

Victorian Society Testimony for May 19, 2026: 144 Greenpoint Avenue (LPC-26-01803); 122-124 Greenpoint Avenue (LPC-26-08566); 555 Carlton Avenue (LPC-25-11236); 215 W. 57th Street, The American Fine Arts Society Individual Landmark (LPC-26-08905); Central Park Scenic Landmark signs (LPC-26-08613); 35 West 83rd Street (LPC-26-02329)

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

LPC-26-01803 -- 144 Greenpoint Avenue, Brooklyn

Good morning commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We write in general support of this improved design, with a couple of suggestions. The design should include more heft and detailing on the brick cornice at the top of the facade. This would better reflect the strong cornices that are a unifying feature of historic buildings in the district, including the one that was on this site before it was severely altered. The applicant suggests this in a half-hearted way with the slightly projecting corner blocks terminating each end of the cornice.

We also think it would be useful to incorporate a second material at sills or lintels to break up the very large expanse of brick.

Finally, we think the additional floor brings the building just a bit out of scale with its context. We'd prefer the 6th floor to be a set back addition, as in the previous design.

Approved 6-0.

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

LPC-26-08566 -- 122-124 Greenpoint Avenue - Greenpoint Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The VSNY supports most aspects of this proposal. We normally urge denial of projects where the proposed demolition work will essentially leave only the front façade intact. However, 124 Greenpoint, which hasn't been used as a fire station since 1972, appears to be in a significant state of deterioration; the side walls are minimally detailed; and the handsomely designed front façade will be cleaned and restored. The demolition of the adjacent taxpayer, 122 Greenpoint will not detract from the streetscape or district. The new building is well scaled for the district. The red brick proposed for the street façade is a material seen on many buildings in the area. And those portions of the side facades and upper floors which can be seen from the sidewalk have been carefully designed in a way which will actually add interest to the streetscape.

Our only concern is the use of a single material for the front façade. We believe the use of slate or cast stone window sills, or brick sills in a contrasting color, would add visual interest to the building and help it relate better to its historic neighbors.

Thank you, commissioners.

No action; restudy style of façade, look at scale of windows, more differentiation between retail at first floor and upper floors, more relationship to streetscape and firehouse, penthouse massing too complex and visible, restudy rear façade.

Approximate time: 11:15; join Zoom by: 10:15

LPC-25-11236 -- 555 Carlton Avenue - Prospect Heights Historic District, Brooklyn

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

We see no reason based on appropriateness or extenuating circumstances to legalize the work done in non-compliance. The railings installed on the stoop have no relationship to the style of the building. We suspect that the pre-existing masonry stoop railings, which are also seen in the tax photo, were not original. A building of this age and type and with this style of historic cast-iron newel post, would likely have had large cast-iron balusters on the stoop.

The plain ironwork at the side yard is also not appropriate. The historic ironwork should have been replicated, providing the required heft and detail.

And the substitution of upper sash with straight heads for the approved shallow, segmental arched heads has resulted in the loss of a significant design feature. The fact that many buildings in the row had previously lost their historic, arched sash is even more reason that the historic design should have been installed as approved.

Finally, the rooftop air conditioning units should have been placed where they were approved so they would not have been visible. Seeing them in conjunction with the profile of the Mansard roof makes them especially distracting.

Denied 7-0.

Approximate time: 12:00; join Zoom by: 11:00

**LPC-26-08905 -- 215 W. 57th Street, The American Fine Arts Society Individual
Landmark, Manhattan**

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We testify in support of this application. VSNY would typically oppose permanent physical alterations to historic material of the kind proposed here. However, because the building continues to be occupied by the organization for which it was built 134 years ago, we think such a change is appropriate in this case. The applicants have presented a tasteful and period-appropriate alteration. We appreciate that the font for the new text on the facade will match what is already there, and the lighting will nicely accentuate this new lettering, while remaining unobtrusive.

Approved 7-0. Work with a typographer or sign designer to ensure the lettering is correctly drawn prior to carving, and mock up the light fixtures for review by staff.

