



Eagle Island Journal

A Publication of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island

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

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

As we look forward to the 2015 summer season on Eagle Island we have wonderful news to report and some very sad news.

The good news is that after a decade of effort by the State of Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands and the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island the US Department of State has awarded Eagle Island its **National Historic Landmark** status. See the article below for the details of this significant recognition.

The sad news is that Ned Dewey, Vice President of the Friends for many years and one of its driving forces since its inception 23 years ago, died in December 2014. This issue of the Journal is dedicated to Ned and his commitment to the mission of the Friends and to the legacy of the Peary family. The articles below chronicle Ned's contributions to the Friends, but cannot fully express the loss we are feeling without his enthusiasm, engineering expertise, historical research, and organizational abilities to guide the Friends in its activities.

One of Ned's greatest contributions to the Friends is his mentoring by example for all the volunteers who carry on the work of the Friends: the corps of docents who assure that all visitors to Eagle Island feel the Eagle Island welcome that the Peary family endowed when they gave the property to the State of Maine; the gardeners who maintain the original gardens started 100 years ago by Josephine and Marie Peary and nurture the annual plantings at the entrance to the museum and in front of the new Welcome center; and the workers who maintain the trails and assist the State crews with the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and grounds. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to our volunteers whose thousands of person-hours each summer support the Bureau of Parks and Lands to assure Eagle Island remains a jewel among the State's public lands.

NEW COORDINATORS FOR DOCENT PROGRAM

Gaye and Wayne Miller are pleased to announce their appointment as new co-coordinators of the Eagle Island Docent Program. Both are seasoned docents, and are excited to move into this new commitment of service to Eagle Island.

The 2015 Eagle Island season is rapidly approaching. The new Welcome Center has been very popular with our visitors, but has somewhat taxed the available pool of our docent program, prompting us to recruit new volunteers for this valuable service. Our goal is to schedule 2-3 people on the island daily mid-June through closing in September, allowing one docent to greet visitors at the Welcome Center full time, with at least one other in the museum at all times.

Docents are an integral part of the Eagle Island experience for our visitors, making them feel warmly welcome, and enhancing their learning about Admiral Peary, his house, and his island. Volunteers receive comprehensive orientation material, and have the support of staff and veteran docents. It is fun and easy, as you learn more about Eagle Island, to share your knowledge and enthusiasm, answer questions, and direct visitors to the various ways of enjoying their island tour.

A Docent Day is a full day, but so enjoyable and fulfilling. Boat transportation to the island leaves Dolphin Marina at 9:00 AM riding with the island Rangers and other volunteers. The return trip leaves Eagle Island at 5:00 PM. Volunteers bring all they need for the day's outing. You will be notified of cancellations due to bad weather.

For more information and to sign up contact Gaye and Wayne Miller, Co Docent Coordinators, 725-6595 or email millerawayne@comcast.net or millergaye@comcast.net. The Friends annual Docent Appreciation and Orientation Luncheon will be on May 30, 2015. New volunteers are most welcome to attend and meet returning volunteers, staff, and members of the Friends as we prepare for another exciting summer.

If you are looking for a great volunteer experience, give this a try, and encourage a friend to do the same.

GARDENING ON PEARY'S EAGLE ISLAND

Soon after Robert Peary, his wife Josephine, and children Marie and Robert Jr. started spending summers at Eagle Island in 1904, the women of the family began developing small gardens along the trail leading south from the house. Farthest from the house is Josephine's 1912 garden, which is dominated by the tallest hydrangea I have ever seen. It towers over a meditation bench and a lovely collection of perennials. Closer to the house is the flower bed that Marie established around 1915 with roses, peonies, sweet william and other perennials around a large birch tree. In the 1940's Robert Junior's wife Inez started the garden closest to the house, first as a vegetable garden and now with flowers.

When the island was turned over to the State of Maine in 1967, the gardening tradition was continued by caretakers and efforts were made to preserve original plantings and restore and replant with historical accuracy. Today much of the gardening is done by volunteers who would welcome additional helpers. Gardening volunteers of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island maintain the historical pocket gardens, create the plantings in the flower boxes along the outside stairway leading from library to the west porch, and maintain the new flower bed by the recently constructed visitors' center. We have several workdays throughout the season. If you think you might like to garden in this beautiful place please contact fullertonjanet@hotmail.com. Thank you!

JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

In the early spring of 2014, Ned Dewey received an unexpected mailing from Arcadia Publishing. They are interested in publishing a book about Eagle Island and the Peary family's life on the island as part of their "Images of America" series of photographic books. You may be familiar with these books which are most often sepia-toned historical photographs with captions telling stories outlining the the history of Americans and American life. From volumes on Alcatraz Island to our own Baxter State Park, these books highlight how we as Americans lived and how America as a country has grown. From one edition to another one can feel what life was like growing up in small town America or adventuring along the Appalachian Trail.

When the Friends' Executive Board discussed this project, it was agreed that this was an opportunity too good to pass up. Since there is never a bad day on Eagle Island (well, maybe this winter proved otherwise), a small group of Friends volunteers offered to give this project a go. We have spent the last year researching the history of the island and searching for photographs and stories about Eagle Island and the Pearys on the island. We have met many wonderful, helpful people at the local libraries and universities while researching and we believe as Admiral Peary says, "Inveniam viam aut Faciam" – we will find a way or make one! It will be a year or so at least in the making. There are more institutions and people to contact but with the kind folks at Arcadia and the material we have found thus far we hope you will soon be able to check your local bookstores for the Friend's contribution to the Images of America series with The Pearys of Eagle Island

Beth O'Connell

A REMEMBRANCE

Do we, as neighbors, appreciate his gift of time, energy, and commitment to our common good? We do.

Do we, as citizens of the State of Maine, give thanks for his tireless efforts to preserve, protect, and enhance Eagle Island as a State Historic Site to assure the island's welcome to all visitors and to celebrate the legacy of an American hero?
We do.

Do we, as Friends of Peary's Eagle Island, realize that his leadership, the standards of excellence he has set for everything we do, and his willingness to accept any task or responsibility are models of volunteerism that have earned him our highest respect?
We do.

Do we, who have had the honor to work with him, recognize that impatience, when driven by the will to get things done for the benefit of others, can become a loveable virtue?
We do, now.

Do we miss him?

Indeed, Dewey!

Edward (Ned) Dewey

1926-2014

Ned joined the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island shortly after its founding in 1992. No tribute in words can do justice to his 22 years of commitment to the Friends and its mission to preserve Eagle Island and the legacy of Admiral Robert E. Peary. But a trip to the island offers full evidence: the solar powered composting toilet was funded primarily from grants obtained under Ned's leadership as Vice President for Development and his engineering background contributed to its design and construction. Similarly the fire suppression and intrusion alarm systems, also solar powered, were funded with significant help from foundations secured through Ned's efforts. The first cabinet to display brochures and island souvenirs for sale was designed and built by Ned to be placed in the entry of the museum. More recently he designed the more elegant Trading Post display cabinet now in the new Welcome Center and supervised its construction by Peary Stafford, the Admiral's Great Grandson. Ned's meticulous research of pictures of the Peary cottage and its contents has resulted in the return to the island of many artifacts and furniture that had been lost and the replacement of other items by antiques he found in local shops that are comparable to the originals as shown in the old photos.

The gardens and grounds of the island have benefitted from Ned's commitment to the island as well as from his green thumb. He has developed a cadre of gardeners through his encouragement and support to assure the Peary gardens, the flower boxes that grace the steps to the museum, and the trails around the islands provide a visual welcome to all visitors and encourage their exploration of the length of the island.

Most recently, Ned's design for the Welcome Center, inspired by a workshop built on the island by Robert Jr. under the guiding eye of his father, but built to modern specifications for a public building on an historic site, and his blue prints for its construction were approved by the Town of Harpswell and by the State Bureau of Parks and Lands. The Welcome Center was completed in 2014 and is the focal point for visitors as they step off the pier onto the island.

The above on-island projects are tangible evidence of his contributions. But there is yet more. The Friends, as an organization, are indebted to him for his leadership, organizational acumen, and attention to detail. There is no project or Friends activity that has not had Ned's attention, support, and expertise. Ned has authored and continues to supply the training materials for the docent program. Although not able to actively participate in his later years in the Trail Day program, he continued to supply logistical support for the day. He has been the primary author and publisher of the Friends Journal, published twice each year. Membership relations have been his responsibility for years. And, quite naturally, the Friends Executive Board turned to him as the resource of choice for all issues that arose in Board meetings. Ned must share much of the credit for the success of the Friends over its first 22 years as a supporting partner to the Bureau of Parks and Lands. Characteristically he would always refuse to acknowledge he deserved such, but the history makes it clear.

And yet there is still more. Each of us, as individuals, have been the benefactor of his mentoring by example; we have gained an appreciation for the role of Admiral Peary in American exploration through his research and articles; and we have learned the value of accepting personal responsibility for the preservation of Harpswell's small island of geographic significance to our country's history.

Ned was always the first to celebrate Admiral Peary's singular great achievement - his conquest of the North Pole.

But great achievement can also come in many small doses. How can we ever thank him enough?

By continuing to "Inveniam viam aut faciam".

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK STATUS

Several years ago the Friends received a copy of the Bureau of Parks and Lands nomination to designate Eagle Island a National Historic Landmark for our review and comment. It was originated by Sheila McDonald who was Historian for the department at that time. I remember thinking as I read it that it was exceptionally well researched and well written but what did it mean?

My knowledge of the National Park Service and their designations for historic sites is pretty limited thus my immediate thought was honor and prestige: honor to the legacy of Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary and prestige to the island he called his promised land, both of which could have a positive impact on the number of tourists visiting the island resulting in increased admission revenue for the state and increased ship's store sales for the Friends. I did find in the fine print that the owner of the property, in this case the State of Maine, is eligible for federal grant money for historic preservation. In the past the Friends have obtained private grant money to support the state in funding projects such as the composting toilet, the fire suppression /intrusion alarm system, restoration of the east bastion and west wall, etc.

Recently my growing need for a better understanding of the true meaning of Landmark status and its potential impact received an important input that helped. We now have a copy of a letter dated Nov 5, 2014, from the Chief of the National Register of Historic Places and National Landmarks Program addressed to the Director, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, informing him that on Aug 25, 2014, the Secretary of the Interior designated Eagle Island a National Historic Landmark in recognition of the property's national significance in the history of the United States. The letter goes on to say, "Landmark designation recognizes and encourages the preservation of places that have exceptional value for commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States, for the inspiration and benefit of all Americans".

It is my hope that this Landmark designation will allow many more Americans, after visiting Eagle Island, to say as I did, 'I walked today where Admiral Peary walked and felt his presence there.'

Harry Rich