

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH ON STATEN ISLAND, SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING, AND CEMETERY.**

**June 1, 2010**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Reformed Church on Staten Island, Sunday School Building, and Cemetery.

On August 11, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Reformed Church on Staten Island, Sunday School Building, and Cemetery. A total of eleven witnesses, including City Council member Kenneth C. Mitchell, Reformed Church on Staten Island Consistory President Warren Mac Kenzie, and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Preservation League of Staten Island testified in support of this designation. The representative of the Preservation League also appeared on behalf of the North Shore Waterfront/Greenbelt Association, the West Brighton Restoration Society and the Four Boroughs Neighborhood Preservation Alliance. A number of members of the congregation who were present at the hearing also rose with President Mac Kenzie to indicate their support for the designation. The Commission has received two letters and one e-mail in support of the designation. There were no speakers or letters in opposition to the designation.. On March 23, 2010, the Commission voted to designate these as a New York City individual landmark.

This Greek Revival style church was erected in 1844 to the designs of Staten Island builder James G. Burger and was enlarged in 1898 with a Colonial Revival Sunday School addition designed by architect Oscar S. Teale. The church's congregation is the oldest in Staten Island and its first church building was erected on this site in 1715. The present church is the congregation's third; it is the oldest church building on the North Shore and one of the oldest churches on Staten Island.

The cemetery incorporates a burying ground in use by 1704/05 and includes grave markers dating between 1816 and 1916. The cemetery is the burial site of a female slave who was the mother of Benjamin and Fortune Perine. Fortune and his wife, Hettie, were members of this church and Benjamin continued to worship here until his death in 1900, at the age of 104. At his death, Perine was the oldest man on Staten Island and the last born into slavery. Together the church, Sunday School Building and cemetery are significant reminders of the historical, cultural, and architectural development of the Port Richmond neighborhood and Staten Island. The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.



## West 54 – 55 Street Block Association

### **Landmark Designation for the Joseph B. & Josephine H. Bissell House at 46 West 55 Street**

### **Testimony by Veronika Conant for the June 1, 2010 Hearing by the NYC Council's Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses**

Dear Chair Lander and Members of the City Council's Landmarks Committee.

I am Veronika Conant, President of the West 54 – 55 Street Block Association, located in the Preservation Subdistrict of the Special Midtown District, including West 54<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets midblock, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, North of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). I am here in support of landmark designation for the townhouse at 46 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street for which we initiated the Request for Evaluation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and which we were able to research thanks to funding from the City Council and NYS, in particular, CM Dan Garodnick and NYS Assembly Member Dick Gottfried.

We are delighted that this unique Beaux Arts townhouse is being considered for a long deserved landmark designation. It was originally designed by architect Thomas Thomas, built as part of a five-building residential development in 1869. The area became very fashionable by the turn of the century and became known as Vanderbilt's Row, with many bankers, physicians and other elite living there. In 1903 Josephine Bissell hired the prominent architect Edward L. Tilton to remove the brownstone façade and high stoop and design a brick and limestone Beaux Arts façade with an American basement plan. Using "red and black brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern with limestone details" (from the Designation Report) the five-story building has a distinguished bowed front, and is a rare example of his residential design. Tilton was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and had worked for McKim, Mead & White earlier. He was a prize winning architect who has designed many institutional buildings and is known for his design of libraries.

The Bissell family lived in the building until 1919. Dr. Joseph Bissell was a prominent surgeon who did pioneering research in the treatment of cancer with radium. After Dr Bissell's death another physician, Dr. James Ramsey Hunt, a famous neurologist, lived in the house with his family until 1937. He was Professor of neurology at Columbia University and several neurological conditions were named after him. In 1943 a physician couple bought the townhouse. Dr. H. Sidney Newcomer was an inventor as well as a physician, and Dr. Marian Newcomer authored a book of medical advice to patients.

As the area became mixed commercial and residential in character, the house changed hands. Currently it is owned by Les Copains, an Italian clothing manufacturer.



