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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski introducing
**LD 762, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for the Maintenance,
Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites.**
Before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
April 10, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Senator Nicole Grohoski and I represent District 7, the majority of Hancock County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 762, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for the Maintenance, Preservation and Promotion of State Historic Sites.”

I am here today because many of our nearly 20 state-owned Historic Sites (see attached map) are in dire need of financial support to save them from falling into complete disrepair. The Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) oversees the Historic Sites but these sites are ineligible for all recent funding directed to State Parks for major renovation projects because they are not State Parks. Given that many of these sites were important sites during the Revolutionary War, now is a perfect time to invest in restoring them as we approach our nation’s 250th birthday (semiquincentennial!).

Two years ago, I presented a bill to the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry committee asking for \$1 million dollars to restore Fort George in Castine, which is a State Historic Site ([LD 791](#)¹). Through that effort, I learned about the great backlog of maintenance and deteriorating conditions at a number of our State Historic Sites, totaling an estimated \$32 million (see table with 2024 data from BPL).

Category	Total Est. Cost (in Millions)
Building Maintenance	\$ 3
New Construction	\$ 1
Repointing	\$ 11
Roofing	\$ 2
Piers and Floats	\$ 5
Museum Renovation	\$ 5
Concrete Repair	\$ 3
Retaining Walls	\$ 2
Total	\$ 32

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/billtracker/#Paper/SP0350?legislature=131>

Recognizing the broader issue, the ACF Committee unanimously amended the bill to provide \$1 million per year in funding to the entire State Historic Site system for the “ongoing maintenance, preservation and promotion of historic sites” – an amendment I wholeheartedly agreed with. LD 791 was approved by both chambers and went to the Appropriations Table.

Since the funding needed to address the maintenance backlog was really one-time in nature, a group of legislators representing nearly all of the State Historic Sites asked the Appropriations Committee to consider an alternate funding mechanism. On the last day the 131st Legislature met, LD 791 was amended in the Senate to instead add a transfer in the General Fund “cascade” of up to \$18 million to a non-lapsing carryover account. Basically, if the state ran a budget surplus, State Historic Sites would be funded. Unfortunately, the House did not take up the bill and the effort stalled... but I have not!

On April 1 of this year, I introduced a bill (LD 761) to the ACF Committee that picked up where that effort left off. The Committee went straight into work session and unanimously voted LD 761 “ought to pass.” This bill is very similar, the only difference is that it seeks funding via a general fund bond issue. My goal in introducing two bills was to give your committee options for how to address the maintenance backlog at State Historic Sites, without a General Fund appropriation.

While the overall need is estimated at \$32 million, both bills propose an \$18 million investment (just over half). The goal is to stretch state funds since some of the restoration work may be eligible for a 1-1 match with other sources, which the BPL and the many friend groups that support these Historic Sites could help identify. For example, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission is able to provide some resources to these sites, but its funding is limited compared to the need.

