



Landmarks Preservation
Commission

Robert B. Tierney
Chair

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September 18, 2012

Mr. Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
252 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10005

Dear Mr. Berman:

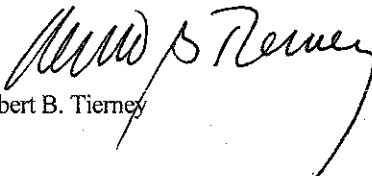
I write in response to your recent request to reconsider 186 Spring Street as a potential New York City individual landmark based on its historical and cultural significance in relation to the gay rights movement in the United States. Please be advised that members of the Research Department and senior staff of the Landmarks Preservation Commission have carefully reviewed the materials submitted by you and other organizations regarding this building, and have also conducted additional research using New York City directories and published histories of the gay rights movement in the United States. One of the most comprehensive of these histories—Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney's *Out for Good*—notes that this movement was highly fragmented, making its history difficult to document, and for the staff of the Commission, difficult to assess. The fact that the movement occurred relatively recently also makes assessment difficult.

Our review of a variety of sources, however, indicates that the tenure of Jim Owles and Arnie Kantowitz at 186 Spring Street was fairly brief, during the period around 1972 to 1973. It also appears that they moved to Spring Street after the Gay Activist Alliance had already established its headquarters at The Firehouse at 99 Wooster Street, which is designated as part of the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District. While some of the Alliance activities likely spilled over to the private residence at 186 Spring Street, the majority of the Alliance's accomplishments would have occurred at The Firehouse – and we believe that building best represents the achievements of the Alliance. Dr. Bruce Voeller's tenure at 186 Spring Street was lengthier, dating from 1973 to perhaps 1982. As you know, Dr. Voeller was one of several people significant to the gay rights movement in the United States and the fight against AIDS. A review of histories of the movement, however, suggests that Dr. Voeller was a later and more of a "transitional figure" (as he is referred to by Clendinen and Nagourney) between the radical post-Stonewall period and a more mainstream professional activism. For these reasons, the building at 186 Spring Street will not be recommended to the full Commission for further consideration as a New York City individual landmark.

Clendinen and Nagourney have documented multiple people, organizations, and events that have contributed to the gay rights movement in the United States. Because relatively little time has passed, it may take more time to truly understand who and what in New York City were the icons of this struggle. The one event that is universally agreed upon as historically significant is the 1969 Stonewall Riots. As you know, the actual building at the center of the riots, the Stonewall Inn, is protected as part of the Greenwich Village Historic District, which was designated on April 29, 1969 – about two months prior to the riots. The Commission encourages the LGBT community to submit to the Commission a list of sites throughout the City that are important to the history of the movement, whether or not they are already protected as landmarks, so that the Commission can begin to better evaluate the commemoration of this history.

On behalf of the staff I want to thank you for the obvious effort taken to put together the information contained in the Request for Evaluation. We appreciate the amount of research that was done, and found the information you provided to be very useful. We thank you for your interest in historic preservation and in the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Tierney