



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

President's Message Fall 2022

The beautiful Fall sunsets we have had paint Eagle Island in brilliant Fall colors. As seen from Potts Point at the end of Harpswell's Route 123, the island's palette commands your attention and you see Eagle Island anew claiming its place in Casco Bay as a State Historic Park and a National Historic Landmark – a fitting tribute to the leadership of Admiral Peary and to what can be accomplished when diverse cultures work together for common goals – White American, Black American and indigenous peoples standing together, shoulder to shoulder, to plant the American flag at the North Pole. There's a lesson in that image for all of us today.

The shuttered windows in the museum are barely visible in the Fall light, but it is those shuttered windows that will attract all our attention in this coming off-season. Gary Best, from the Bureau of Parks and Lands, reports that planning for the mold remediation is well underway: a broad outline of what needs to be done has been established, a general sequence of the many interwoven projects that will need attention determined, and most significantly, the funding secured to begin the repairs to the superstructure, to professionally restore the artifacts, and to develop the preservation strategies that will allow the artifacts to be returned to the island safely and with due regard to their protection against the Maine seashore environment.

As suggested above, this ambitious project has three components. First is the renovation of the museum and library superstructure to eliminate mold damage, to repair damaged areas that allow moisture to enter and accumulate (roof, windows, and doors,) and to add support where water damage has weakened the underpinnings. The second phase is to cleanse all the artifacts of all mold presence, recondition them as necessary, and preserve them as appropriate for their future use. And the third, and critical, phase is to determine what the appropriate future use is for each artifact. To this end there can be three categories: artifacts that no longer need to be on the island (such as baseball bats that have been stored in the seat chests on the compass porch that haven't seen the light of day in decades); artifacts that should be returned to the museum as critical to the historic story of the Peary presence; and artifacts that are too precious, valuable, and/or too weakened that they deserve a climate-controlled environment. Items in that second category, such as the Bridge Coat, the ship's clock, or the narwhale tusks, will be returned with a preservation strategy to protect them from further deterioration. At this time, it is not clear how, or by whom, such determinations of category will be made.

What is clear is that the Friends stand ready to support the State at every step of this process, including our financial support. To this end we will be coordinating with the Bureau of Parks and Lands to determine where our support can be most effective and is most needed.

To be sure, the Friends' docent corps will continue to play a critical role in the next couple of years. They deserve our thanks and appreciation for adjusting to the changing situations this past summer,

welcoming the many visitors with an explanation of why the museum was closed, but augmenting their visits with window-shopping tours and pictorial tours of the museum interiors. Next year we will lean on them again to explain to visitors the plans for returning the Eagle Island Historic site to the ‘magical place’ it has been to so many visitors for so long.

And a special thanks to the docents who filled in when Docent Coordinator Wayne Miller’s doctors advised him to take a few weeks off to rest that warm heart, the warmth he has shared with us all, to assure it keeps beating for many years to come. Thanks to our docents; and best wishes for full and speedy recovery to Wayne!

Steve Ingram, President
Friends of Peary’s Eagle Island

Eagle Island Park Manager’s Fall Update

Visitation to Eagle Island in 2022 held strong through Labor Day and we experienced several late-season days where our dock space and moorings were full within an hour of opening. Despite seeing 400 more visitors in July alone, compared to July 2021, we finished out the season with just under 100 more visitors in 2022 (1,815) compared to 2021 when 1,719 visitors came to the Island.

After Labor Day I was off to Ranger Academy for a nine-day Bureau of Parks and Lands Compliance and Enforcement training program hosted at Sebago Lake State Park. At the conclusion of Ranger Academy, the gears shifted towards battenning down the hatches for winter. With help from Assistant Regional Manager Matt McGuire, State Park Maintenance Coordinators from Reid, Two Lights, and Mt. Blue, and two additional Rangers from Two Parks, we put the storm shutters on the museum and replaced the shingles on a section of roof above the master bedroom. We also removed a substantial amount of material from the basement of the museum in preparation for the mold remediation project. Steve Ingram, President of Friends of Peary’s Eagle Island, worked to apply water seal to the decking of the composting toilet facility, visitor center, and the entirety of the pier with the help of Nick Knight, Treasurer of FOPEI. The maintenance crew returned the following week, and we pulled the float and stowed the gangplank. In the midst of closing up Eagle Island, I also helped out at the first annual Fall Festival at Ferry Beach State Park and worked with the parks Maintenance Coordinators to pull the floats at Colonial Pemaquid.