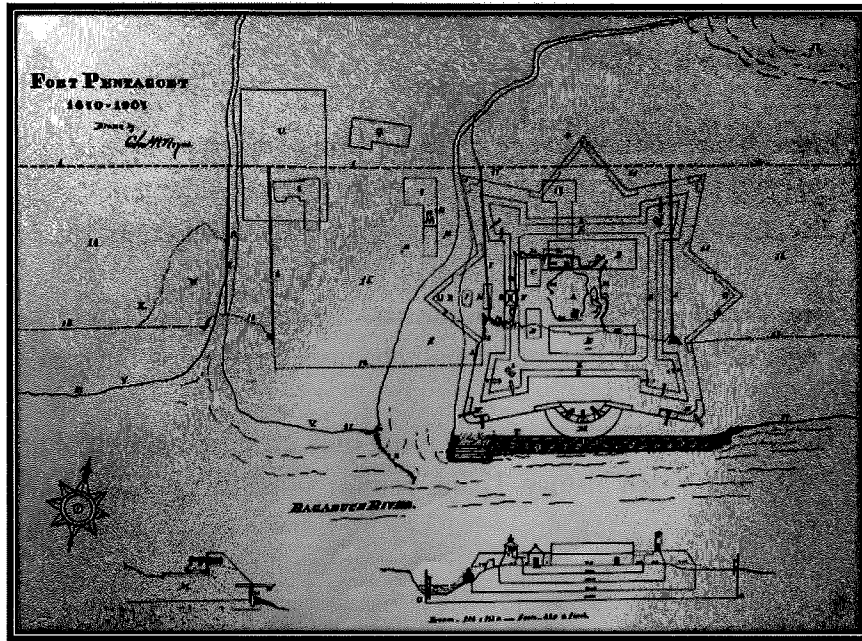
About Fort George

As I mentioned, I originally submitted a bill to support the maintenance of Fort George in Castine, which is home to both of the State Historic Sites in my district. Few Maine towns have a colonial history as decorated as that of Castine. The Town of Castine – ancestral homeland of the Penobscot people – has been a battleline for four nations because of its strategic position on Penobscot Bay: the Abenaki, the British, the Dutch and the French. French colonists settled Castine in 1613, seven years before British colonists settled the Plymouth Colony.

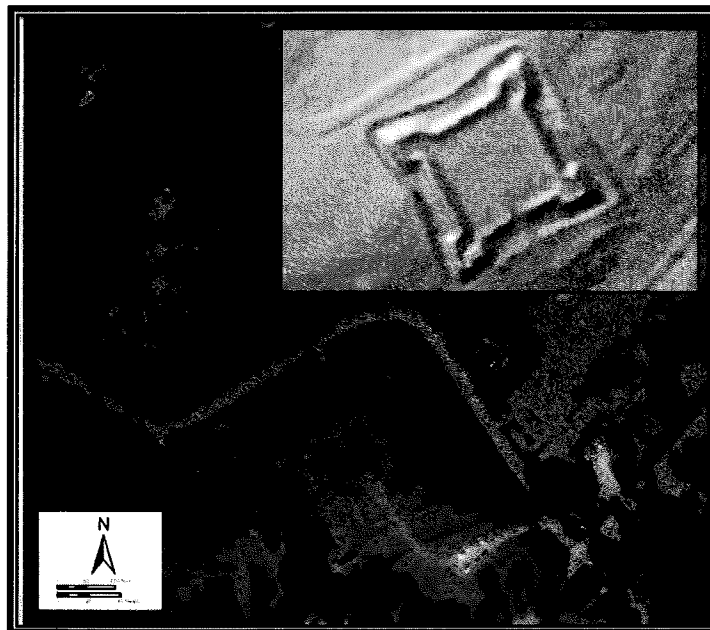
Fort George was erected by the British during the Revolutionary War to protect the Crown Colony of New Ireland, what is now Downeast, Central, and Northern Maine. The Americans attempted and failed to wrest Fort George from British grip in the calamitous Penobscot Expedition (1779). The British abandoned the fort until the War of 1812, when they invaded

Maine and tried again to make New Ireland a reality. When the Treaty of Ghent was signed, American troops took charge of Fort George and used it from 1815 to 1819.

The Fort consisted of earthen ramparts, ditches, and projecting bastions in each corner. I've included a few images from the Fort George Historic Properties Management Plan that was completed in 2021 with funding from the Department of the Interior (National Park Service) and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. If you are interested in learning more about the design and history of Fort George, I am happy to share this comprehensive document with you!



Hancock County Atlas, 1881 (Doudiel 1978).



Current conditions of Fort George, Town of Castine, Hancock County, Maine, on a 2019 aerial photograph and 2019 digital elevation model.

The State of Maine formally acquired Fort George in 1940 and invested in the refurbishment of the fort's magazine in 1960. Since 1981, the management and maintenance of Fort George have been governed by a contract between the State and Town of Castine. Basic upkeep has been ongoing, but the lack of greater maintenance investments has unfortunately resulted in much of the fort falling into disrepair. A great deal of it is unsafe. As a result, no one wants to promote what could be a crown jewel of America's early history. This is especially unfortunate, seeing as Castine is home to Maine Maritime Academy, which provides a nice connection between the past and present.

Why invest in State Historic Sites?

