

Victorian Society Testimony for June 2, 2026: 404 West 246th Street (LPC-26-09171); 119 St. Felix Street (LPC-26-08212); 224 and 226-228 Hall Street (LPC-26-06750); 26 Bleecker Street (LPC-26-10511); 4 St. Marks Place - Hamilton-Holly House - Individual Landmark (LPC-26-03566); 595 Madison Avenue (aka 593-599 Madison Avenue, 41 East 57th Street) - Fuller Building - Individual and Interior Landmark (LPC-26-06412); 404 Fifth Avenue - Stewart & Company Building - Individual Landmark (LPC-26-10527); 116 East 80th Street - Lewis Spencer and Emily Coster Morris House - Individual Landmark (LPC-26-10574)

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

LPC-26-09171 -- 404 West 246th Street - Fieldston Historic District, the Bronx

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. Now celebrating our 60th year, the NY chapter promotes preservation of our historic districts, individual and scenic landmarks, interiors and civic art.

The VSNY is strongly opposed to replacement of the existing slate sidewalk with grass.

When Fieldston was designated, staff in the research department carefully listed the “notable site features” of each property. At 404 the bluestone sidewalks were specifically mentioned. The outstanding site features called out by Research also included the fieldstone retaining walls, the bluestone curbs, and the fieldstone and bluestone steps. The list of outstanding features on the house included its solid fieldstone base, patterned brick highlights, and the fieldstone-clad corner tower.

The Victorian Society typically opposes the removal of historic elements called out in the designation report. We find the removal here especially egregious as the designation report makes it clear that Dwight James Baum, the original architect, considered the use of all these different sizes, colors and types of masonry, and the stone outcropping, as integral parts of his design for the property. It’s almost a celebration of masonry. Removal of any of these elements will diminish the overall composition, the street and the district. This proposal should be denied.

Thank you, commissioners.

Denied 9-0.

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

LPC-26-08212 -- 119 St. Felix Street - Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District, Brooklyn

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

This application provides a lesson in the importance of retaining historic fabric, including windows, on designated buildings. The original painted wood windows on this building lasted 100 years. In the last 50 years the building has been through two replacement campaigns and is now requesting a third. No doubt if the original windows had been restored and maintained, they would have lasted another 100 years. Most modern windows deteriorate and break in a fraction of that time.

The Commission once encouraged—in fact required—that historic windows be restored and not replaced. The Commission's rules now require that the staff approve replacement windows, even if the historic windows can be restored. We suggest that this rule should be revisited.

For this application, the proposed configuration seems correct and the details are reasonable. We object to aluminum cladding on windows in small historic buildings of this type and recommend that the windows be painted wood.

Approved with modifications 9-0; vertical muntins to be widened to simulate casements. Goldblum suggested that the Commission return to an emphasis on restoration of historic windows.

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

LPC-26-06750 -- 224 and 226-228 Hall Street - Clinton Hill Historic District, Brooklyn

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

The VSNY is happy to support the work on the street facades of these adjacent buildings. We are delighted to see the applicants will be removing the faux stone and recreating the historic red brick cladding at the carriage house. The replication of the ground floor infill, stone lintels and four-over-four sash will bring this building much closer to its original appearance. The modifications required to create a new front entrance within one garage bay are a clever solution which will have no noticeable impact upon the appearance of the building. And we have no problems with the construction of new window openings at the rear of the carriage house.

However, we can't support the proposed alterations to the existing rooftop addition on the garage. We find this small extension quite unobtrusive as it is: adding a skewed roof will make it much more noticeable. Also, as there aren't any solar panels proposed for this roof, there seems no practical reason for this skewed orientation.

Although we have often argued against the installation of visible solar panels on historic buildings, we feel that the modest character of this service building would not be compromised by their installation. We could also support the construction of a rooftop addition on the carriage house set back from the front façade and partially concealed by a raised parapet. However, in an area of historic buildings where the facades are typically oriented towards the street, a skewed roof oriented at a specific angle towards the sun will be both noticeable and obtrusive. We also believe the small additional energy savings from positioning the solar panels at that one specific angle is not enough to compromise the architectural integrity of this building and this block. We urge the Commission to require the applicant to come back with drawings showing solar panels set back on the roof of the proposed addition in a more straight-forward arrangement.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 9-0.

lunch

Approximate time: 12:50; join Zoom by: 11:50

LPC-26-10511- - 26 Bleecker Street - Noho East Historic District, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society supports most of the proposed changes at 26 Bleecker Street. Thanks to the admirable research the applicant has done to locate historic façade drawings, it seems the work on the ground floor is very close to being restorative. The materials, details and finish of the proposed painted wood storefront infill is completely appropriate. The work will not destroy any significant historic material and will bring the building closer to its original condition.

We also have no major concerns about the proposed rooftop addition. It will be partially visible from several vantage points, but usually in conjunction with other tall buildings. We were happy to see that the historic cornice will be largely restored. The work will help to block views of the addition. However, we feel the cornice restoration doesn't go far enough. The 1904 photo on Board 13 shows that the cornice incorporated a cheneau or crest with anthemion motifs at its upper edge. This is a detail frequently found on buildings of this age and type and should be restored.

