



# Eagle Island Journal

A Publication of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island

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"Invenium viam aut facium"  
(Find a way or make one)

## President's Message

A short time ago I visited Eagle Island as they were closing things up for the season. Always a sad time. As we approached the island from the north about a quarter of a mile or so out, I was pleased to note how well the gray shingles and green trim helped the new Welcome Center blend into the background. It looked like it had always been there. That is exactly what we had hoped to achieve and it will only get better as the vegetation grows back. After we landed I walked all around and through the nearly completed building. Outstanding workmanship was highly visible everywhere I looked. I'm no expert, but I doubt if you could find a contractor that would do work of that quality. The work done by Steve Ingram and his volunteer crew is impressive. To learn how it was done please read Steve's article "Volunteer Voices" printed later in this journal.

Spring work will begin as soon as the float and ramp are in place to provide safe access to the island. All that's left to do on the outside is add the deck, stairs and handicapped access to the main entrance, the back deck and stairs for emergency exit, the Solar Power Panels on the roof, a shed out back for the solar batteries and inverter as well as storage for the Center, and a small amount of landscaping. Interior work can commence after we take delivery of materials, hopefully in early May. This includes the pine paneling for the walls and hard pine for the floors. Electrical wiring, cabinetry, folding chairs, lighting, fan, and Venetian blinds all need to be installed. It is expected to take 6 to 8 weeks to complete. Our goal is to have the new Welcome Center fully functional as close to the June 15th opening of Eagle Island as possible.

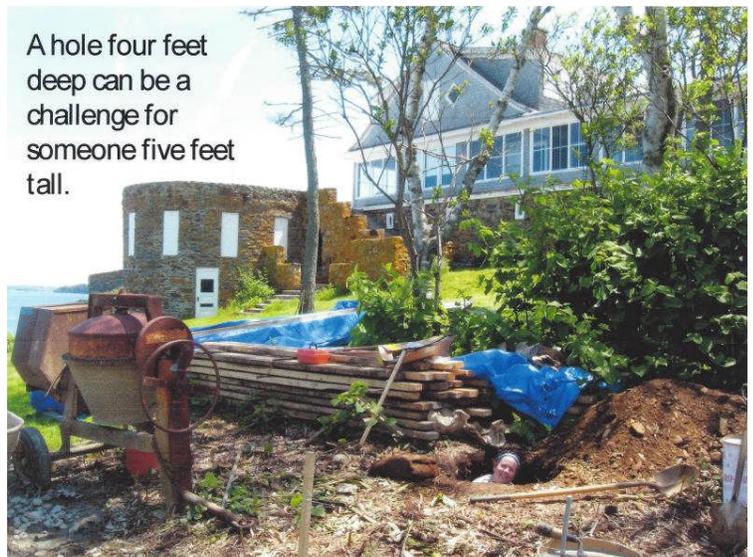
My admiration and sincere thanks to the Bureau of Parks and Lands, and to Steve with his many enthusiastic and hard working volunteers for creating a Welcome Center that would make Admiral Peary proud.

## Volunteer Voices

### A Welcome Center on Eagle Island rises from the Banter

"Is this deep enough?" a voice muffled by 4 feet of earth, finds its way out of the top of a 2 foot diameter hole. Beth completely disappears as she stands in the hole reaching down with her shovel to get just a few more inches of broken shale from the bottom. She is digging one of 17 holes that had to be hand dug for the foundation pillars that would be poured to begin construction of the Welcome Center on Eagle Island. A Welcome Center was the brainchild of Cmdr. Ed Stafford, (USN, Ret.), a grandson of Adm. Robert E. Peary, and is a joint project of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands and the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island, a volunteer organization with the mission to protect, preserve and enhance Eagle Island as a tribute to the American hero who first discovered the North Pole.

The Friends group would provide much of the



A hole four feet deep can be a challenge for someone five feet tall.

funding, materials, and labor. The State of Maine, through the Bureau of Parks and Lands, would complete the funding, guide the project through local, State, and federal permits and restrictions, and supervise the project from its professional staff. But the digging - - that would be the first of many 'volunteer contributions'.

"Four hours ago my feet started telling me to carry more each load; now my shoulders are telling my feet to go to hell!", David laments, keeping his sense of humor after a day of hauling lumber from the Eagle Island pier up to the construction site on the south edge of the Peary Museum lawn. Six tons of lumber, the first of three barge loads of materials to be delivered to the island by Falls Point Marina, was expertly placed on the pier in strapped bundles three feet wide, weighing 800 pounds apiece, leaving just six inches of space on either side between the pier railings. From there the lumber had to be carried by hand off the pier, up the lawn to the site-- the second of many 'volunteer contributions'.

"Let's not do that again!" advises Ron, who, with two colleagues from the BPL maintenance staff, came to assist the volunteers with the second load of lumber and materials. The volunteers needed both the expertise and the manpower from the BPL maintenance crew since this second load included 20 feet long 8" x 8" beams that would be the sills on which the Welcome Center would be built as well as the 20 feet long 3" x 12" rafters that would support the roof. The first 8" x 8" brought four men to their knees before they reached the construction site--hence Ron's suggestion to try an alternative method. Fortunately Falls Point had also delivered a heavy two-wheeled "mast carrier" used to transport masts around the marina yard. By balancing one of those beams on this carrier, the wheels took the weight and the four men



could use all their energy rolling what now became a "beam carrier" off the pier and up the lawn. It was another long day, but by the end of the day, lumber and supplies to initiate construction were on site and building could begin.

