

September 1, 2016

Chairman Scott Benson and members of the Board
Historic Preservation Board
389 Congress St.
Portland, Maine 04101

cc: Deb Andrews

Chair Benson and members of the Portland Historic Preservation Board:

We are asking you for the opportunity to address you at your next meeting on the status of Fort Sumner Park on North St. We are seeking historic landmark status for the park.

While the park is highly valued for its scenic overlook, sunsets, and view of Mt. Washington, its historic importance as the site of Fort Sumner is little known. The view is integral to the location and function of the Fort, commissioned in 1794 by George Washington. The sweeping view provided a vantage point for monitoring the waterfront at Back Cove, and was part of a system later connected to Fort Allen on the Eastern Promenade.

The Fort's history includes a commandant who resigned his command to work for the British in the early 1800's and, after its decommissioning, its use as a site for the first integrated gym in the United States by entrepreneur John Neal. It is believed to be the location of the "sunrise and sunset gun on the hill" referred to by Longfellow in his poem, *My Lost Youth*.

We would like to see the magnificent view preserved in entirety, the experience of visiting it undiminished, and signage providing the Fort's history and points of interest in the view located in the park. We are very concerned by the impact of development on the park, and note that a piece of the park appears to have been conveyed recently to a private development on Sheridan St.

We are therefore requesting Commission members initiate the process of granting historic status to the Park.

Sincerely,

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