

# The Way We Were

The Story Behind 118 Congress Street  
Portland, Maine



118 on Munjoy Hill Condominiums  
2015

# 118

ON MUNJOY HILL



Portland living at its peak.



December 2016

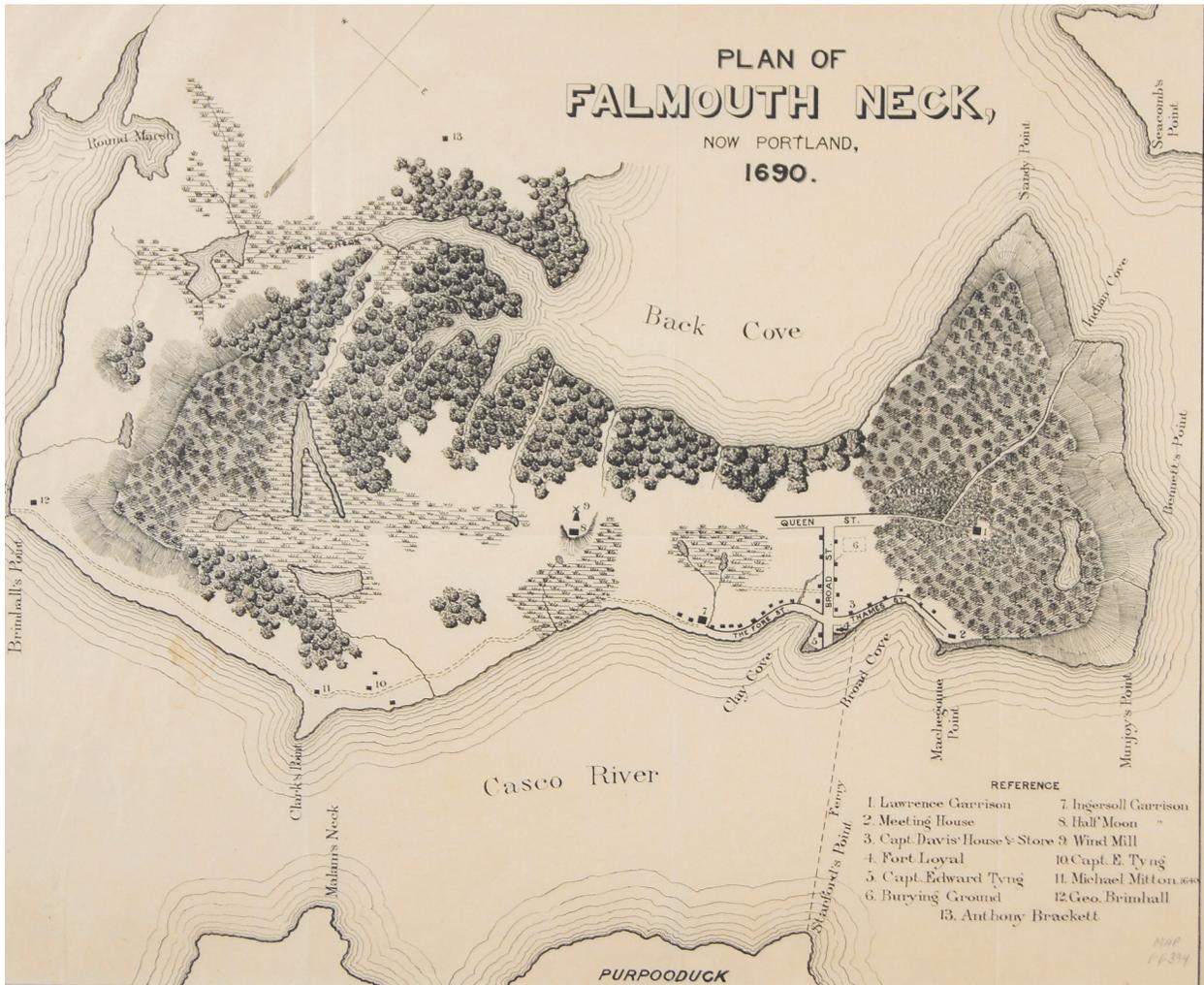
We would like to express profound gratitude to Janet Theriault who compiled *The Way We Were*, the history of 118 Congress Street. Her love of history, strong writing skills and, by nature, being a champion for details and accuracy were much appreciated.