## West 54 – 55 Street Block Association

The building has been kept in excellent condition, and apart from an impressive, widened entrance, made of wood in 1987, remains unchanged.

LPC in March, 2010, unanimously voted to designate the townhouse. Designation has been supported by CB5, our elected State officials, the Historic Districts Council (HDC) and other preservationists as well as our members. I have copies of these letters here for you, including a recent one from NYS Senator Liz Krueger.

Our midblocks in the Preservation Subdistrict, zoned C5-P, with maximum FAR 8, are filled with unique, low-scale townhouses, apartment buildings, lots of small businesses, restaurants, hotels. The area was recommended in 1982 by the Department of City Planning for Historic District (HD) designation. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Instead it was zoned a Preservation Subdistrict. These blocks are the last remnant of what Midtown used to look like and are very alive, a real mixed residential/commercial neighborhood worthy of preservation.

We have fifteen designated individual landmarks in the blocks, and thanks to you, this is the fifth individual landmark to be designated since 2007.

I hope you will consider the beauty and rich history of the remarkable townhouse at 46 W 55<sup>th</sup> Street, and support the efforts to designate it a landmark. Thank you.

**LIZ KRUEGER**  
**SENATOR, 26TH DISTRICT**

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June 1, 2010

**VIA FAX (212) 788-8967**

Council Member Brad Lander  
New York City Council  
Chair Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses Committee  
250 Broadway, Suite 1776  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Council Member Lander:

I am writing in support of the landmarking of 46 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street, a townhouse located in the 26<sup>th</sup> Senate district which I represent.

46 West 55<sup>th</sup> is part of a development dating back to 1869 and designed by architect Thomas Thomas. When this townhouse was originally constructed many row houses were being built on the side streets in the area below Central Park while larger mansions were being constructed along Fifth Avenue. The movement of residents and business in Manhattan picked up momentum during the building boom that followed the Civil War. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this area was the city's most prestigious residential neighborhood and was known as Vanderbilt's Row because of that family's involvement in maintaining the elite character of the neighborhood. A number of important civic and institutional building projects initiated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century also sets this neighborhood and its homes apart. This area gained further prominence when Fifth Avenue became the approach to Central Park in 1868 and an entrance plaza was created between East 58<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> streets.

The facade of 46 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street is a rare example of a private residential commission by Edward L. Tilton who redesigned the facade in 1903. Tilton is particularly associated with the design of libraries. He altered the house by removing the traditional Italianate style brownstone facade and its high stoop and replacing it with a more fashionable neo-Classical style brick and limestone facade. The facade features a bowed front, red and black brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern and limestone details including two prominent cornices with block modillions and scroll brackets. Several prominent physicians lived in the house in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually the house has changed from residential to non-residential use and it is currently owned by a clothing manufacturer based in Italy.

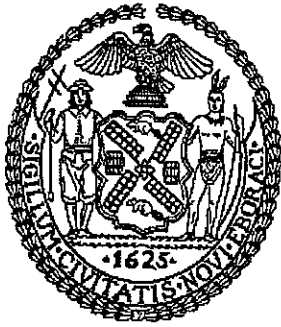
Community Board Five in their January 2008 Resolution, Historic Districts Council, West 54<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association and colleagues in the New York City Council and New York State Assembly overwhelmingly support the designation of this townhouse as a landmark.

I hope that the New York Council will affirm the vote of the Landmarks Preservation Commission for landmark designation of this extraordinary townhouse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Krueger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Liz Krueger  
State Senator



## MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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David Siesko, *Chair*

Wally Rubin, *District Manager*

January 22, 2008

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: 46 West 55th Street – Proposed designation.**

Dear Chair Tierney:

At the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of Community Board Five on Thursday, January 17, 2008, the Board passed the following resolution recommending approval by a vote of 30 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining:

WHEREAS, On Monday January 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, concerned members of the public appeared before Community Board Five's Landmarks Committee seeking support for their effort to designate, as an individual landmark, the townhouse building at 46 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street, located between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and

