is generally appropriate, with one notable exception. The drawings explain that the reproduced bulkhead grilles will be applied to the existing bulkheads. But the existing bulkheads are not original, do not align, and are too tall, as can be seen by comparing the existing condition with the excellent historic photos. The existing bulkheads should be reconstructed to their correct proportions and the new grilles better integrated with them, rather than being stuck on as appliqués.

We also recommend that the entrance doors be taller so that they have a better proportional relationship to the transoms above. The original door head positions can be determined by looking at their relationship to the cast-iron columns in the historic photos. Also, the storefront framing should be more detailed than the square sectioned aluminum proposed. Finally, the material of the storefront unusual decorative frieze should be identified, and restoration notes for that feature should be provided.

Approved 9-0 (design had previously been modified to address bulkhead and door/transom height concerns).

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

LPC-25-11238 -- 89 South Street - South Street Seaport Historic District, Manhattan

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. It's a sad commentary that such a massive and highly visible structure on the roof of this building would have so little effect on the historic and architectural character of the South Street Seaport Historic District. This is because the building on which it would sit is already as alien to the historic character of the district as it could possibly be. So, while it seems pointless to object to yet another physical change in the Seaport that further cements its role as an entertainment and shopping theme park, there are some questions that need answers.

These questions include where the mechanical equipment is to be located for this structure. We assume it will need heating and ventilation when in use. Another is whether roof drainage modifications are required. A third question is where the components of the structure will be stored between March and November. What arrangements have been made to ensure the structure will in fact be removed? Is there an escrow proposed as part of the arrangement?

Finally, we wonder why this proposal was calendared as a temporary installation. It doesn't meet the Commission's definition of temporary, nor does it meet the rules for such installations. It appears to be a request for a seasonal installation, something very different, with different criteria for approval.

No action; reconsider the design of the addition.

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

LPC-25-11198 -- 257-263 Washington Avenue and 230-236 Hall Street - Clinton Hill Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The Victorian Society will be happy to see this fine church, abandoned for 10 years, stabilized and utilized. The additions to the church and the school are largely obscured from public view and seem to us reasonable and appropriate as a way to preserve and reuse these significant buildings. However, we have several questions and concerns.

A note on Board 39 states that the removed stained glass panels with religious iconography will be donated or sold. These include eight windows by Tiffany Studios and three by J R Lamb Studios, all with multiple lights. The specific program for disposition of these protected windows should be clarified, with the Commission's approval required. We think some of the windows should remain on site in common areas, again with the Commission's approval for their long-term protection. The effect of the new aluminum frames and exterior windows on the appearance of the stained glass windows to remain in place needs to be shown, and the frame details and finishes specified. And the removal of decorative wood, Gothic framing from some windows, to be replaced by aluminum framing with little detail, is not appropriate.

Replacement shingles for the slate roof should be real slate. This is especially important at the highly visible tower. Perhaps salvaged historic shingles would be sufficient to clad the tower. Certainly, detailed photographs of the original roofing and samples of real and synthetic slates need to be provided so a proper assessment can be made.

On Board 15 there's a note that the two pairs of historic wood doors on the Washington Street façade are to be secured in an open position. Doors left open are impacted by the weather much more than closed doors. How will these doors be preserved when subject to soaking by rain and snow?

On Board 20 there's a note "Gable crosses to be removed." We believe this to be a misguided change. We can understand removing windows with religious iconography which would be in individual apartments, but the gable crosses are on the public street facades, on a building obviously designed as a church. They are part of the streetscape. These exterior crosses should be retained.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 10-0.

