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May 21, 2018

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Walt Whitman House
99 Ryerson Street, Brooklyn

Dear Chair Srinivasan and Commissioners:

We are writing to urge you to designate the Walt Whitman House a landmark.

Although altered, this house is one of only two known extant sites (the other being Pfaff's saloon in Manhattan), and the only residence, in New York City associated with the great American poet. It is also one of the earliest extant buildings in the city associated with someone who today would be considered an LGBTQ individual.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892), often proclaimed America's greatest poet, lived mostly in Brooklyn and Manhattan between 1823 and 1862. Whitman was intimately associated with Brooklyn, where he worked as an editor, journalist, and writer, and lived in at least 15 different residences.

Whitman lived in this house between May 1, 1855, and May 1, 1856, with his family, including his mother Louisa, father Walt Sr. (who died here in July 1855), and his four brothers. The Whitmans were the first owner-occupants of the recently completed building.

Whitman lived in this house when the first edition of his epochal first collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, was finished, and published and for sale in Brooklyn in June 1855. It was also while living here that he received his first favorable reviews of the work, which launched his new career as a poet. Today, *Leaves* is considered one of the most important American works ever written.

The significance of Whitman and his residence to world culture cannot be understated. Needless to say, as one of the first Americans to express same-sex desire in literature, Whitman has a special place in LGBTQ history and designating the house would help address the dearth of landmarked LGBTQ sites.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson
Speaker, NYC Council



Daniel Dromm
Chair, LGBT Caucus



Laurie A. Cumbo
Majority Leader, NYC Council



Ritchie Torres
Council Member, 15th District



Carlos Menchaca
Council Member, 38th District



Jimmy Van Bramer
Council Member, 26th District

cc:

Sarah Carroll
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