On September 12th we hosted a lobster bake on the island for Friends of Peary’s Eagle Island docents and volunteers as means to thank them for the many hours spent welcoming visitors to the Island, working to maintain the trails and buildings, and keeping the gardens looking their best.

I have continued to stay on Eagle Island into November, working on projects that we never had time for during the busier months. Now, as I prepare to transition to seasonal leave in the coming weeks, my focus has shifted to planning and coordinating interpretive opportunities and events for next season to provide rich alternative experiences for our visitors while the museum is closed for mold remediation and repair.

Thank you all for another wonderful season on Eagle Island. See you next year!

John Burgess, Park Manager II- Eagle Island State Historic Site

Garden Update

The 2022 season proved to be another challenging one - mostly because the summer months were so very dry, and windy. The drought caused us to rethink our ambitious plans for dividing, transplanting, and adding new plants to the historical pocket gardens, and the winds made planning and scheduling trips out to the island more difficult. However, during the several trips we were able to go out, we continued with maintenance tasks - weeding, trimming, and deadheading to keep the gardens looking as nice as we could. We filled the flower boxes that adorn the steps up to the Museum, and added a few perennials and annuals to the foundation garden. Thankfully, the rainbarrels captured enough rainwater to allow us to keep the flower boxes watered and many thanks to the Docents and volunteers who so diligently kept up with this task!



Welcome to Our newest Board Member Karon Salch

Our newest board member is Karon Salch. She has been a valued member of the Volunteer and Docent team for a few years and we are very happy to have her join the board.

Karon tells us, “When we returned to Maine 20 plus years ago, our family got involved in the outdoors beyond hiking and backpacking. Trail work became a standard feature of our vacation time. We currently maintain an Appalachian Trail shelter in the 100-Mile Wilderness. When a small flyer appeared on a bulletin board at work looking for volunteer gardeners on Eagle Island, I thought it might be fun, and it was. I continue to help with the gardens, and becoming a docent a couple of years ago meant I could spend even more time on the Island. The volunteers and visitors have many stories, experiences, and perspectives to share about Eagle Island. What’s not to love about spending a summer day on an island in Casco Bay? How did I end up on the board? I made too many suggestions.”

Asking for help

The Friends of Peary’s Eagle Island is looking for help. Our Board of Directors is a diverse group of very talented people who contribute to the success of our mission in innumerable ways. However we are in need of a person(s) with expertise in accounting, familiarity with software such as Square and Quickbooks, and website development. If you have such experience or know someone who does, and are looking to expand your commitment to the Friends, please respond to President Steve Ingram, singram3@myfairpoint.net or, Treasurer Nick Knight, nickatknight@icloud.com.

Your Donations at Work

Your support has allowed us to install solar panels to power the Visitor Center and the composting toilets, repair the gutters, paint the trim, seal the decks, repair windows and retaining walls, maintain the trails, fill the flower boxes, and operate the Visitor Center. Your donations help to purchase the supplies for these tasks - our volunteers supply all the labor. As you can deduce from the President’s message, we have much to accomplish in the coming months and years to preserve this State Historic Park and National Historic Landmark that is Eagle Island. Your financial support is essential and is greatly appreciated.



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Thank you for your continued support of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island especially during these challenging times as we strive to help preserve the Peary Family Summer Home and the artifacts the Admiral collected on his many journeys to the far north in his quest to reach the North Pole. Our work would not be possible without your generous donations. Visit our website: pearyseagleisland.org for more information on how to donate through our secure Square account. You can also learn more on the website about the history of Eagle Island and the Peary Family and ways to volunteer, or to become a Docent to share your interest and enthusiasm in preserving this "magical place" for generations to come.

Our best for a safe and happy 2023. We look forward to seeing you on the Island next summer.