Approximate time: 12:45; join Zoom by: 11:45

LPC-26-08613 –Central Park Scenic Landmark signs, Manhattan

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

In 2024 the Commission reviewed similar signs that had already been installed in Prospect Park without required LPC review. Commissioners expressed the hope that “next time” designs more sympathetic to the special character of the scenic landmark would be proposed. Well, the “next time” is now, but the proposal is the same. The Parks Department wants these standard signs at every entrance to every park in the city. But Central Park and other scenic landmarks are not standard; they are each unique and every addition or alteration to them must reflect and support their special character.

Olmsted and Vaux meant for visitors to these parks to enter a different world—a naturalistic, pastoral, and picturesque world--the moment they cross the threshold into the park. It was to be “total immersion...a means by which we can lose our identity in the whole and gain thereby a more intense consciousness of being.” A whole style of architecture and design was developed—the picturesque and the rustic, forms that seemed to grow out of nature. That is why all original park features, including *signs*, were designed to conform to the park’s aesthetic character. Signs such as those proposed would never have been seen, because they conflict with the desired character and break the spell.

The proposal provides little useful graphic information to illustrate the huge scale of the signs as they will be encountered by visitors, or to describe their materiality and color. Their blank reverse sides have in elsewhere become magnets for graffiti and stickers. The application includes no information on historic signs. We provide in our written testimony examples of rustic and picturesque historic signs from Olmsted parks.

While the proposal calls for some smaller existing signs to be removed, many would not. In fact, there are hundreds of signs in the park not shown or mapped in this presentation that would remain. This project would add to the burden of excessive signage in the park.

Despite assurances to the contrary by the applicant, many of the illustrations show new signs that would interfere with views of scenery and would be located immediately adjacent to architectural features such as masonry piers at entrances, blocking and spoiling the character of scenic views into the park that these architectural features frame.

The Appendix shows new signs proposed to be attached directly to masonry structures in the park, incredibly including the soft and fragile stone at Bethesda Terrace. This should not be allowed to happen. And a sign should not be affixed to the ornate Vanderbilt Gate at East 106th Street.

We question the utility of installing these large signs with huge amounts of small print at every entrance. Will people stop to read them? Unlikely. Will they contribute to enforcement of the rules? Doubtful. Parks and the Conservancy must come up with better ways to address information transmittal and rule enforcement than installing more signs of inappropriate design in inappropriate locations.

Scan through the illustrations provided and you can see how these signs will drag the visually chaotic, messy cityscape further into the park at nearly every entrance. This is contrary to Olmsted and Vaux's vision. Parks and the Conservancy must return with a better plan that addresses the numbers of signs, their sizes, their locations, and their designs. This should happen before the Commission votes and allows the current proposal to go to the Public Design Commission.

