

# LANDMARKS OBSERVER

*Historic character enriches our lives*



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Rachel Ambrose

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Greater Portland  
Landmarks



## LETTER FROM SARAH HANSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Sarah atop a giant bunny at Henry's Rabbit Ranch on historic Route 66, Illinois

### Many, many thanks.

**W**HAT A YEAR IT'S BEEN! I am so thankful to have the opportunity to work with an extraordinary team of people here at Landmarks: staff, trustees, members, docents and partners.

When reflecting on our work this past year, I continually return to something Julie Larry, Director of Advocacy, wrote in one of our many Munjoy Hill Historic District advocacy statements:

Our organization was founded on the belief that Portland's future is brighter if it builds upon the rich social, cultural, and architectural character of its past. Historic Preservation is not about freezing any community in time. Rather, historic preservation looks to preserve enough of the built environment that establishes a city or a neighborhood's sense of place while accom-

modating new development and the needs of contemporary life.

Greater Portland continues to face significant development pressures. We strongly believe that balance is essential on any path forward. We have a responsibility to protect what we know to be meaningful chapters in our story. We do this as we continue to look for solutions to challenges presented by development, a changing climate, and our region's need for inclusive housing solutions.

I see our work as an opportunity to celebrate our home's vibrancy: its unique neighborhoods, small businesses and new residents; to advocate for smart preservation policy throughout the region; to foster thoughtful discussion about climate change impacts, quality of place, and affordable housing; and to tell the rich social, cultural, and architectural story of greater Portland. We'll do this through collaboration and balance. We'll do this together. ■

**T**HIS FALL WE HAD TO WISH A VERY FOND FAREWELL to two members of our amazing team: **Chloe Martin**, Office & Communications Coordinator, and **Courtney Walker**, Development Assistant. Chloe is now working with Gardner Real Estate Group, but thankfully joined the Marker Committee and has promised to continue to bake for us. Courtney was offered the opportunity to become the full-time Executive Director of the Friends of the Eastern Promenade, and we are delighted she's now one of our local partners.

I am excited to welcome two new staff members, **Kate Burch**, our new Office & Communications Manager and **Dianne Manning**, our new Development Assistant. Kate joins us from the Philanthropy Department at the Portland Museum of Art, and Dianne has previously worked with Friends of Fort Williams Park. They both have a delightful sense of humor and adventure, and we're very lucky they've joined Landmarks.

## PRESERVATION UPDATES



BY JULIE LARRY

**F**OR THE PAST TWO YEARS, Greater Portland Landmarks has partnered with local residents to advocate for a Munjoy Hill historic district to manage change and loss of historic character in a rapidly transforming neighborhood. Only five Munjoy Hill properties are currently protected by the city's preservation ordinance.

The proposed Munjoy Hill Historic District will protect more than 350 neighborhood residences and commercial buildings, as well as six individually designated historic residences that fall

outside the district's boundaries. Throughout the designation process, Portland has successfully balanced the preservation of historic resources with economic growth and the development of new housing units. The proposed historic district will conserve a neighborhood that has been home to generations of families that helped to shape the city.

The Munjoy Hill Historic District was approved unanimously by Portland's Historic Preservation Board in late November and is currently under review by the Planning Board, before moving to City Council for final consideration. ■

## CHANGING PORTLAND: New construction abounds around the city



Center Street Hotel construction begins.



Construction of the Free Street Apartments is underway.

The Portland Company's redevelopment is under review.



Maine Medical Center's new employee parking garage.



Hobson's Landing at the former Rufus Deering Lumber Co. takes shape.

### Greater Portland Landmarks



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# Places in Peril

BY JULIE LARRY

IN SEPTEMBER, LANDMARKS ANNOUNCED THE 5TH ANNUAL PLACES IN PERIL LIST, calling attention to threats facing historically significant properties in greater Portland. Places in Peril is the only endangered properties program in Maine to focus on a local region. There are approximately sixty such statewide and local programs in the United States.

Through the Places in Peril program, Landmarks intends to proactively work with property owners to protect these significant buildings for the future, so they can continue to play a vital role in defining greater Portland's architectural landscape.