WHEREAS, The building, commissioned by John W. Stevens and Brother and designed by architect Thomas Thomas, is one of a five townhouse development, dating from 1869, and is among the earliest structures on the block; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thomas was born and trained as an architect in England. He came to New York as a young man and, with 10 other architects, formed The National Institute of Architecture, the precursor of today's AIA, the American Institute of Architects. Thomas also collaborated on the design of St. Peter's Church from 1836-1840 on Broadway between Barclay and Vesey Streets but most of his work was on private residences for well known people of the period; and

WHEREAS, In 1903 Mr. J.H. Bissell, who owned the house, commissioned renowned architect Edward L. Tilton and his partner to design the classic period brick and limestone Beaux Arts façade that exists today. Tilton is also well known for designing over 100 of the Carnegie Libraries as well as the Main building, the Kitchen & Laundry Buildings, the Main Powerhouse and the Main Hospital on Ellis Island; and

WHEREAS, this neighborhood was a fashionable address for Manhattan's banking elite and other prominent families, and

WHEREAS, this building is deemed to have significant historical, cultural and architectural importance; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, Community Board Five **recommends** that the townhouse building at 46 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street be designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission as an individual landmark.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,

David Siesko  
Chair

Howard Mendes  
Chair, Landmarks Committee



RICHARD N. GOTTFRIED  
75TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

CHAIR  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

## NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

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CHAIR  
MANHATTAN DELEGATI

March 14, 2008

Robert Tierney, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 36 West 56th Street, Manhattan  
46 West 55th Street, Manhattan  
41 West 54th Street, Manhattan

Dear Bob:

I am writing in support of three landmark-worthy buildings referred to the Commission by the West 54th Street Block Association and Manhattan Community Board 5.

The Community Board passed resolutions urging the Commission to evaluate and consider the merit of a designation hearing for 36 West 56th Street in April 2007 and the companion properties in January 2008. The community appealed to me after 36 West 56th Street was rejected; and I urge you to provide another opportunity for them to present supporting documentation of this significant property. I understand from Commission staff that the request failed because of the work done to the ground floor.

### **36 West 56th Street**

Built 1881-82 and designed by the distinguished architect Bruce Price, this property is one of only a few remain examples of his work. The row house was constructed on one of the few undeveloped lots on the block and was built on nearly the entire depth of the lot, making this a larger and grander residence than neighboring properties. It was also singled out in Harper's New Monthly Magazine as one of the few successful applications of the Queen Anne style in New York architecture, with a tin roof and using red brick and terra cotta, thus achieving an extraordinarily brilliant and dazzling façade. A subsequent addition altered the ground floor for commercial use, but the façade is still very much intact and retains much of Price's details including molded bricks with round bosses, transoms with small square window panes, an iron terrace railing and a pedimented iron cornice.

I support the request of Community Board Five and the West 54th Street Block Association for individual landmark designation of 36 West 56th Street for its extraordinary beauty and rare architecture and for its distinguished architect.

### **46 West 55th Street**

This impressive property is one of a five townhouse development dating from 1869.

They were the earliest structures on the street. They were commissioned by the developer John W. Stevens and Brother and designed by architect Thomas Thomas, a founding member of The National Institute of Architecture. As styles changed, renowned architect Edward L. Tilton was commissioned to design the brick and limestone Beaux Arts façade we see today. Tilton's design for this building was altered by widening the main entrance, but it still remains a great building in great condition. The other townhouses in the development have been modified and are nondescript. Designation will ensure that we preserve this rare example of Tilton's residential work.

I support the request of Community Board Five and the West 54th Street Block Association for individual landmark designation of 46 West 55th Street for its extraordinary beauty and rare architecture and for its distinguished architect.

#### 41 West 54th Street

41 West 54th Street has a similar history. It was built in 1878 by developer James Lynd as part of a five-building row in the Neo-Greco style. In 1909, it was given a Beaux-Arts façade by architects Foster, Gade and Graham, who did several townhouse renovations in the Upper East Side as well as the individual landmark John H. and Caroline Iselin House at 59 East 79th Street. The townhouse has a broad double doorway, balconies and two tiers of casements which compose a projecting bay. The bay is flanked by subtly canted rusticated piers. There is some delicate relief carving on the balconies. Over the two round arched dormers is a simple mansard roof. It has been lovingly restored and stands out from the ordinary buildings that surround it. The townhouse was singled out in the 1979 Midtown West Survey and recommended to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Designation is long overdue for this notable property.

