



**Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation**

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**TESTIMONY OF THE  
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
REGARDING PROPOSED INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF THE  
Germania Fire Insurance Company Building  
357 Bowery, Manhattan  
June 23, 2009**

Thank you commissioners for the opportunity to testify before you today. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation strongly supports the designation of the former Germania Fire Insurance Company Building, located at 357 Bowery, as an individual landmark.

The Germania Fire Insurance Company Building stands as an important reminder of the immigrant culture that reshaped the East Village in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The architect of the structure, Carl Pfeiffer, arrived from Germany as part of the influx of immigrants that gave the neighborhood its moniker of Kleindeutschland, and which produced a flood of skilled and well-educated Germans to the United States. Many of these immigrants established themselves in the East Village through a variety of businesses and cultural institutions. The Germania Fire Insurance Company Building recalls the height of Kleindeutschland, when over 50,000 German immigrants lived and worked in the neighborhood.

Completed in 1870, the building remains a well-preserved example of the Second Empire style. Representative of the economic prosperity of the period and viewed as more progressive than the Greek and Gothic Revival styles, Second Empire was a popular choice for both homes and commercial structures. The building's largely-intact façade, still bearing a faded advertisement, features the circular-headed windows and embellished brickwork that is typical of the style. Like Pfeiffer's other buildings, such as the landmarked Metropolitan Savings Bank and Hamilton Park Cottage, the Germania Fire Insurance Building's symmetry and dignified proportions set it apart its neighbors.

Thus, we thank the Commission for recognizing The Germania Fire Insurance Company Building as valuable reminder of the East Village's heritage and we urge the Commission to move forward with designation.

Thank you.