



**METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF
THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA**
c/o The Neighborhood Preservation Center
232 East 11th Street. New York. NY 10003

March 20, 2007

**Testimony of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America
Regarding the proposed façade changes to the New-York Historical Society
Individual Landmark**

Good morning, Commissioners. I am Hilda Regier, second vice president of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America. Founded in New York City in 1966, the Victorian Society in America is dedicated to fostering the appreciation and preservation of our nineteenth-century heritage as well as that of the early twentieth century (1837-1917). The Metropolitan Chapter, oldest of numerous chapters now flourishing throughout the country, is an independent organization affiliated with the national society.

The Metropolitan Chapter strongly objects to the façade alterations proposed for the New-York Historical Society's classical building on Central Park West. The changes remove too much historic fabric and insensitively and irreparably alter the architecture of the individual landmark. In particular, the removal of the austere bronze doors, ornamental bronze decoration over the doors within the masonry frame, and the stone on the building's primary façade is not justifiable and should not be allowed. Moreover, we felt that the proposed new modern entrance is inappropriate to the landmark quality of the building and should also be turned down by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The Historical Society was designated an individual landmark in 1966, within the first year that the Landmarks Preservation Commission started designating buildings. At that time, the Commission considered the building to be among the best architecturally in the entire city. Subsequent designations of the Central Park West-West 76th Street Historic District and the Upper West Side Historic District included the Historical Society within their boundaries, confirming the building's significance not only as an individual piece of outstanding architecture, but also as an integral part of the history and character of its surroundings on the Upper West Side.

Over forty years later, the very architecture that the Commission once found to be of utmost significance is now threatened. In 1966, the Commission celebrated the austere design of Historical Society's building, stating in the designation report that the building displays "great dignity in its formal composition" and "is a fitting home for a distinguished society." The Central Park West façade of the building is described as "nobly ornamental," and in designating the building, the Commission found that the Historical Society is "designed in the best classical traditions, that it contains much excellent architectural detail, and that this imposing structure has great dignity and grandeur."

The Historical Society now hopes to solve some of its programmatic and accessibility needs by destroying the very austere historic fabric on the front façade that led to its building's designation not once, but three times. The alterations are simply too drastic to be acceptable for an individual landmark, and the Metropolitan Chapter asks that you not allow these changes.