



Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association

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January 27, 2010

Ms. Mary Beth Betts
Director of Research
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10007

Re: The Fort Independence Historic District Application

Dear Ms. Betts:

Attached please find a current “Request for Evaluation” form for the above stated area. As part and parcel of this application, we hereby submit copies of previously filed papers concerning landmarking for “The Fort Independence Historic District Application” as re-submitted March 2004, as well as the originally submitted December 1997 by the Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Improvement Association (FIPNA). We have never received a response from your agency concerning these applications.

UPDATE: At this time, we would like to update our address and contact information as listed above on our letterhead, and request an evaluation and calendaring of this issue for review by your agency. Please change the contact address to:

Ms. Lynn Schwarz
Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association
3332 Giles Place
Bronx, NY 10463

HISTORIC DISTRICT SIGNIFICANCE: For centuries, the Fort Independence Historic District has played a special role in the development of our heritage in many areas. As you will discover, this area has contributed many levels of historical significance to the character and heritage of our nation, state and city.

It begins before the Revolutionary War Era with an Indian Village resting place at the corner of Giles and Fort Independence Street, “where a small shell-pocket in the sidewalk gave an indication of a native resting-place alongside the old trail.”¹ It continues with the Revolutionary War to the battlefield defending King’s Bridge (Fort Independence) and the site of the farm and home of General Richard Montgomery, the nation’s first war martyr, whose cottage, of Dutch architecture, stood north of Heath Avenue at 3489 Fort Independence Street.²

In 1877, F. L. Olmstead petitioned the city to preserve the beauty of certain portions of the newly annexed 23rd and 24th wards by creating curvilinear streets rather than a grid. The successful application to place the Jerome Park Reservoir on the State and National Historic Register, mentioned the significance of this design: “It is clear that Olmsted’s intent in providing neighborhoods like Kingsbridge Heights with narrow, curvilinear streets was to assure that they would maintain their residential character, discourage inappropriate development, and preserve their existing natural beauty.”³

In the 1920’s, the Sholom Aleichem Houses, one of the city’s first experimental co-ops, was built here. “The founders of the co-ops saw themselves as the first step in the transformation to a better world...They were built around courtyards and were near parks. Light and cross-ventilation were very important to people coming from tenements... They believed that the physical circumstances under which people live encourage collective action and identity, so these were intended to be more than affordable housing.”⁴ The Sholom Aleichem is located at the corner of Giles Place and Sedgwick Avenue and is eligible for the State and National Register.

There are many more historically significant areas described in our attachments.

BOUNDARY: At this time the boundary includes both sides of the all streets starting at the most southern point of Fort Independence Street at Sedgwick Avenue going north and westward

¹ Bolton, Reginald Pelham (1922) *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis*. Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York. (p. 116)

² Peterson, A. Everett (1923) *Landmarks of New York*, City History Club of New York., p. 125

³ Application to the State and National Register nominating Jerome Park Reservoir, (1997-8) section 8, page 4-5 - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/historic-JPR.pdf>

⁴ *New York Times*, November 4, 2004, A Historical Look Back At Working-Class Housing <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A02E3DB143CF934A35752C1A9629C8B63>

for the entire Fort Independence Street to Orloff Avenue, then northward along Orloff Avenue to Van Cortlandt Avenue West, then eastward to along Van Cortlandt Avenue West to Sedgwick Avenue, and southward along Sedgwick Avenue to Fort Independence Street, including all of both sides of Giles and Cannon Places. (see attached map)

DOCUMENTATION: Attached are articles from local newspapers and other significant papers. They are also available on our web page at: <http://www.fipna.org/2010/01/16/nyc-landmarks-preservation-commission/>. These papers constitute the application:

- I. **Fort Independence Historic District Application Cover** - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Fort-Independence-Historic-District-Application-Cover.pdf>
- II. **Photo Gallery FI Historic District** - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Photo-Gallery-FI-Historic-District.pdf>
- III. **Letters Fort Independence Historic** - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Letters-Fort-Ind-Historic.pdf>
- IV. **The Bronx In History Articles** - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/The-Bronx-In-History-Articles.pdf>
- V. **Articles and Notices Fort Independence** - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Articles-and-Notices-Fort-Independence.pdf>
- VI. **Excerpts from the document “historic JPR” submitted to State and National Register**, go to section 8, page 4-5 - <http://www.fipna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/historic-JPR.pdf>. Also find Jerome Park Reservoir Preservation Report (click TABLE OF CONTENTS) -- <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/lehman/preservationreport/index.html>

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please review and calendar this as soon as possible. We will call you next week to follow up on any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Lynn Schwarz
FIPNA Vice President

Kristin Hart
FIPNA Secretary

c: Bronx CB 8
Attachments