Gorham Academy Building



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, the **Gorham Academy Building (1805-1806)** is one of the first six academies incorporated in the then District of Maine by the General Court of Massachusetts. Although the building is occupied, it is threatened by a lack of maintenance and a

proposal for a large addition on the rear of the building as recommended in the 2019 University of Southern Maine Gorham Campus Master Plan. We are pleased to report that the University awarded a contract this Fall to a preservation architect to develop plans for the building's preservation.

Deering Farmhouse



The **Deering Farmhouse (c1807)** on Brighton Avenue in Portland is the last remaining structure of the more than 200-acre James Deering Estate (1803) and is believed to be the last Federal period farmhouse within the city.

The building was recently determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but has no current local protection from demolition or alterations. It is currently vacant. The University's 2019 Portland Campus Master Plan proposes to use the site as the location for a new graduate school and would require relocation or demolition of the historic building.

Historic Fire Stations



Most **Historic Fire Stations in greater Portland** were built for a different age of firefighting. Many fire stations face challenges including consolidation, changes in firefighting technology, and insufficient staff accommodations. With narrow doors and short bays that cannot hold new equipment, several departments plan to close, relocate, or demolish stations to construct larger buildings.

Several historic greater Portland fire stations are threatened by closure. In South Portland, the fire station at 360 Main Street will be demolished due to mold, lack of living space, insufficient bay width, and inability to expand the building to accommodate new

equipment. The new replacement station will result in the closure of the engine house in Thornton Heights (1939). In Portland, an October 2017 study recommended closing or replacing stations in East Deering (1957), North Deering (1966), Riverton (1971), Rosemont (1951), and the Central Station on Congress Street (1924/5). The Bramhall Station on Congress Street (1964) was also recommended for a major remodel or closure. In Westbrook, one closed station may soon have a new life as Discover Downtown Westbrook recently presented a plan to turn the vacant downtown fire station into an artist space and visitor center.



The **Historic Coastal Communities of Greater Portland** contain many treasured prehistoric and historic resources that are at high risk from storm surges and rising sea levels. At-risk heritage sites include historic seaside communities, residential neighborhoods, wharves, forts, lighthouses, and 2,000 documented shell midden sites along the coast that contain cultural artifacts and valuable information about prehistoric food processing.

Already, greater Portland communities are experiencing recurrent flooding and an increase in storm intensity. These impacts are projected to increase as the Gulf of Maine warms and expands. The continued damage and destruction of local historic landmarks and sites will be detrimental to greater Portland's personality and sense of collective history. The potential loss of archaeological sites is both academically and culturally devastating as information about Maine's prehistory and early colonialism will wash away, and Indigenous communities will lose more fragments of their ancestors' landscapes. The loss of heritage sites due to climate change will also cause substantial revenue losses, as our regional economy depends so heavily on historic districts, properties, and parks to attract tourism, new residents, and new businesses. ■

# PLACES IN PERIL UPDATES

**S**INCE THE FIRST PLACES IN PERIL LIST in 2012, Landmarks has assigned endangered status to 30 properties. Seven of these properties are now protected or saved, and six others have made progress toward preservation. Landmarks continues to monitor the remaining properties, in hopes that they will be preserved in the future.

## Saved!



### Grand Trunk Office Building, Portland

Rehabilitated by Gorham Savings Bank and awarded a Greater Portland Landmarks preservation award in 2018.

### Sacred Heart Church, Portland

Exceeded their fundraising goals to stabilize the bell tower and make interior repairs caused by water infiltration.

### Bowery Beach School, Cape Elizabeth

Completed their fundraising campaign for exterior repairs to the former schoolhouse.

## Protected

### House Island

A 2015 historic district ensures changes to the north and south ends of the island (now under separate ownership) are consistent with the historic character of the fort and former immigration station.

### South Portland's Historic Resources

In 2019, zoning changes in South Portland included an incentive for property owners to rehabilitate existing historic buildings by allowing applicants to seek alternative uses compatible with their zoning district. The changes also included a new 90-day demolition delay for properties built before 1941, along with buildings identified as historic by the City's Arts and Historic Preservation Committee—approximately 40% of the properties in South Portland.