I support the request of Community Board Five and the West 54th Street Block Association for individual landmark designation of 41 West 54th Street for its extraordinary beauty and rare architecture and for its distinguished architect.

I am grateful for the support the Commission demonstrated in 2007, protecting the architectural significance in the Special Midtown District designating 10 and 30 West 56th Street.

I hope the Commission will calendar hearings for these important buildings so they can be preserved for future generations of New Yorkers.

Best regards.

Very truly yours,



Richard N. Gottfried  
Assembly Member



DANIEL R. GARODNICK  
COUNCIL MEMBER, 4<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

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Via Facsimile and U.S. Mail

April 15, 2008

Robert B. Tierney  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
1 Center Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Tierney:

I am writing to formally urge you to consider landmark designation for 41 West 54th Street and 46 West 55th Street, two distinct and historically significant buildings within my Council District.


41 West 54th Street was designed by James G. Lynd and Brothers, and was completed in 1878. It was originally constructed in the Neo-Grec style; a Beaux-Arts façade by architects Foster, Gade & Graham was added in 1909. They were also the architects of the John H. and Caroline Iselin House at 59 East 79th Street, which was designated an individual landmark in 1981.

The townhouse at 46 West 55 Street was designed in 1869 by Thomas Thomas, a founder of the National Institute of Architecture, and the architect of St. Peter's Church on lower Broadway. In 1903, Edward L. Tilton, well known as a designer of over 100 Carnegie libraries, designed the townhouse's brick and limestone Beaux-Arts façade, which remains intact today, and is one of Tilton's last remaining residential works. Tilton's acclaimed designs also included the New Emigration Station on Ellis Island in 1898.

Please do not hesitate to call on me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Garodnick



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

232 East 11th Street New York NY 10003  
tel 212-614-9107 fax 212-614-9127 e-mail hdc@hdc.org

January 7, 2008

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
The Municipal Building, 9th Floor  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 41 West 54th Street, 46 West 55th Street and 36 West 56th Street

Dear Commissioner Tierney,

The Historic Districts Council strongly supports the consideration of the three buildings at 41 West 54th Street, 46 West 55th Street and 36 West 56th Street for designation as individual New York City landmarks. These buildings all date from the period when Midtown Manhattan was a residential district, with two of them, 41 West 54th Street and 46 West 55th Street, receiving new facades in the early 20th Century when the area became fashionable for New York's financiers and bankers.

41 West 54th Street was built in 1878 by developer James Lynd as part of a five-building row in the Neo-Grec style. In 1909, it was given a Beaux-Arts façade by architects Foster, Gade and Graham, who did several townhouse renovations in the Upper East Side as well as the individual landmark John H. and Caroline Iselin House at 59 East 79th Street.

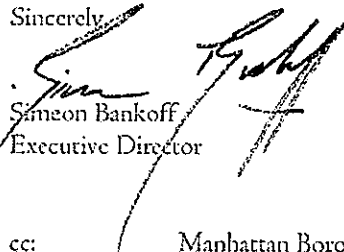
46 West 55th Street was part of an earlier development row, dating from 1869 and originally designed by architect Thomas Thomas for the development firm of John W. Stevens & Bro. Thomas, a founder of the National Institute of Architecture (a predecessor of the American Institute of Architects) was the architect, with John Haggerty, of St. Peter's Church (1836-1840) on lower Broadway but he was best known for his residential designs. Like 41 West 54th Street, it was given a handsome Beaux-Arts façade in 1903 by architect Edward L. Tilton, architect of the 1898 New Emigration Station at Ellis Island, in partnership with William L. Boring. In 1900, the firm was awarded the gold medal for best American architectural design at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. This building is a rare survivor of Tilton's residential work.

36 West 56th Street, built 1881-1882, was designed by Bruce Price, architect of the landmark skyscraper American Surety Building. An architectural figure of international importance, Price is best known for his Shingle style designs in Tuxedo Park, NY, the National Historic Landmark Georgian Court in Lakewood, NJ, several stations and hotels for the Canadian Pacific railway system and several halls at Yale University. The building at 36 West 56th Street was called by Montgomery Schuyler in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* as one of the few successful applications of the Queen Anne style in New York domestic architecture. Although this building

is the most altered of the three, with a front ground floor addition, the upper façade is still very much intact and retains most of Price's façade details.

All three of these buildings have long been known by architectural historians and enthusiasts as being eminently worthy of landmark protection. They are all handsome, possess high levels of architectural integrity and are works of noted and significant architects. In fact, 41 West 54th Street was heard by the LPC for designation in 1985, along with its neighbor at 35 West 54th Street. We urge the LPC to add these three buildings to the roster of protected landmarks in Midtown Manhattan.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director

cc: Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer  
Council Member Daniel Gardonick  
Assembly member Richard Gottfried  
State Senator Liz Kruger  
Manhattan Community Board 5  
Veronica Conant, West 54th – 55th Street Block Association



**Fw: Landmarking of 41 W 54 + 46 W 55**

Wednesday, February 13, 2008 5:08 PM

**From:** "Napier\_Collyns@gbn.com" <Napier\_Collyns@gbn.com>  
**To:** "Veronika Conant" <vaconant@yahoo.com>

I don't think I can make it on next Wednesday but this may please you!

----- Forwarded by Napier Collyns/GBN/Monitor on 02/13/2008 02:04 PM -----

Date 2/12/2008

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 41 West 54 Street, request for consideration for designation  
46 West 55 Street, request for consideration for designation

Dear Chair Tierney:

I am a resident of 45 West 54th Street since 1979, and a member of the West 54 – 55 Street Block Association which includes West 56 Street.

Our residential neighborhood, in the midst of high-rise Midtown Manhattan, is the home of a diminishing number of unique and beautiful townhouses. Preserving the best of them to maintain the special character of our neighborhood is very important to me and the members of our community. Our community supports the designation of these buildings.

During the early 1900's, the neighborhood became a fashionable address for Manhattan's banking elite and other wealthy families. Both 41 and 46 had their facades altered and designed by distinguished architects as tastes changed with the times.

In the late 1800s, many of the townhouses were built on what were undeveloped lots and were designed by the finest architects of the time. 46 West 55 Street was designed by Thomas Thomas, who was born and educated as an architect in England. In 1837 with ten other architects, he formed an organization which later re-organized as the American Institute of Architects. 46 dates from 1869 and it is one of the earliest structures still standing on the street. The current brick and limestone Beaux Arts façade we see today was designed in 1903 by renowned architect Edward L. Tilton and his partner. Tilton was known for designing over 100 of the Carnegie Libraries. He was a friend of Andrew Carnegie's personal secretary; very helpful in getting those commissions. Before designing the façade, Tilton had won the competition to design the new Immigration Station on Ellis

Island in 1898: the Main building, the Kitchen and Laundry Buildings, the Main Powerhouse and the Main Hospital.

The new façade of 46 is a rare example of his residential work

41 West 54 Street was constructed in 1878 and designed by the developer James G. Lynd and Brothers. Lynd was one of a group of architects and builders who in 1883 proposed amendments to the New York City Building Law and for the Mayor to appoint an Inspector of Buildings and a Board of Examiners. In 1909, the present white, carved limestone Beaux-Arts façade was designed by architects Foster Gade & Graham. They were the architects of The John H. and Caroline Iselin House at 59 East 79 Street, designated a landmark in 1981. The townhouse was singled out in the 1979 Midtown West Survey and recommended to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. No action was taken at the time, one of many buildings it did not act upon. The townhouse is located in the Special Midtown Preservation Subdistrict.