We also would like to give a “tip of the hat” to some of the nonprofits that are integral to the preservation of the Munjoy Hill neighborhood: Maine Historical Society, Greater Portland Landmarks, St. Lawrence Arts and Friends of Eastern Promenade. They also contribute to the day-to-day quality of life that is created via their programming, exhibits, and the commitment of their staff, volunteers and boards.

Susan Morris and Chip Newell  
NewHeight Group Developers and Residents  
118 on Munjoy Hill Condominiums

# The Way We Were

The property at 118 Congress Street has seen many changes through the years....



1690

Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society

Early settlers to the area in 1632—George Munjoy arrived in 1659 just after the peninsula was named “Falmouth Neck”—were met with staunch and deadly resistance by Native Americans and by the French, forcing abandonment from 1690 to 1716. A new town was organized in 1718 named “Falmouth,” consisting of the peninsula of Falmouth Neck and considerable neighboring property. In 1775, British warships destroyed nearly three-quarters of the town. Falmouth Neck separated from Falmouth and was renamed “Portland” in 1786.



**1845**

Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society

By 1807, Portland was Maine’s most important shipping and trading port and the sixth largest commercial port in the nation. The waterfront, with its deep and safe harbor, allowed large ships to enter and seek shelter while they loaded or unloaded goods and people. That year, the Portland Observatory was completed under the direction of Captain Lemuel Moody, just steps away from the future site of 118 Congress Street. The Observatory provided an efficient means of monitoring and identifying inbound ships and communicating that fact via signal flag groupings to merchants and dockworkers on the waterfront. At the base of the tower, Captain Moody built stables, a banquet hall, a dance hall and a bowling alley. The Observatory attracted visitors from the very beginning. The Moody family deeded the building to the City of Portland in 1938. Following various renovations in the 1900s, the Observatory was re-opened in 2000, having been saved as the last remaining maritime tower in the U.S.



*1870s*

At the top of Congress Street on Munjoy Hill in the 1870s: the Portland Observatory, Engine Co. #2 Firehouse (1864–1976) and the Congress Street Methodist Church (1868–1974). Just beyond the Church, out of view, is St. Lawrence Street—then the 118 Congress Street property. Most of Munjoy Hill was developed between the Civil War and 1900 for working-class families, many of them Italian, Irish, Scandinavian and Jewish immigrants. They worked on the nearby docks, the Grand Trunk Railroad or at the Portland Company complex, which built locomotives for the railroad, according to State Historian Earle Shettleworth in a 2013 Portland Press Herald article “Looking Up on the Hill.”



***St. Lawrence Church, ca. 1897***

66 Congress Street.

Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society



***Engine No. 2, ca. 1898***

Congress Street taken July 2, 1898 and decorated for the Independence Day holiday. The Portland Observatory is visible beside the Fire House.

Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society



***Congress Street on Munjoy Hill, ca. 1910***

View of the Portland Observatory and adjacent buildings.

Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society



*View from Portland Observatory, ca. 1895*  
Facing southwest, with Congress Street on the right.  
Source: Collections of Maine Historical Society



*View from Portland Observatory, ca. 1900*  
Facing south toward the waterfront.  
Source: Collections of Maine Maritime Museum



*S.L. Carleton House ca. 1850–1914*

Located on the very site of 118 Congress Street, at the corner of Congress and St. Lawrence Streets, this mansion was designed by Irish architect Henry Rowe, who also designed the Gothic House on Spring Street in Portland. The story goes that the house was auctioned for back taxes of \$15.60 in 1852. Daguerreotypist Samuel L. Carleton was the highest bidder. Carleton resided in the home—which became known as the “Carleton Castle”—until his death at age 84 in 1908. His widow, Mrs. Caroline E. Carleton, continued living there until 1912, after which the building was vacant until torn down in 1914. *Portland Evening Express* columnist Harold Boyle noted in his December 5, 1981 column “Express Scrapbook” that the mansion “was almost as well known as the Portland Observatory up to World War I. Built like an (sic) European castle with tall towers and a ‘widow’s walk,’ it was easily one of the best-known landmarks on Munjoy Hill.”



*1924*

At some point after the demolition of the “Carleton Castle” in 1914, 118 Congress Street became the site of one of Munjoy Hill’s first filling stations, owned by Standard Oil Company of New York (Socony). This photo was taken in 1924 as part of a city-wide tax reassessment.

