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Landmarks Committee
Manhattan Community Board Five
450 7th Avenue, Suite 2109
New York, NY 10123

June 3, 2013

Dear Landmarks Committee Chair:

I write to you today to express The Victorian Society New York's (VSNY) support for several buildings being considered for landmark status on West 29th Street in Manhattan. 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). VSNY, formally known as The New York Metropolitan Chapter, oldest of numerous chapters now flourishing throughout the country, is an independent organization of more than 300 members, affiliated with the national society.

The Victorian Society New York has a long tradition of supporting and advocating for the preservation of significant Victorian era culture, history and architecture throughout the city. The buildings currently being considered 3-7, 9, 11, and 13-15 West 29th Street showcase a wealth of Victorian-era architecture which deserves to be preserved for future generations.

3-7, known as the Bancroft Building, was designed by prominent Victorian-era architect Robert H. Robertson, who designed buildings across New York City as well as important landmarks in New Jersey, the Hamptons, and Newport, Rhode Island for society personages and prominent institutions. His most well-known work is the Shelburne Farms complex in Vermont, originally built in 1886 as a model agricultural estate for the Webb family, and now an educational complex dedicated to sustainability. The Bancroft Building displays a wealth of Victorian high-style ornament in a striking red and white masonry design.

Additional buildings being considered include 9 West 29th Street, originally a rowhouse and later altered with a cast-iron façade by John B. Snook & Sons. Snook designed the first Grand Central Terminal (demolished) and America's first department store, the A. T. Stewart Store on Chambers Street, among other notable works. The preservation of New York's cast-iron architecture has long been a cornerstone of the Chapter's work since our founding by Margot Gayle, an early SoHo advocate and founder of Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture, so we enthusiastically support the designation of this commercial building. VSNY also supports the LPC's consideration of 11 and 13-15 West 29th Street, early Italianate rowhouses that help tell the story of this area's development from an exclusive residential neighborhood into a thriving commercial district, a change that took place from the 1850s until the early 1900s.

The Victorian Society encourages you to support the preservation of these worthy pieces of New York City's irreplaceable Victorian heritage.

Sincerely,

Chelcey Berryhill
Chair, Preservation Committee

The New York Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America