PHOTO: COREY TEMPLETON

### Portland Company, Portland

In 1974, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission determined the complex to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its industrial significance, but it was never actually nominated, nor designated a City landmark. A 2016 local historic district protects a portion of the former industrial complex and ensures new development is compatible with the character of the historic core.

### Maine State Armory, South Portland

Although the drill hall was lost, the head house was preserved and rehabilitated, and is now a convenience store and karate studio.

## Lost

### Portland Company Building Nos. 1, 5, 7, 10

The 2016 historic district only protected 7 of 16 buildings of Portland's last intact industrial complex.

## Places In Progress



PHOTO: COREY TEMPLETON

### Lincoln Park, Portland

Thanks to Friends of Lincoln Park and the City of Portland, the French fountain has been restored, the paths have been repaved throughout, the park has new benches, and the gardens are revitalized.

### Masonic Temple, Portland

Interior rehabilitation is in process to make more of the stunning interiors open to the public.

### Eastern Cemetery, Portland

The cemetery is under the stewardship of Spirits Alive, a vibrant and active group that continues to make outstanding progress repairing the cemetery's weathered and damaged stones.

### Hay & Peabody Clock, Portland

New owners The Francis have sent the clock to Thomaston, ME, where it is currently being restored by expert Jonathan Taggart. State of Maine Clock and Watch Collectors (Chapter 89, National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors) are restoring the clockworks.

### Abyssinian Meeting House, Portland

Preservation experts Barba + Wheelock recently completed a Comprehensive Master Plan to rehabilitate the Abyssinian. Work is nearly ready to begin on restoring the main floor, which includes structural stabilization and flooring repairs.

## Still in Peril

### African American Resources on Munjoy Hill, Portland

Some buildings would be protected by the proposed Munjoy Hill Historic District.



PHOTO: HILARY BASSETT

### Dunn Memorial Church, Portland

As recommended by an engineering report, the church has wrapped the bell tower to prevent stones from falling. Fundraising continues to stabilize the tower and make repairs.

### Union Station Clock, Portland

With the city's renovation plans for Congress Square, the Union Station Clock will need a new home. Perhaps it can be included in future plans for a new Amtrak station!



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# WHO WE ARE: Rachel Ambrose



## TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND GROWING UP IN FRIENDSHIP, MAINE.

**Rachel:** I didn't really grow up in Friendship year-round, I'm a summer jerk, part of the sixth generation to summer in Friendship. My dad worked for Corning Glass Works and we moved a ton. I was born in Corning, New York, then we went to England. And then New Jersey. And then I went to college in Vermont. And then I moved to San Francisco for 15 years.

## HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN PRESERVATION AND HISTORIC PLACES?

**Rachel:** I've always been very interested in design and architecture and love to be able to see the work of the hand. Having lived in lots of different places growing up, I appreciate when communities have a sense of place so you know you're there and not Anywhere, USA. I think architecture does a lot to create that sense of place and old houses just have the richness I crave. I co-own a 1903 classic Maine cottage in Friendship and my business is located in a wonderful 1890 factory. If these walls could talk!

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START HOME REMEDIES?

**Rachel:** When I was in college, my parents moved to Maine and bought a woodworking company called Bradco



Chair Company. I was in San Francisco and all my friends were outgrowing their college furniture and asking, "can I get a table from your dad?" I decided to open a store specializing in things from Maine, including tables and chairs from Bradco, case pieces from Maine Cottage, vintage items from summer antiquing trips, etc.

When I moved to Portland in 2004, there was no home decor fabric store and I knew I wasn't the only one driving to Boston for a decent selection. I wrote up a business plan to sell fabric and furniture and have an onsite work room where employees are sewing and re-upholstering. I got a big loan, found a wonderful building to rent and set up shop. In April 2020 it'll be 10 years in business!

## WHAT DO YOU FIND ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO THE GREATER PORTLAND AREA?

**Rachel:** People have a very good feeling about Maine because they went to camp here or school here or were lucky enough

to grow up here. The quality of life is high and that's obvious to everyone. For me, part of the reason for that high quality of life is the character of the place.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN LANDMARKS?

