

Public Statement:

In support of the inclusion of Sandlass House as a contributing structure within the boundaries of the Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground National Historic Landmark district which encompasses the Sandlass House so that the building may be eligible for the National Historic Preservation Act Section 111 leasing program.

Provided to: Fort Hancock Advisory Committee, meeting on Wednesday, October 19, 2022.

From:

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Statement:

The Sandlass House, a locally significant building in the history at the late 1880s Highland Beach Resort and included in the Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook, is being destroyed by the bureaucratic fumbblings and contradictory policies of the National Park Service and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Both agencies have failed to recognize that places of local significance, such as Sandlass House, are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and hence, for review of the effects of undertakings by the National Park Service, in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106.

Avoidance of recognizing the property's eligibility for the National Register has delayed the opportunities for preservation through the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 111 leasing authority. Because of such inactions, the National Park Service is guilty of demolition by neglect of the Sandlass House, and of failure to meet its responsibilities as steward of our American history.

Many residents and interested citizens have sent letters and petitions to have the Sandlass House included in the contributing structures list (CSL) and, thereby, in the Section 111 leasing program. The return to the Sandy Hook CSL in the Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground Historic District would make it eligible for the leasing program authorized in the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 111, specifically to help federal agencies find income-producing ways to keep historic properties not needed for their mission preserved. Informal offers by National Park Service staff to transfer and move the Sandlass House to another site is not a viable alternative due to lack of publically controlled land within the area in which the house has historic significance.

The question that the Fort Hancock Advisory Committee should be asking of the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service is: **How does the American public, including citizens of New Jersey, benefit by the National Park Service allowing the Sandlass House, a historic element in the GNRA, to deteriorate?** Why are the NPS & SHPO vacillating as to whether the Sandlass House should be included in the historic district? Why are these agencies thwarting the possibility of preservation of the Sandlass House through the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 111?

Thank you,
Constance Werner Ramirez, PhD