There are two problems with the proposed replacement windows. The greater problem is that this permit would allow the applicant to replace the historic one-over-one double-hung window with a hybrid window, a casement window below, a fixed pane above. As we've noted before, we believe it's always important, when replacing sash in designated buildings, to get as close as possible to the original in terms of configuration, operation, materials, details and finish. The new windows must match the original double-hung operation. The small additional energy savings from these hybrid windows compared to high quality double-hung windows is not enough to compromise the architectural integrity of this prominent building.

The smaller problem is that the window elevation on drawing 30 appears to show the lower half of these windows have much wider stiles and rails than the upper half, leading to noticeably different window pane sizes. The glass size of the upper and lower sashes should be equal, matching the historic windows.

We also think that consideration needs to be given to the significance of the exposed rooftop water tank, which is proposed for removal.

Thank you commissioners.

Approved 9-0, with applicant to study cornice details, improve window details to equalize top and bottom sash, eliminate or modify uplighting, and review light color of stone bulkhead.

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

LPC-26-03566 -- 4 St. Marks Place - Hamilton-Holly House - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. We acknowledge the difficulties of making a building like this accessible, but this proposal is one of the most intrusive solutions we've seen. The lift proposed is enormous in its bulk, and will sit in front of this finely detailed Federal house looking like a walk-in cooler abandoned in the areaway. It is not appropriate.

No action; return with a less visually intrusive proposal.

Approximate time: 1:50; join Zoom by: 12:50

LPC-26-06412 -- 595 Madison Avenue (aka 593-599 Madison Avenue, 41 East 57th Street) - Fuller Building - Individual and Interior Landmark, Manhattan

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

The Victorian Society supports the proposed modifications to the Madison Avenue service entrance at the Fuller Building. The work will include replacement of the existing bronze-clad pull-down door with a new pair of outward swing doors with concealed hinges set in the existing opening. The existing counter-weight system, which supported the pull-down door, will be discarded. The existing fixed transom panel will be replaced in kind. The new doors and transom panel will match the originals in terms of design, proportions, materials, details and finish.

The VSNY is typically loath to find appropriate the removal of original material from individual landmarks, especially when it incorporates scarce or even unique historic mechanical systems such as this. We can support it in this case because of the applicant's commitment to carefully replicate the appearance of the historic entrance. As paired service doors are typical features at buildings of this age and type, we believe that the change in operation will be imperceptible to the public. But most importantly the applicant has provided evidence that the counter-weight system has proved extremely dangerous in the past, and that it has become impossible to maintain.

Thank you, commissioners.

Approved 9-0.

Approximate time: 2:10; join Zoom by: 1:10

LPC-26-10527 -- 404 Fifth Avenue - Stewart & Company Building - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

Good afternoon commissioners, _____ for the Victorian Society New York. There are many things to like about this proposal. It will go a long way towards restoring the transparent quality of the original storefront base and the unusual clerestory configuration above the base. However, we believe that some details need to be changed for this to be an appropriate proposal.

First, the clerestory glazing is called out as white frosted glass. We think white glass will be too bright and will visually jump out from the façade above and below. The original glazing, or most of it, appears to have been clear frosted or translucent glass. This will be more subdued and typical of this kind of historic glazing.

Second, the aluminum storefronts need better detailing. The proposed “beauty caps”—a term which speaks volumes about the state of today’s architectural design—do not appear to have a stylistic relationship to the historic storefronts on this building or other buildings of the period. Details from this building or similar buildings should be studied and storefront framing and other details designed to replicate historic profiles. This would preferably be done with solid wood or cast or extruded metal and not by tacking sheet aluminum caps onto plain framing.

We also recommend that the stone sills capping the bulkheads project slightly past the face of the bulkhead. This will serve to provide a drip, hide the mortar joint, and give some texture to the base.

Approved 8-0, but work with staff on final color (warmth) of the glazing.

Approximate time: 3:00; join Zoom by: 2:00

LPC-26-10574 -- 116 East 80th Street - Lewis Spencer and Emily Coster Morris House - Individual Landmark, Manhattan

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

This application is similar to a transfer of development rights application from two houses on 79th Street that we testified on just last month. Even the proposed receiving site is the same, suggesting that an even more outsized building is in the works.

Rather than repeating the entirety of our testimony, we'll say this:

First, the implications of the new transfer of development rights scheme are of questionable benefit to landmarks, historic preservation, or rational development of the city. Second, we have little confidence that the Commission has the resources to keep track of the required maintenance plans and cyclical inspections, nor that there are usable mechanisms to ensure that identified work is undertaken.

Until these issues are successfully addressed, we oppose approval of applications under Section 75-42.

Approved 9-0, with addition of immediate work to include painting windows and trim to match the historic condition and cleaning the masonry façade.