The townhouse has a broad double doorway, balconies and 2 tiers of casements which compose a projecting bay. The bay is flanked by subtly canted rusticated piers. There is some delicate relief carving on the balconies. Over the two round arched dormers is a simple mansard roof. It has been lovingly restored and stands out from the ordinary buildings that surround it.

I hope you will agree that these houses need to be saved and we count on you to help.

Sincerely

Napier Collyns

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February 19 2008

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street 9th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 41 West 54 Street, request for consideration for designation  
46 West 55 Street, request for consideration for designation

Dear Chair Tierney,

I am a resident of Rockefeller Apartments, 24 West 55 Street since 1991 and a member of the West 54 - 56 Street Block Association which includes West 56 Street.

Our residential neighborhood, in the midst of high-rise Midtown Manhattan, is the home of a diminishing number of unique and beautiful townhouses. Preserving the best of them to maintain the special character of our neighborhood is very important to me and the members of our community. Our community supports the designation of these buildings.

During the early 1900's, the neighborhood became a fashionable address for Manhattan's banking elite and other wealthy families. Both 41 and 46 had their facades altered and designed by distinguished architects as tastes changed with the times.

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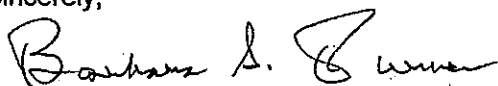
The new facade of 46 is a rare example of his residential work.

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The townhouse was singled out in the 1979 Midtown West Survey and recommended to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. No action was taken at this time, one of many buildings it did not act upon. The townhouse is located in the Special Midtown Preservation Sub-district.

The townhouse has a broad double doorway, balconies and two tiers of casements which compose a projecting bay. The bay is flanked by subtly canted rusticated piers. There is some delicate relief carving on the balconies. Over the two round arched dormers is a simple Mansard roof. It has been lovingly restored and stands out from the ordinary buildings that surround it.

Sincerely,



Barbara Sharp Turner

cc: Veronika A. Conant, President, West 54 - 56 Street Block Association

June 22, 2009

Dear Hon. R Tierney, Chair

The building at 46 W. 55 St. is across from my window. It is a reminder of New York's past-pre War bldg. I remember when Gov. Rockefeller used this building for his office. It is a rare design, there is none like it and it is a picture of N. Y. history. Since there are so many tourists in the hotels in this area 53-57th Streets 6 Ave., the building is a reminder of past history and is one building that should be noted for tourists to see. Not to landmark this building would be detrimental to New York's history of the past. I am sure that there were many world leaders who visited 46 W. 55th St.

Thank you

JoanBulik, Arista Reisber, and Helana Nguyen

Members, West 54 -55 Street Block Association

*Marilyn C. Hemery  
15 West 55th Street  
New York, New York 10019*

February 19, 2008

Hon. Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Re: 41 West 54 Street, request for consideration for designation  
46 West 55 Street, request for consideration for designation

Dear Chair Tierney:

I am a resident of 15 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street since 1970, and a member of the West 54 – 55 Street Block Association which includes West 56 Street.

Our residential neighborhood, in the midst of high-rise Midtown Manhattan, is the home of a diminishing number of unique and beautiful townhouses. Preserving the best of them to maintain the special character of our neighborhood is very important to me and the members of our community. Our community supports the designation of these buildings.

During the early 1900s, the neighborhood became a fashionable address for Manhattan's banking elite and other wealthy families. Both 41 and 46 had their facades altered and designed by distinguished architects as tastes changed with the times.

In the late 1800s, many of the townhouses were built on what were undeveloped lots and were designed by the finest architects of the time. 46 West 55 Street was designed by Thomas Thomas, who was born and educated as an architect in England. In 1837 with ten other architects, he formed an organization which later re-organized as the American Institute of Architects. 46 dates from 1869 and it is one of the earliest structures still standing on the street. The current brick and limestone Beaux Arts façade we see today was designed in 1903 by renowned architect Edward L. Tilton



and his partner. Tilton was known for designing over 100 of the Carnegie Libraries. He was a friend of Andrew Carnegie's personal secretary; very helpful in getting those commissions. Before designing the façade, Tilton had won the competition to design the new Immigration Station on Ellis Island in 1898: the Main building, the Kitchen and Laundry Buildings, the Main Powerhouse and the Main Hospital.