**Rachel:** I have been a member for a long time. I always really liked the Galas because they were in cool houses that I wanted to get into. A lot of my customers are involved. I was honored to be asked to join the Board. It's been fascinating and fun.

## WHAT DOES PRESERVATION MEAN IN GREATER PORTLAND TODAY?

**Rachel:** I think change is energizing and good and it's going to happen whether we like it or not. We need groups like Landmarks to make we're managing change while keeping the character of our fair city. If we weren't rehabbing and creating housing for the people who want to live here, then I wouldn't have any customers. They've all got windows that need to be dressed. They need a new couch. A thriving city should have lots of different types of people to create layers of character and community. Architecture and design are a big part of that.

## WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

**Rachel:** I'm trying to brand the neighborhood where Home Remedies is located: Bridge Side. That's what all the cool kids are calling this 'hood and great things are happening here. ■

# Historic Marker Program

BY JULIE LARRY

LAUNCHED IN 1975, the Historic Marker Program is one of Landmarks' oldest initiatives, providing a visible way to show pride in our historic homes and communities. As part of this year's Marker Program relaunch, the following markers were presented at Landmarks' Annual Meeting in September:

### 234 STATE STREET

*George S. Hunt Block 1881*

Located in the Deering Historic District, this brick duplex was built by the founder of Forest City Sugar Refining Co. His wife Augusta Hunt was the first woman to vote in Portland.

### 205 OCEAN AVENUE

*Franklin Morse House c1878*

Franklin Morse was a partner in Cooper and Morse Provisions, and President of the Zenith Dry Plate Company (manufacturer of photographic plates).

### 48 STATE STREET

*Jacob S. Winslow Block 1889*

This apartment block was developed by a sea captain turned shipyard owner.

### 89 WEST STREET

*John W. Deering House 1893*

This home was designed by John Calvin Stevens and built for John W. Deering, a former mayor of Portland (1883, 1885) who was also a lumber merchant and sea captain.



205 Ocean Avenue, Portland



Owner James Fisk researched the history of 11 Cushman Street.

### 11 CUSHMAN STREET

*James Berry – Asa C. Mitchell House 1863*

The dwelling was built for James Berry and purchased a few years after its construction by Asa Mitchell, a railroad engineer, and his wife Julia.

### 74 STEVENS AVENUE

*Edith B. & Thomas A. O'Brien House 1916*

This house was built for Edith and Thomas when they were newlyweds and new parents, next door to Thomas' parents.

