

Francis Morrone  
455 Sixth Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
[fm27@nyu.edu](mailto:fm27@nyu.edu)

To: Chair of Manhattan Community Board 8

I am an architectural historian with a special interest in the work of Ogden Codman Jr., the architect of 1083 Fifth Avenue. In this capacity I have been retained by the owner and architects of 1083 Fifth Avenue to prepare a detailed report on the construction history of the house. To that end I have, among other things, located and studied approximately 300 of the Codman office's original plans and drawings for 1083 Fifth Avenue.

In the matter of the proposed low wall to be placed in front of the entrance to 1083 Fifth Avenue, I was asked what I thought. The entrance was designed by Codman for his client, Archer M. Huntington, to be a vehicular entrance, a highly unusual thing for a Manhattan town house. We do not know how often the entrance was actually used in that capacity, but we do know that for by far the greater part of the house's history the entrance was not used that way at all, but as a conventional town house entrance, or, in the years that the house served as the National Academy of Design, a conventional institutional entrance. Now that the house is reverting, after some time, to use as a private house, the proposal has been made to place a low wall near the entrance to serve as the sort of "buffer" that is a standard—and highly desirable—feature of the Manhattan town house typology. Such a buffer—sometimes a low-walled front garden, sometimes a low or a high stoop—provides a transitional space, of immense psychological benefit, between that which is fully public and that which is fully private. It is, indeed, an essential part of the genius of the Manhattan town house typology that this psychological and physical transition is handled so seamlessly. What then to do with a house that, for a very specific reason (i.e., to create an unusual vehicular entrance), omitted this standard feature when the house was first constructed?

The addition of this buffer seems to me an eminently reasonable thing to do, so long as it is done sensitively. I choose to work with the architects Zivkovic Connolly because I feel they are unusually sensitive to historic architecture in the classical style of 1083 Fifth Avenue. Having studied their proposed design for the low wall, I feel that it should be approved by the Community Board and by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

I do not feel that it in any way compromises the architectural integrity of Codman's design. What's more, I feel that it brings the house into a better contextual alignment with neighboring buildings. From an architectural and urbanistic perspective, it is a small thing. From a homeowner's perspective, it is a large thing. It represents no alteration to the house's fabric, and as such is consistent with historic preservation practice. I strongly urge its approval.

Sincerely,

Francis Morrone  
Architectural Historian/Preservation Consultant