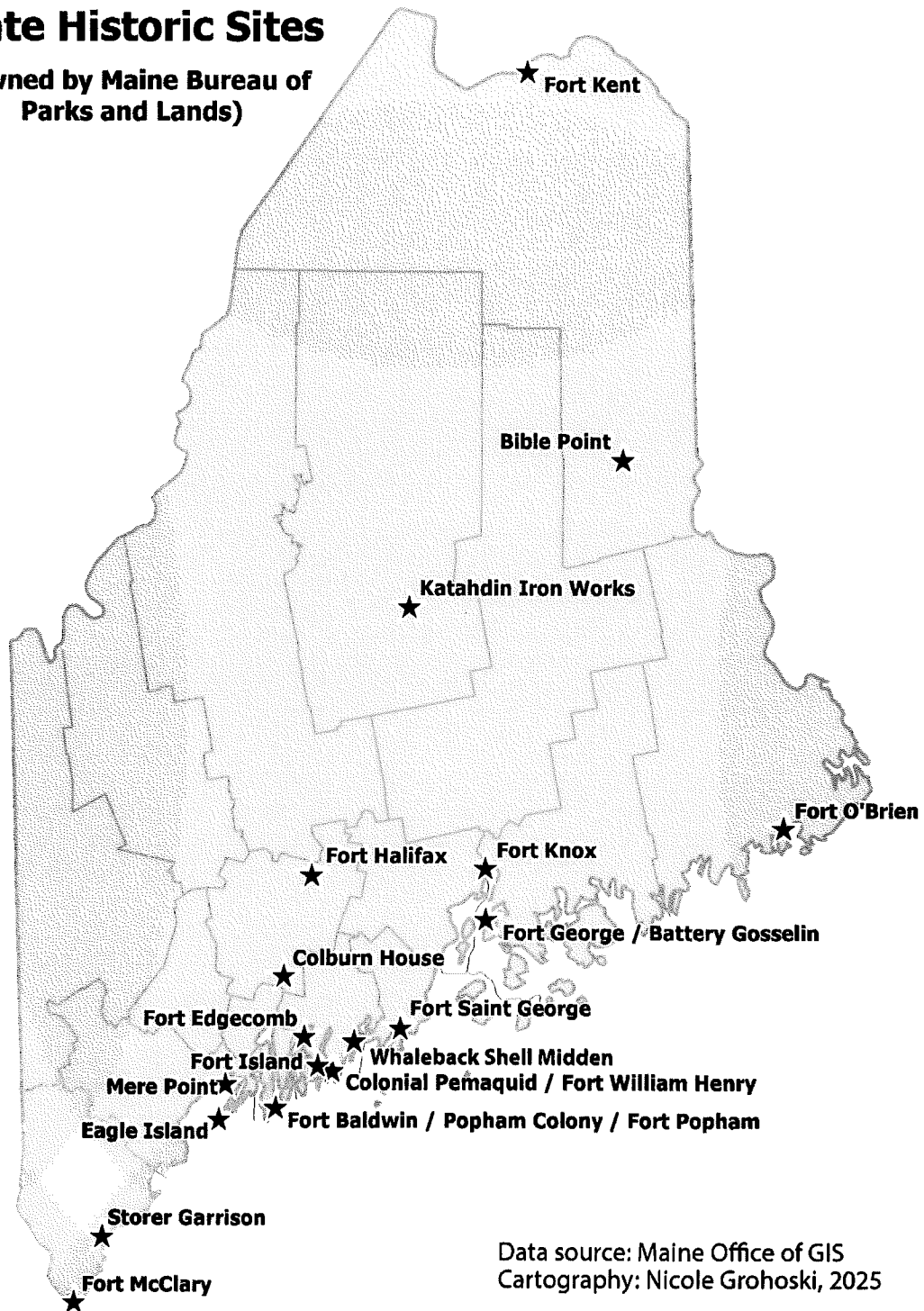
Historic Sites preserve the history of both Maine and the United States. Maine's Historic Sites and landmarks need funding so that we can maintain the original infrastructure and stories of the past for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

Historic Sites create economic opportunities. People visiting Historic Sites from both in and out of state often patronize local small businesses, boosting the local economy.

I hope you will agree that preserving these sites is not only our responsibility but will allow future generations to experience our rich history. Thank you for your attention, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

State Historic Sites

(Owned by Maine Bureau of
Parks and Lands)



Data source: Maine Office of GIS
Cartography: Nicole Grohoski, 2025