

placeMATTERS

sponsored by city lore and the municipal art society

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August 1, 2012

Hon. Robert B. Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, Ninth Floor
New York, NY 10007
Email: rtierney@lpc.nyc.gov

RE: 186 Spring Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Tierney,

City Lore and Place Matters join the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and many others in respectfully urging you to protect the historic house at 186 Spring Street. I write to you as an architectural historian and the director of Place Matters, a preservation initiative co-sponsored by City Lore and the Municipal Art Society, that strives to honor and advocate for sites that anchor tradition, host memories and help to tell the history of New York City. I would like to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect this distinguished building, both for its architectural and its cultural significance.

186 Spring Street is nearly 200 years old, but it is much more than a 19th-century row house. As the *New York Times* has correctly noted, 186 Spring Street was “the center of gay activism in the decade after Stonewall.” Many people know that in 1969, a group of Stonewall Inn patrons rebelled against the police, resulting in three days of riots and the birth of the modern gay rights movement. While 186 Spring Street may be less famous than the Stonewall Inn, it is no less a local landmark for the international LGBT community. Several founders and pioneers of the LGBT and AIDS activist communities, including James W. Owles, Dr. Bruce Voeller and Arnie Kantrowitz, lived in this house. Unfortunately, Owles and Voeller both passed away from AIDS. However, 186 Spring Street continues to stand as an icon of their hope and persistence, as well as that of countless others. The memory of the devastating AIDS epidemic is rapidly fading from public consciousness, and it is important that we give this part of our past a public presence. In particular, 186 Spring Street merits protection in light of its former function as an LGBT activist center and refuge.

City Lore and Place Matters hope that you will consider protecting this building, as well as the rest of the proposed South Village Historic District, as soon as possible. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Molly Garfinkel
City Lore and Place Matters
72 East First Street
New York, NY 10003