The new façade of 46 is a rare example of his residential work.

41 West 54 Street was constructed in 1878 and designed by the developer James G. Lynd and Brothers. Lynd was one of a group of architects and builders who in 1883 proposed amendments to the New York City Building Law and for the Mayor to appoint an Inspector of Buildings and a Board of Examiners. In 1909, the present white, carved limestone Beaux-Arts façade was designed by architects Foster Gade & Graham. They were the architects of The John H. and Caroline Iselin House at 59 East 79 Street, designated a landmark in 1981.

The townhouse was singled out in the 1979 Midtown West Survey and recommended to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. No action was taken at the time, one of many buildings it did not act upon. The townhouse is located in the Special Midtown Preservation Subdistrict.

The townhouse has a broad double doorway, balconies and 2 tiers of casements which compose a projecting bay. The bay is flanked by subtly canted rusticated piers. There is some delicate relief carving on the balconies. Over the two round arched dormers is a simple mansard roof. It has been lovingly restored and stands out from the ordinary buildings that surround it.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

*Marilyn Hemery*

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE JOSEPH B. AND JOSEPHINE H. BISSELL HOUSE IN MANHATTAN.**

**June 1, 2010**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House in Manhattan.

On June 23, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 18). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of Councilmember Daniel R. Garodnick, the West 55th Street Block Association and the Historic Districts Council. A representative of the owner spoke in opposition to designation. On March 23, 2010, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City individual landmark.

The Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House was originally constructed as one of five Italianate style brownstone row houses designed by architect Thomas Thomas and built in 1869 by owner and builder John W. Stevens. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this area was the city's most prestigious residential neighborhood and was known as Vanderbilt's Row because of that family's involvement in maintaining the elite character of the neighborhood. The house was purchased by Josephine H. Bissell in 1903 and she hired prominent architect Edward L. Tilton to alter the house by removing the traditional Italianate style brownstone facade and its high stoop and replacing it with a more fashionable neo-Classical style brick and limestone facade with an American basement plan. The Bissell House facade is a rare example of a private residential commission by Tilton, who is particularly associated with the design of libraries.

Mrs. Bissell lived in the house with her husband, Dr. Joseph B. Bissell, and their children and sold it shortly after his death. Dr. Bissell was a surgeon who did pioneering research in the treatment of cancer with radium. Several prominent physicians lived in the house in the first half of the 20th century. Gradually, the house went from residential to non-residential use and it is currently owned by a clothing manufacturer based in Italy.

The Commission urges you to affirm this designation.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 113 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/1/2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TARA KELLY

Address: 20 EAST 69TH ST NY

I represent: FRIENDS OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/1/10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: WARREN MacKENZIE

Address: 54 Port Richmond Ave

I represent: Reformed Church on Staten Island

Address: 54 Port Richmond Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU13 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: June 1, 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez

Address: 1 Centre Street

I represent: Landmarks Preservation Commission

Address: 1 Centre Street

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU 110 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: June 1, 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez  
Address: 1 Centre Street  
I represent: Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Address: 1 Centre Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU 12 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: June 1, 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez  
Address: 1 Centre Street  
I represent: LPC - Landmarks Preservation Comm.  
Address: 1 Centre Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU 111 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: June 1, 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Fernandez  
Address: 1 Centre Street  
I represent: LPC | Landmarks Preservation Comm.  
Address: 1 Centre Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 20 111 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: June 11 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Veronika Covalt

Address: 45 W 54 St, 7C, New York, NY 10019

I represent: West 54 - 55 Street Block Association

Address: 45 W 54 St, 7C, New York NY 10019

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 113 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/1/10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TAKA KELLY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: FRIENDS OF THE UPPER

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 44 111 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: JUNE 2010

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RITASNEI STEGER

Address: 17 WEST 54 ST, 9B, 10019

I represent: WEST 54-55 ST BLOCK ASSOC

Address: 45 WEST 54 ST, 7C, 10019

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