



July 23, 2012

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

Re: 186 Spring Street

Dear Chair Tierney:

I urge you to act immediately to preserve 186 Spring Street.

This nearly 190 year old house played an extraordinary role in connection to LGBT and AIDS activism and history. Those who helped found the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Gay Activists Alliance, and Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats all lived here. These organizations have had a profound effect upon our city and country.


Jim Owles, one of these residents, was New York City's first openly-gay candidate for public office, and lobbied for New York's very first gay and lesbian anti-discrimination ordinances in the early 1970s.

Dr. Bruce Voeller, who also lived here, not only lead the first national gay and lesbian advocacy organization, but conducted the first research establishing that condoms prevent the spread of AIDS, and established the use of the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, rather than the inaccurate and stigmatizing "Gay Related Immune Defense Disorder (GRIDD)". Voeller was also the subject of a landmark case before the United States Supreme Court establishing the rights of lesbians and gay men to visit and have access to their children at a time when they were still considered by many to be mentally ill and a danger to children.

Because of those who lived there and its use as a "gay commune" in the early 1970s, 186 Spring Street had an extraordinary impact upon the lives of lesbians and gay men in New York City and beyond, and the legacy of their work continues to have a profound impact upon our culture today. One can even argue that 186 Spring Street, along with the former firehouse on nearby Wooster Street, are direct precursors to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center of today. Of course this house is not alone in the South Village in its unique significance in the history of the LGBT community, which flourished in bars, clubs, theaters, cafes, music halls, bookstores and other gathering spaces throughout this neighborhood.

For this and many other reasons, I urge you to protect 186 Spring Street and move ahead with designation of the proposed South Village Historic District of which it is a part.

Sincerely,



Glenda Testone  
Executive Director

Copies to:

Senator Tom Duane

Assemblymember Deborah Glick

Hon. Christine Quinn

Hon. Rosie Mendez

Hon. Daniel Dromm

Hon. Jimmy Van Bramer

Andrew Berman, Executive Director

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation