



# EAGLE ISLAND JOURNAL

A Publication of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island

"Inveniam viam aut faciam."  
Find a way or make one.

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## President's Message

I continue to have nothing but total admiration for the dedication of our volunteers. They are the heart and soul of our organization and they proved it again this past summer. More than 1400 volunteer hours were recorded by our docents, trail workers, and our "work days for four" special projects people, plus two members of the Peary family. That's up 200 hours from last year and a new record.

A special thanks to each of you for the many hours you spend in support of our goals on Eagle Island. Specifically: to preserve and restore the house, library, caretaker's cottage, and the network of trails; plus through educational outreach, perpetuate the legacy of a most remarkable man, Admiral Robert E. Peary.

Each project makes a substantive contribution, but they take on added meaning when a member of the Peary family is included. Once again this summer, Peary Stafford (Admiral Peary's great-grandson) came to Maine and spent two days on Eagle Island replacing the Compass Porch ceiling in the main house. He was ably assisted by four of our most dedicated volunteers. The results are most beautiful.

The southern yellow pine boards have to be special ordered months in advance and then shaped to the same size as the original. Multiple coats of varnish have to be applied to the top and bottom over a period of weeks to allow proper drying, then, transported out to the island. Preparation is truly a group effort, but when the time comes to install the new ceiling, Peary Stafford is the highly skilled key player that makes it happen.

Thank you Peary for once again making a major contribution to the restoration of the old house we all love.

*Harry Rich*

## The Seawall

The extensive seawall that surrounds the summer home of Admiral Peary on Eagle Island is in need of major repairs. Built nearly a century ago, these stone walls, outlining the shape of a ship heading north, have been weakened by age and storms and are no longer "ship shape." The prow is listing to port, the two stone companion-ways (stairways) have disappeared, and the East Bastion starboard side running up to the prow is undermined with large cracks and voids.

At the fall board meeting of the Friends, we were sobered to hear the facts of life (and death) regarding the seawall from George Waterman of South Free-

port. Prior to his retirement, George carried out many engineering projects along the coast. In addition to sharing his personal knowledge of masonry at the boundary of land and sea, he greatly impressed several of us with his agile climbing over and around the seawalls during his recent inspection visits to the island. His advice: find some professionals with the proper time and interest (and passion!) to undertake these repairs as soon as possible.

All of this information has been brought to the attention of the Bureau of Parks and Lands, who are now planning the next appropriate steps. Mean-

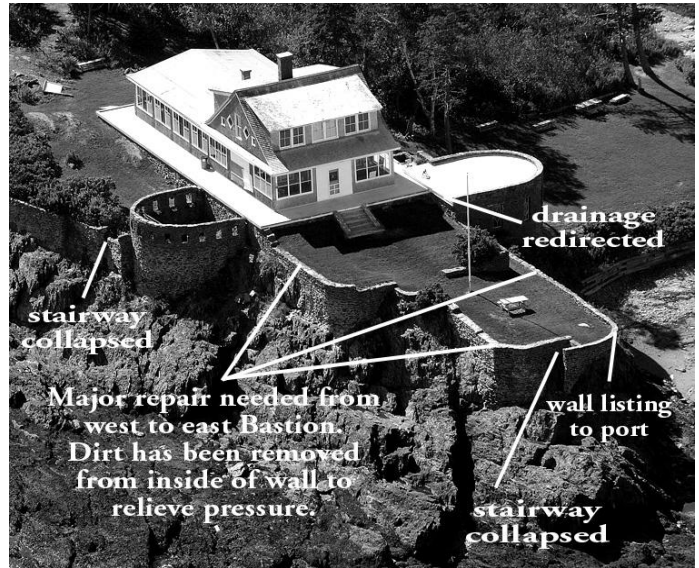
*See Seawall on Page 2.*

**Seawall** from Page 1.

while some “band-aid” efforts by the Friends have recently been applied: removal of about three feet of soil on the inside of the wall to reduce the pressure, redirection of the water run-off and the covering of several major cracks on the top of the wall to minimize freeze/thaw damage to the most fragile areas. We have our fingers crossed that our patchwork efforts will suffice in the interim before the professional work is completed and that come next summer we will find the walls standing stronger than ever! Stay tuned.

*Bob Johnson*

**S.O.S.** – Help us “Save our Seawall.” Make a long term, rock solid investment, toward the future of Eagle Island. See the enclosed envelope.



## TRAIL DAY AND WORK PARTIES

This past summer has been very productive in terms of accomplishing many needed tasks. On Trail Day we installed stone steps and a picnic table on Dave’s Way trail. The stone steps provide a safer passage and helps control erosion on the trail. The picnic table provides a rest stop over looking the bay and a nice spot for a picnic lunch. On the Sunset Stroll trail we relocated a section of the trail away from the bay and installed water bars and stone steps down to the water. In addition to these major improvements we spread over 50 bags of mulch on the trail as well as pruning and sign painting where needed. The crew that volunteered their time was enthusiastic and showed considerable creativity in accomplishing their tasks.

The work parties of four came out two days a week during the month of June and continued through July and August based on work that needed to be done. The list of projects would be too long to list but two major tasks were the installation of a ceiling on the Compass porch and an extensive project under the library to control mold and dampness. The Compass porch party was led by Admiral Peary’s great-grandson.

The major tasks for Trail Day next summer will be several trail maintenance and stabilization projects as well as the usual activities of signage, mulching and pruning, plus whatever Maine’s winter might bring. I hope we have another successful season.

*Dick Regan*

### Launching of USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5)

The fourth US Navy ship to be named in honor of Admiral Peary, was launched in San Diego on October 27, 2007, but, due to the wild fire emergency, without the usual public ceremony. Cdr. Ed Stafford, the Admiral's grandson, and many other members of the Peary family, were going to be present. On January 12, according to present plans, a christening ceremony will be held. In our Spring 2008 Journal, we will feature a full account by Ed along with photos and a description of this fine ship. The mission of this ship (689 feet overall length) is to "Deliver ammunition, provisions, stores, spare parts, potable water and petroleum products to carrier battle groups and other naval forces, serving as a shuttle ship or station ship."

*David Stuntz*

**Excerpts from “Northward over the Great Ice”**  
**By Robert E. Peary – published 1898**

*(In which he describes the Eskimos living north of Cape York)*  
*Introduction - pgs. lix to lx*

There is also a phase of my work which has a deeply human interest, and that is, its connection with, and effect upon, the very small but extremely interesting tribe, or perhaps I might more properly say family, of the human race, - the little community of Eskimos, the most northerly known individuals of the human race, numbering but two hundred and fifty-three, living at, and north of Cape York, completely isolated from all the rest of mankind by impassable icy barriers.

The effect of my expeditions upon those children of the North has been to raise the entire tribe to a condition of affluence. The difference between their condition five years ago, and today, can perhaps be best illustrated by imagining the case of a community or village of farm- or day-laborers working at a dollar and a quarter a day, possessing nothing but their wages; and then suppose each member of this community to have given him a furnished house, and lot, and a ten-thousand dollar bank account. Seven years ago many a man in this tribe possessed no knife, and woman no needle. Few of the men possessed kayaks or skin canoes; and he was indeed well off who had a spear or harpoon-shaft made of a single piece of wood. Today, men and women are amply supplied with knives and needles; every adult man and half grown boy has his canoe; most of the men have guns; every hunter is supplied with the best of wood for his lance, his harpoon, his seal spear, and his sledge. The effect of these improvements in their weapons has shown itself at once in an improved condition of the tribe, resulting from the great increase in the effectiveness of the hunters. The people are better clothed, they can support a larger number of dogs (their only domestic animal), and as a result of their more ample nourishment, and consequent greater ability to withstand the constant hardships of their life, the death-rate has decreased, and the birth-rate perceptibly increased, within the past six years

*Appendix II*

In several ways these Eskimos are unique among aboriginal tribes, and their idiosyncrasies in these matters compel my admiration and respect.

They have no unnatural or depraved appetites or habits; no stimulants or intoxicants; no narcotics; no slow poisoning. Nor do they in any way mutilate or disfigure the form the Creator gave them, or modify or pervert the natural functions. Neither have they any medicines. Their diseases are principally rheumatism and lung and bronchial troubles. The causes of death among the men come largely under the terse Western expression, “with their boots on.”

A kayak capsizes, and the occupant is hurled into the icy water; a hunter harpoons a walrus or bearded seal from the ice, a bight of the line catches round arm or leg, and the big brute drags him under to his death; an iceberg capsizes as he is passing it; a rock or snow slide from the steep shore cliffs crushes him; or a bear tears him mortally with a stroke of his paw; and so on. Occasionally, in the past, starvation has wiped out an entire village.