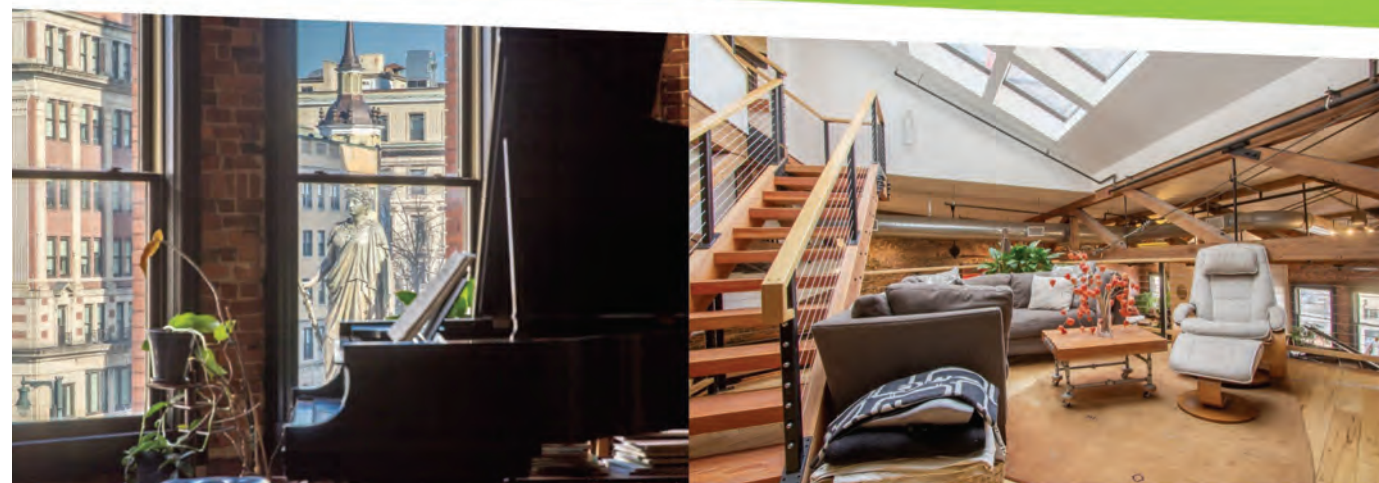


The Historic Marker Program celebrates the rich architectural fabric of greater Portland that we work to preserve and protect. Property owners can celebrate the historical or architectural significance of their property with a historic marker that includes the property's name, biographical information about the original or significant owner, and the original date of construction.

Interested in having a marker on your home or obtaining a replacement marker? Visit [portlandlandmarks.org/historic-marker-program](http://portlandlandmarks.org/historic-marker-program) or give us a call at 207.774.5561 to learn more.

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SUMMER IN REVIEW



PHOTO: HEATH PALEY

View of Portland looking down Congress Street from the top of the Observatory.

BY ALESSA WYLIE

THE 2019 TOUR SEASON WAS A VERY BUSY ONE. We welcomed 19 new docents from the Portland History Docents program, with 12 volunteering for the Observatory, 5 for walking tours, and 2 for the Customs House. That brings our total number of docents to 72—amazing! Here are some more highlights from the season:

**Portland Observatory**

This year we hosted two interns from Putting History to Work, a grant-funded student internship program via the University of Maine System.

Haylee Dahlborg is a Secondary Education Major with a concentration in History. She's from Gorham and studies at the University of Southern Maine.

Colt Schell is a history major with a folklore minor. Colt was born in Dallas, Texas but now lives in Sanford and goes to school at the University of Maine in Orono.

Haylee and Colt were great additions to the Observatory this season and they also created a very fun *I Spy* game for kids. We were fortunate to have them and wish them well in their studies.

This year we welcomed 20,393 visitors to the Observatory! Thank you to Site Managers Karen Hamilton, Jessica Graham, Jessica Vogel, Anastasia Azenaro-Moore, and Stephanie Nichols, and the 61 active docents who gave 1,969 volunteer hours. It's because of this great team that we consistently get reviews like this one:

*This place is a MUST visit when you come to Portland! You will be amazed with the craftsmanship and the passion that went into building and keeping this Observatory in operation. Talk to the folks that work here. The sights from the top are breathtaking!*



Colt Schell and Haylee Dahlborg.

**Walking Tours and Customs House Tours**

This year we had more Walking Tour Docents than we've had in many years. Thanks to their enthusiasm and interest, we expanded our walking tours to include a brand new West End tour, *The Western Promenade in the Gilded Age*. This tour explores the family and business connections of the men and women who inhabited the neighborhood. Special thanks to Nancy Ellenberger for all her work on this new tour. This tour joins our long-running *Homes of Portland's Golden Age* and the returning *Neighborhood Stories: Portland's India Street*. This season we also saw increased interest from private groups for walking tours. At the U.S. Customs House, we welcomed individual visitors and expanded our private tours with groups from Portland, Kennebunk, and Gorham as well as high school kids from Brunswick.



Docent Kathi Perkins with Brunswick High School students at the Customs House.

While our tour numbers for walking tours and the Customs House were down just a little from last year, we see the trend for the private tours as something to explore. And, because of our enthusiastic and flexible docents this is something that we might expand next year.

All and all it was a great year for Education at Greater Portland Landmarks, thanks to all our docents, staff, and visitors who made it so wonderful. Looking forward to 2020! ■

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**LANDMARKS PEOPLE AND PLACES**



Firefighters from our sister city of Archangel, Russia visit the Observatory with their Portland colleagues.



Board President Ed Gardner at Landmarks' Annual Meeting in October.



MECA MFA candidate Rachel York used the Observatory for her site-specific performance *the grace that beckons, the joy that kills*.



Landmarks staff attended a packed Planning Board workshop on the proposed Munjoy Hill Historic District.



Our festive holiday window display at the Safford House.

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– Craig and Libby Owens, 104 West Street Portland, Maine '2007'

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