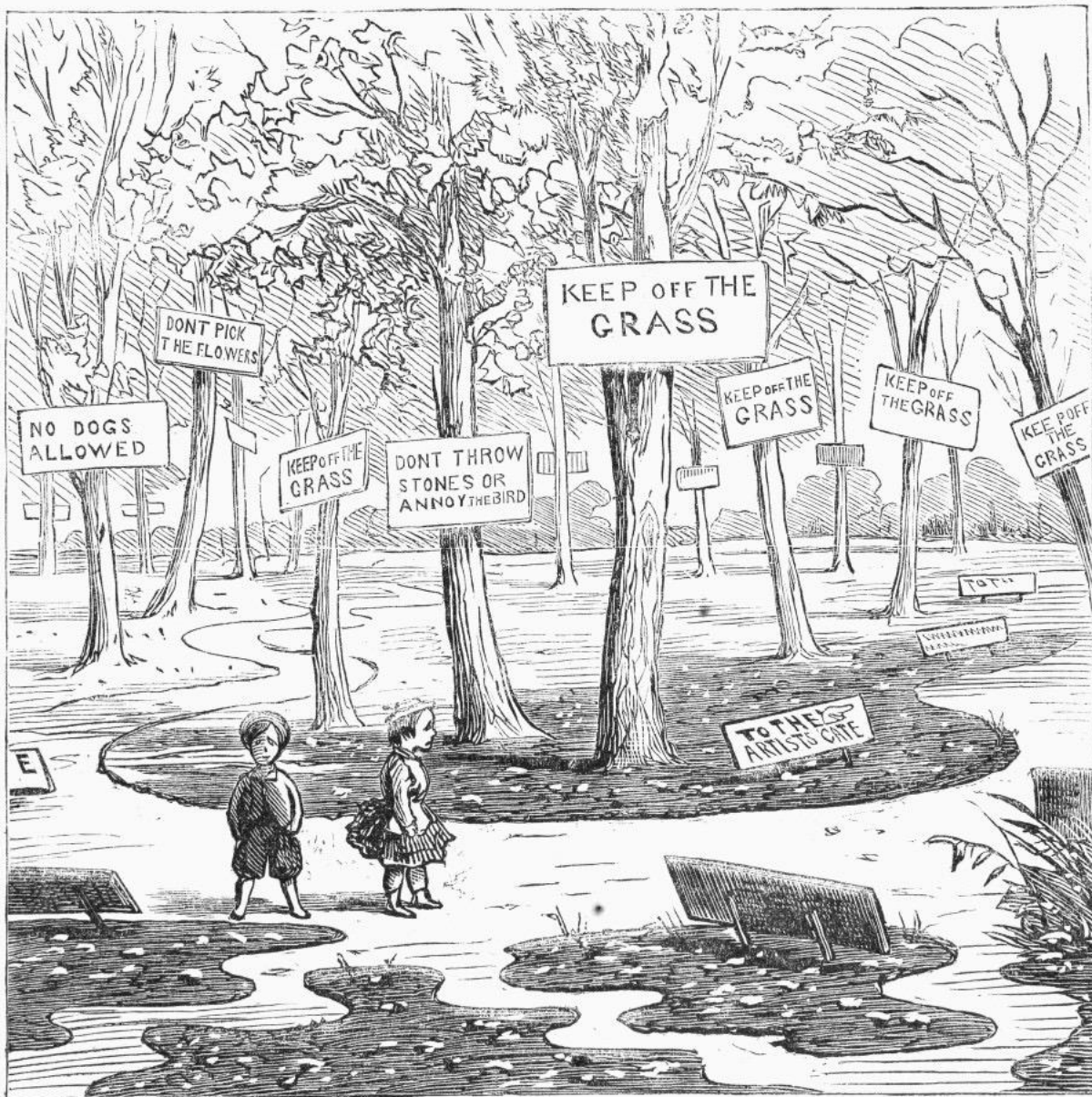
See illustrations below.



Prospect Park rustic sign.



Prospect Park, picturesque sign, Grand Army Plaza entrance.



THE CENTRAL PARK.

A delightful resort for toil-worn New Yorkers.

Cartoon ca. 1869.

Approved 6-0.

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

LPC-26-02329 -- 35 West 83rd Street - Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, Manhattan

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

The tax photos show clearly that the original stoop on this building had large, cast-iron newel posts; large, turned cast-iron balusters; and heavy, cast-iron handrails. The photo shows that the stair railings did not include solid masonry walls. The applicant offers pictures of other stoops with such walls, but the fact that they existed on other buildings of different style and design has no bearing on what's appropriate for this building.

Stylistically and historically, we know what this stoop should look like.

Cast iron newels, balusters, and railings of this type were meant to imitate stone. Originally, many were painted with sanded, brownstone-colored paint. That could provide an interesting opportunity to construct the new railings of cast stone in imitation of the original cast iron.

Regarding the garage door, as we saw on another recent application, removing historic masonry for the convenience of fitting a large vehicle into a garage is not an appropriate plan. Removing the original masonry will further disfigure this brownstone house, altering its proportions for the worse. This aspect of the work should be denied.

It appears the rooftop addition will be minimally visible, and so we think it can be approved.

Approved with modifications, 7-0: lower screening at rooftop addition, darken color of new garage doors, stoop to be revised to replicate original in cast stone or to provide a more ornate railing.