On the death of a man or woman, the body, fully dressed, is laid straight upon its back on a skin or two, and some extra articles of clothing placed upon it. It is covered with another skin, and the whole covered with a low stone structure, to protect the body from dogs, foxes, or ravens. A lamp with some blubber is placed close to the grave; and if the deceased is a man, his sledge and kayak, with his weapons and implements, are placed close by. If a woman, her cooking utensils, and the frame on which she has dried the family boots and mittens, are placed beside the grave.

If the death occurred in a tent, the poles are removed allowing it to settle down over the site, and is never used again, but rots or is finally blown away. If the death occurred in an igloo, it is vacated and not used again for a long time.

*Continued on Page 4* →

The relatives of the diseased must observe certain formalities in regard to clothing and food for a certain time; the name of the dead person is never spoken, and any other members of the tribe who have the same name must assume another until the arrival of an infant, to which the name can be applied, removes the ban.

To many a good person the thought at once arises; "Poor things; why don't we send some missionaries to them, and convert or civilize them? Or, why wouldn't it be a good plan to take them away from their awful home to a pleasanter region?" To both these I answer at once, "God willing, never, either." When I think of the mixed race in South Greenland, which, in spite of the fostering care of the Danish Government, is still like most half-breed human products, inferior to either original stock; when I recall the miserable wretches along the west coast of Baffin Bay, vile with disease, vitiated with rum, tobacco and contact with the whalers, and then think of my uncontaminated, pure blooded, vigorous, faithful little tribe, I say: "No, God grant no civilization to curse them." What I have done in the past, and shall continue to do in the future, is to put them in a little better position to carry on their struggle for existence;

Give them better weapons and implements, lumber to make their dwellings dryer, instructions in a few fundamental sanitary principles, and one or two items of civilized food, as coffee and biscuit. – allies to rout the demons starvation and cold.

As I sit here writing now I can see them, already within the shadow of the "Great Night" in their little stone igloos perched on the shore of the frozen sea, the soft light of their oil lamps glowing into the savage cold and darkness from door and sealskin window. And many a familiar face rises in memory:

Old Komonahpik, with his bronzed, impassive face, careful and thoroughly reliable, my bow oar and harpooner; Nooktah, my faithful hunter and dog driver; smiling baby Anador; handsome Sipsu; Merktoshar, the one-eyed bear hunter of Netiulum, famous throughout the tribe for many a single-handed struggle with the polar bear, the "tiger of the North." Though one eye had been destroyed by a knife thrust when as a young man, in a desperate struggle with the tattooed men of the west, far out across the frozen surface of the sound he had captured his first wife, the remaining eye, glittering through the straggling veil of his long black hair, saw as much as any three others in the entire tribe. It was in fact, the only sign of life about him except when the huge tracks of his favorite game flashed every nerve and muscle into savage excitement. Then there was Kyoahpadu, the *angakok*; Ootoonia, Kyogwito, and Myouk, the three good natured giant brothers of Narksarsomi; Kessuh and Nupsah, the dashing dudes of Cape York; Kessuh, or the "Smiler," the walrus killer of Ittibloo; with his half-witted brother Arningana or the "Moon"; Tukoomingwah, the child-bride of Kookoo; bright-faced Alakasingwah; Tartarah, the kittiwake; Akpalia, the "Villain"; "Misfortune"; the "Fox"; and the "Comedian."

Fortunately for them, with no possessions to excite cubidity, with a land in which no one but themselves could conquer a living, they are likely to be left in peace, to live out the part appointed them by the Creator.

### Eagle Island Board Members

President: Harry Rich  
Treasurer: David Stuntz  
Secretary: Connie Henry  
Vice-Pres: Dick Regan, Outdoor Volunteers

Vice-Pres: Helen Regan, Indoor Volunteers  
Exec VP: Ned Dewey, Fund Raising  
At-Large: Steve Ingram, Bob Johnson,  
Bob Nelson, Peary Stafford,  
Noel Golz

Presidents Emeriti: Oliver Brown and Bob York  
Bird Study: John Berry

Tour Directors: Barbara Tucker & Jim Davis  
Journal Editor: Helen Boynton

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