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THE HARDENBERGH SOCIETY

51 WEST 73RD STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023 LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

December 15, 1983

Chairman Gene Norman
Landmarks Preservation Commission
20 Vesey Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chairman Norman:

This letter is in reference to the proposal submitted by the New York Historical Society to construct an apartment tower addition on top of their existing headquarters building at 170 Central Park West - (between West 76th Street and West 77th Street).

The proposal should be considered as completely unacceptable as well as totally inappropriate 1- due to City, State, and Federal landmark preservation provisions specifically prohibiting such ventures; 2- so as to maintain the inherent integrity and the effectiveness of the Landmark Preservation Commission of the City of New York, the New York State Department of Historic Preservation; and the National Register of Historic Places - in relating to current, pending, and future issues; and 3- to preserve and protect the architectural and historic significance of all landmarked properties as provided with landmark designation.

The proposed site, immediately above and over the New York Historical Society, is itself a landmark - and is literally surrounded by over one hundred landmarked buildings, in addition to the entire Park Block area of the West Side - rich in architectural merit, history, and quality of life. The New York Historical Society building was one of the original landmarks designated in 1966 by the newly formed Landmarks Preservation Commission, and was later included in the Central Park West - 76th Street Historic District - which was just recently listed on both the New York State and National Registers. The designated landmarks of the immediate area include 1- the American Museum of Natural History 2- Central Park 3- Central Park West (listed on the New York State and National Registers) 4- the Central Park West - 76th Street Historic District (comprised of 49 buildings and also listed on the State and National Registers as mentioned) including the Studio Building, the New York Historical Society, the Universalist Church of New York and Parish House, the Kenilworth Apartments, and 76th Street west to numbers 51 and 56. 5- the Central Park West - West 73rd Street, West 74th Street Historic District (comprised of 46 buildings and also listed on the New York

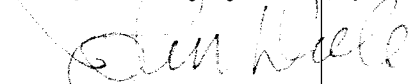
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State and National Registers) including the north side of 73rd Street west to Columbus Avenue, the south side of 74th Street west to Columbus Avenue, the east side of Columbus Avenue between 73rd Street and 74th Street, and the Langham Apartments 6- the Dakota Apartments and 7- Congregation Shearith Israel.

The apartment tower proposed by the New York Historical Society would significantly alter the majestic and landmarked skyline of Central Park West, as well as putting much of triple landmarked 76th street into shadow, especially during morning hours. It also should be noted that the streetscape of 76th Street as viewed looking eastward from Columbus Avenue, which has remained virtually intact since its beginnings and is an irreplaceable and vital link with our architectural heritage and socio-economic history, would be completely destroyed. Such a tower would, to a certain extent, also affect the feeling of openness and well-being as experienced in the high ground area immediately adjacent in landmarked Central Park. And finally, it should furthermore be noted, that the proposed tower would grossly affect the architectural integrity of the New York Historical building itself. While the architect should be commended for his attempt of a unification of sorts with a well designed tower and the Historical Society building, the tower would be much more appropriate by itself in a neighborhood in need of good architecture, and away from its proposed properly scaled neo-classical base.

In conclusion, any proposal - whether it be the addition of a tower or other transfiguration - which would alter landmarked properties and districts - designated on the City, State, and/or National level - should be considered totally inappropriate, completely unacceptable, and an offense to the integrity and sensitivities of landmark preservation groups. Any decision, other than immediate rejection, would serve to set a very dangerous precedent indeed. The New York Historical Society, in its publication "The Importance of Being Hyphenated" describes itself as having been founded in 1804 "to symbolize the links with the past which we feel are our responsibility to carry on for the benefit and guidance of the future." One would like to think that such an inspired statement is based on fact and true self image, and would have little importance should it ever be carved into stone as a linking band between tower and home.

Very truly yours,



John Diele - President

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cc:

The National Register of Historic Places
The New York State Office of Historic Preservation
The National Trust for Historic Preservation
The National Trust Legal Services Division
The Municipal Art Society
The New York Landmarks Conservancy
Preservation League of New York State
National Center for Preservation Law
United States Congressman Ted Weiss
New York State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein
New York State Senator Franz Leichter
New York State Senator Leon Bogues
New York State Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
New York State Assemblyman Jerrold Nadler
New York City Councilmember Ruth Messinger
Landmarks Committee - Community Board #7
Central Park West Preservation Committee, Inc.
West 77th Street Block Association
West 76th Street Block Association
Federation of West Side Block Associations
New York Times Architectural Critic Ada Louise Huxtable
New York Times Architectural Critic Paul Goldberger
Sinclair Armstrong
Leonard Farbman
Sally Goodgold
Chris Gray
George Litton
Joyce Matz
Arlene Simon
Elliot Sklar
John Tauranac

RE: Letter from Hardenbergh Society

1. Alteration to landmark not prohibited by any provision.
2. Preservation and protection do not mean freezing in time.
3. Site surrounded by many designated landmarks - not hundreds - mixing together New York City landmarks and National Register listings.