



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!  
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
12 West 72nd Street  
December 11, 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 establish a master plan governing the future installation of windows on this neo-Renaissance style apartment building built in 1926-27, designed by Emery Roth and designated as part of the Upper West Side-Central Park West Historic District,

Considered by Emery Roth “the finest building produced by his office” at the time of construction, the bold, magnificent Oliver Cromwell Hotel epitomized Jazz Age optimism and opulence and set the tone for high-rise construction on the Upper West Side, according to Steven Rutenbaum’s biography of Roth, *Mansions in the Clouds*. Roth was a master of combining modern massing with classical ornament and incorporating modern innovations such as steel casement window to evoke 1920s contemporary design. Described by Rutenbaum as the Upper West Side’s first skyscraper, 12 West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street “inaugurated the transformation of its parkside neighborhood into one of the most architecturally distinctive areas in the city” and set the standard for Roth’s other high rise masterpieces: the San Remo and the Beresford on Central Park West and the Normandy Apartments on Riverside Drive.

At this stage, we again look to the Oliver Cromwell to set the tone for the neighborhood. One look at the historic photos of 12 West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street with its multi-light casement windows quickly reveals how much richer a visual experience it was before the current banal, anodized aluminum double-hung replacement windows were installed. The application before the commission is to endorse a master plan that would insure that this current, inappropriate state continue in perpetuity.

We are sympathetic to the arguments of the applicant – that the incremental cost is great and that requiring a return to casements would probably mean a mix of windows for decades – but on balance the Committee feels strongly that the Commission should allow the building to be restored to its original richness rather than make this impossible by permitting replacement windows to echo the current condition in layout, details and color.

Ideally, the board of the Oliver Cromwell would decide to replace all the building’s windows at once; if that decision is not taken now, a master plan made up of casements would allow a future board to make this, the right decision. To approve the application before the Commission would render this impossible. We hope The Oliver Cromwell will be able to follow the lead of other great neighborhood landmarks, including The Century, The Majestic and the Normandy, each of which has a master plan to replace non-historic windows with replacements echoing the original configuration and details.