A 1924 ad for Socony products notes, “The Veteran Motorist says:--‘Play Square with your Motor.’ All good motors are silent. They never speak out nor complain except when they are abused. And then they do complain. Loud and long. They miss and sputter, knock and pound. After all, they have certain rights; just like people, they must have the proper care....It is only fair both to them and you to use the proper oil and right gasoline. All oil is not oil that pours. All gas is not gas that fires. For your motor’s sake and your pocket-book do the square thing: Use Socony Motor Oil and Socony Gasoline, the balanced motor rations.”



*2014*

Throughout the mid- to late-1900s, 118 Congress Street was home to a series of businesses that served the Munjoy Hill community, such as small convenience and food stores. Names recalled by local residents include “Night Owl” and “Li'l Peach.” The well-known Whole Grocer opened in 1984 and moved to Marginal Way in 1998 to take advantage of more square footage. The Marginal Way store was eventually bought out by Whole Foods in 2007.

Later in 1998, the property was purchased by Theriault/Landmann Associates and became home to “TLA,” an architectural/design firm founded in the Portland area in 1990 and based on Munjoy Hill until 2014.



### ***118 on Munjoy Hill Condominiums, 2015***

In 2013, Ed Theriault of TLA joined forces with Chip Newell and Susan Morris of the NewHeight Group to develop “118 on Munjoy Hill,” with the goal of providing a new approach to condominium design and urban living in Portland.

Completed in 2015, 118 on Munjoy Hill is comprised of 12 residences and two commercial spaces. There are four different floor plans and four homes on each of three floors. All are designed to be spacious one level homes with at least two bedrooms plus a den and two and a half bathrooms. The layouts include open living areas, large outdoor decks accessed directly from the living space, and kitchens that are aesthetically appealing as well as functional. There is no wasted space and much storage is configured into each home. On the ground floor, there are indoor parking spots with either a car lift for a second vehicle or a private storage unit. Amenities include bike, kayak and ski storage, a dog wash, a shared workshop and a dedicated mailroom.

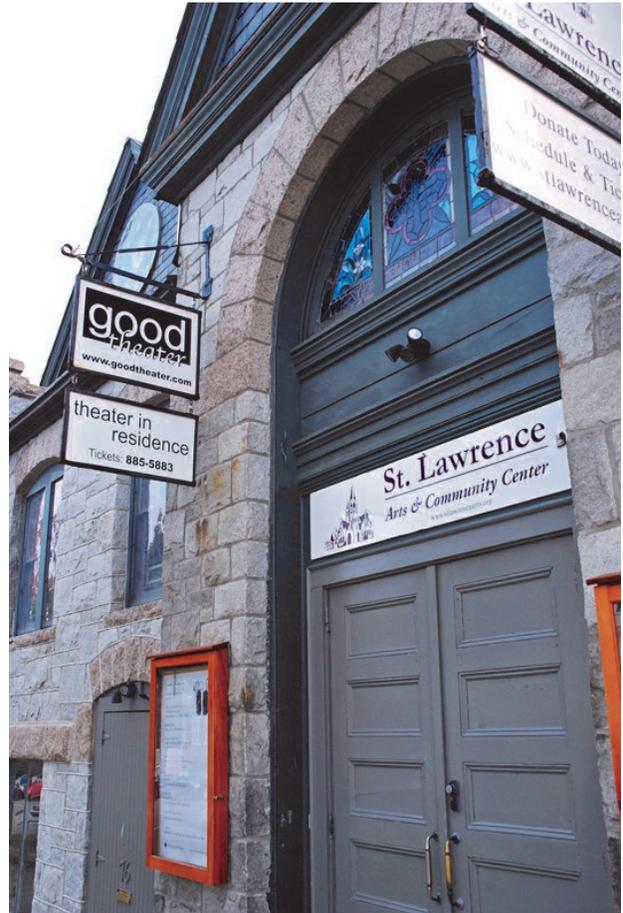
The 118 Team included NewHeight Group, TLA, Archetype Architects, Wright-Ryan Construction, and design advisor Ted Oldham. All share a commitment to Portland and the history of its neighborhoods.



*Eastern Promenade, 2015*



*Portland Observatory, 2015*



*St. Lawrence Arts, 2015*

## **Greater Portland Landmarks**

Founded in 1964, Greater Portland Landmarks' mission is to preserve and revitalize greater Portland's remarkable legacy of historic buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes and parks. Founded in response to the Urban Renewal movement and the demolition of Portland's historic Union Station (1888), Landmarks works to increase the public's connection to greater Portland's historic built environment by providing leadership, advocacy, educational publications, programs and resources, and by acting as steward of the Portland Observatory (1807) for future generations. Its goal is to save greater Portland's historic places through preservation and adaptive reuse while promoting creative new architecture that enhances historic neighborhoods.

