



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
121 West 69th Street
April 3, 2007**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to construct a stoop of this Renaissance Revival style rowhouse with Romanesque Revival style elements designed by Thom & Wilson and built in 1891, and altered in 1919 by George F. Pelham and designated as part of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District.

Our Committee applauds the Commission's decision to bring this stoop application—typically something permitted at the staff level—for discussion and consideration at a public hearing. We take this decision as a sign of the Commission's growing sensitivity to the “layering” of historic architectural elements and the potential that some early 20th-century façade renovations represent significant design interventions that may be worthy of preservation in their own right. Erasing these layers for the sake of pure restoration is not always the right answer, as the Commission divined in this case.

However, in this specific instance, our Committee does not believe that the significance of George Pelham's 1919 alterations, which include the removal of the building's original stoop and the addition of pilasters, carvings and an entrance at the basement level, rises to a level that would outweigh the benefit of a stoop restoration. Unless we can determine that an architectural statement of note was made by Pelham alterations, we support restoring the stoop.

Our second round of applause goes to the property owner for embarking on this restoration project. At an LPC public hearing on April 28, 1998, LW! testified in favor restoring the stoop at 113 West 69th Street, a Thom and Wilson brownstone cited as a precedent for this application. LANDMARK WEST! also gave a Homeowner Restoration Award in 1998 to the owner of 135 West 69th Street, another rowhouse on this block.

As we have stated before, stoop restorations tend to have a contagious effect, and we hope the trend will continue on this block. We look forward to seeing this long-neglected building fully restored and are pleased to support this application.

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