

I am new to the “Sandlass House” preservation discussion, but not since my service with the Ellis Island Restoration - National Park Service Project as Architectural Studio Director at Beyer Blinder Belle, Architects, have I seen such grassroots support and detailed documentation come to the forefront in any preservation effort...

I say this as a Historic Structures and Landmarked Sites Architect with over 45 years of experience in the profession. My professional practice as a Historic Preservation Architect has been recognized by NJ SHPO, the NJ State Assembly, the American Institute of Architects, the US Department of Interior.

I have also been privileged to be the recipient of both the Federal and Presidential Design Achievement Awards, which were presented at White House Ceremonies.

The NJ American Institute of Architects suggested I be contacted to advise the citizenry and municipal leadership in examining the historic significance and imposing threat to the “Sandlass House” located at the entrance of the Sandy Hook/Fort Hancock Post.

The “Sandlass House” and site was thought to be protected in that it fell within the Sandy Hook/Fort Hancock boundaries by the National Park Service. Recent clarifications unveiled that it was, in fact, excluded or overlooked and determined not to be a contributing structure and therefore not landmarked and now scheduled for demolition, subject to the receipt of demolition funding.

The Sandlass family was also informed by NJ SHPO staff that the structure had no significant architectural merit.

The explanation by SHPO staff was an expedient answer and somewhat dismissive

without further consideration to the significance of the site.

What is historically important here is the **social significance** of the “**site**” as being key to the beginnings of seaside tourism for the common man at the Jersey Shore as early as the 1870’s, while shore tourism was often viewed and associated as something available only to the very wealthy. Sandlass House remains as an important milestone of the past shore tourism with ties to rail development, steamboat travel and public beach access.

The structure, although relocated off the main entry road by the Army for logistical purposes does not make the underlying story nor the site less significant.

In my past experience, historically sensitive buildings without extraordinary or rare architectural detailing nor craftsmanship have been designated historic and landmarked on the Historic Register nonetheless.

A specific example can be found in “**The Fisk Chapel**”, located in nearby Fairhaven. The relatively small, non-descript wood frame structure was moved to an available site several hundred feet away from its original position to accommodate local development needs. The relocation did not reduce the historic significance of what the structure represented in that the Chapel which was linked to early Afro-American community seeking refuge during and immediately after the AMERICAN CIVIL WAR conflict...*but now a local cultural and community use center.*

That **story** is what made that structure so **significant**. The wood frame building was not a piece of masterful architecture nor an example of woodworking artisanship but was landmarked and protected without reservation. An ACTION PLAN was prepared and detailed required stabilization, various necessary repairs and cited the potential public benefit.

The steps taken included a “VISIONING SESSION” by a steering group comprised of end users and local leadership. Strategies were developed with the guidance of preservation professionals and recommendations with specifics included in the final “ACTION PLAN”.

I urge and recommend that the proposed demolition be delayed, at the very least, while a preliminary application for historic site significance be prepared and submitted to the NJ SHPO for historic designation *re-consideration*. In the interim, local funding support and immediate stabilization efforts will be explored and addressed.

Sandlass House definitely warrants a second and third look!

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