[www.portlandlandmarks.org](http://www.portlandlandmarks.org)

## **Maine Historical Society**

The Maine Historical Society preserves the heritage and history of Maine: the stories of Maine people, the traditions of Maine communities, and the record of Maine's place in a changing world. Because an understanding of the past is vital to a healthy and progressive society, its goal is to collect, care for, and exhibit historical treasures; facilitate research into family, local, state, and national history; provide education programs that make history meaningful, accessible and enjoyable; and empower others to preserve and interpret the history of their communities and the state.

[www.mainehistory.org](http://www.mainehistory.org)

## **St. Lawrence Arts**

St. Lawrence Arts is owned and operated by the non-profit corporation Friends of the St. Lawrence, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization created in 1996 to restore the historic St. Lawrence Church and return it to use as an arts center. The St. Lawrence has a 3-part mission:

**Arts & Culture:** creating an affordable and accessible venue for a diverse offering of arts including but not limited to theater, dance, music, film, and workshops;

**Neighborhood & Community:** adding activity, entertainment, cultural enrichment, social interaction, renovation and investment that serves both the surrounding neighborhood of Munjoy Hill as well as the residents of Greater Portland;

**Historic Preservation:** rehabilitating this local and national landmark with the adaptive reuse of an arts center.

[www.stlawrencearts.org](http://www.stlawrencearts.org)

## **Friends of the Eastern Promenade**

Founded in 2006, Friends of the Eastern Promenade is the leading voice for Portland's signature park. Working with the City of Portland, Friends aims to protect the significant historic assets of the Eastern Promenade, while accommodating the existing and evolving needs of this popular public recreation space—all while remaining true to the vision of its original designers, the Olmsted Brothers firm.

Priorities of Friends include: waterfront access, Fort Allen Park restoration, East End boat storage, perennial beds, trail maintenance, and interpretive displays. Popular programs include: summer concerts, garden tours, April Stools Day & Community Cleanup.

[www.easternpromenade.org](http://www.easternpromenade.org)

## Notes:

Information and photographs used here came from perusing a variety of sources which are listed below. They are intended *only* to be used personally as an informal timeline of uses of the property at 118 Congress Street over the years.

## Photographs:

Plan of Falmouth Neck now Portland 1690  
(Maine Historical Society)

Birdseye view of Munjoy Hill and the Islands in  
1845 (Maine Historical Society)

Socony Gas Station at 118 Congress Street  
1924 (City of Portland Planning and  
Development)

[www.newhope360.com](http://www.newhope360.com)  
Whole Grocer Goes Whole Nine Yards for  
Health, Lynn Ginsburg 4/24/2008

[www.pressherald.com](http://www.pressherald.com)  
Looking up on the Hill, Tom Bell, 2/25/2013

[www.118onmunjoyhill.com](http://www.118onmunjoyhill.com)  
General Information

[www.stlawrencearts.org](http://www.stlawrencearts.org)  
St. Lawrence Timeline of Significant Events

[www.theodora.com/encyclopedia/p2/  
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Information about the Carleton House

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Hill had 'haunted' mansion, Harold Boyle,  
Portland Maine Evening Express, 12/5/1981

Mapping Portland 1690-1900, An Educational  
Packet and Lesson Plan by the Maine Historical  
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Then & Now: Portland by John Moon c. 2009,  
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Edmond Theriault, Theriault/Landmann  
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[www.cooperativemaine.blogspot.com](http://www.cooperativemaine.blogspot.com)  
Ghost of Whole Grocer still haunts foodies  
hereabouts, 4/2009

[www.bonanza.com/booths/pricedtocollect](http://www.bonanza.com/booths/pricedtocollect)  
1924 Socony Ad

[www.bangordailynews.com](http://www.bangordailynews.com)  
Photograph of Theriault/Landmann  
Associates, 118 Congress Street, Troy R.  
Bennett, Photographer

[www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)  
Information about Standard Oil Company  
and Socony

[www.darrensetlow.com](http://www.darrensetlow.com)  
Image of 118 on Munjoy Hill

[www.facebook.com/PortlandMaineHistory](http://www.facebook.com/PortlandMaineHistory)  
1786toPresent  
Photograph and information on Carleton  
House  
Photograph and information on 1870s  
Observatory/Fire Station/Church

[www.maineuide.com](http://www.maineuide.com)  
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[www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net)  
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Connolly



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