"A one inch error may be 'good enough for government work', but is it good enough for the Friends?" asked Steve as the sill beams were measured and cut with "ship-lapped joints" to the building specification of 18'x22'. Then they had to be lifted and placed on the foundation pillars poured by Chris Blum, a seawall mason from Falmouth. The final accounting would be the diagonal measurements. If the two corner-to-corner diagonals were equal, the building would be square; if not, the problem would only amplify as the walls went up. In this situation a one inch error is not 'good enough' and ropes and come-along had to be used to pull the sills into perfect right angles. Angle braces would keep

them in place until the floor boards could be placed diagonally across the floor joists and sills to assure they stayed at right angles during the rest of the construction.

"What do you mean it doesn't fit?" Dick responds with exasperated surprise as a 2x4 he had cut to a volunteer's specifications doesn't fit the space measured by his co-volunteer. It was only a short distance from where the volunteers were nailing together the first of the four sides, this one the east side, and the cutting table just outside the building footprint. But somehow, in that short distance, sound waves changed the dimensions so that what was called down was not what was heard and there was a lot of 'cutting twice'. There was also a lot of good natured ribbing about who could measure accurately (or not), and who could read a tape measure (or not), and whose hearing had 'seen' better days. But the 22'x10' east side was framed by the end of the day, the four volunteers working on it lifted it into place with the help of the three island Rangers, and the Welcome Center began its 'rise'.

Volunteers offered their services on a Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule tentatively set up in June to determine enough volunteers would show up on those days to make the schedule work. Island work also has to plan on weather cancellations and initial planning was based on the hope that two of those three days each week would have suitable weather and sufficient volunteers to have a work day. As it turned out over the course of the summer, not only did the weather cooperate, but the commitment of a strong group of volunteers made a three day work week the rule rather than the exception. And with the BLP's decision to close the island soon after Labor Day, we would need all those days to get the Welcome Center closed in for the winter.

"It's slipping! Stop! It's slipping" Zane shouted to halt the lifting on the west wall which was the second wall to be framed and now lifted into place. This would be the largest and heaviest of the four walls with its 22' length, 13' height, and three large windows requiring double jack studs in addition to the usual wall studding. The base of the wall had been lifted onto its sill and blocked from going over the side by temporary blocks at the corners and in the middle. As the top

was lifted off the deck the weight of the wall would be split between the vertical force down and a horizontal force pushing the base out. Until the wall reached an angle of 45 degrees the horizontal force would be greater than the vertical force and the wall would want to move horizontally, stopped only by the blocks. But before that critical 45 degree angle was reached, the blocks started to fail and Zane noticed the problem, and his alarm stopped any further lifting. More blocks were quickly added to bolster those in place and the lifting could begin again, foot by foot until the wall was in vertical position. Now with the east wall and west walls in place, the south and north walls would be less of a challenge -- smaller in width and guided by the two walls in place. The final north wall was finished and raised into place on trail day, a fitting conclusion to our traditional volunteer day on Eagle Island.



"Are you sure these rafters are cut to fit before we raise them up and put them in place?" Ralph asked obviously not very confident in any assurances he would receive. Rafter day brought two BPL maintenance technicians to help the volunteers get all ten of the 20 foot long 3"X12" yellow pine rafters into place with the east ends on the 10' high east wall and the west ends on the 13' high west wall. That meant lifting over 300 pounds for each rafter over 13' high and maneuvering them into their final position. "If they don't fit, its the building that's off--we cut them to exact precision," responded Bob, who had worked the entire previous day cutting the rafters, with notches to fit onto the plate on either side, and cut to continue beyond each wall to form

the overhang of the roof around the entire structure. Bob's confidence in these cuts was curious because many times over the summer his co-volunteers had heard his mantra, "Measure, measure - then verify!" his modification of the adage, "measure twice, cut once". By verification he meant taking the board and temporarily putting it into its final position and scribing exactly where the cuts must be. "Measure, measure - then verify" was repeated whenever a measured cut had to be re-cut. Of course, with the rafters verification was not feasible and each rafter had to be cut using only linear measurements and calculated angles. And he knew very well that all the rafters were cut exactly the same to match one another. Hence if this first one didn't fit, none of the others would fit either. His sigh of relief was one of the most audible when Ralph, sitting atop the 13' wall gave a thumbs up when the first rafter slipped perfectly into place.



"If you want, I could just lift the rest of the rafters up into place for you," offered Frank as he examined the temporary towers that had been erected on the east and west walls, extending 4' higher than the walls, to support the top double pulley of the 5 strand block and tackle system used to hoist each rafter end. Stripped to the waist, it was obvious he probably could do just that. But concern for the safety of all volunteers suggested the more incremental, measured approach of raising them a little bit at a time using the block and tackle systems and within a couple of hours all rafters were in place and secured to the walls and to one another.

"Best view in the State!" announced Nick as he stood on the roof, nailing the roof deck to the rafters. No one argued with that. Eagle Island is often referred to as a 'magical place' and the sweeping vistas from many places on the

island contribute to its attraction. But standing up on that roof just seemed to open up Casco Bay, its islands, and the adjacent and distant mainland. Admiral Peary would have agreed.

"Now you see why they call this stuff 'bitch-a-thane'!" Dave advised his co-workers as we wrestled with the roof membrane that goes down under the Roll Roofing. "Ice and Water Shield" (Bituthene) is the modern version of black roofing paper, only it has a tenacious sticking surface on one side to form a solid seal with the roof deck. Unfortunately it forms a solid seal with anything it comes into contact with! And trying to get the 3' wide roll to unroll smoothly onto the roof without gaps, bubbles or contacting itself -- or your hands or clothes -- took some practice and patience. Patience often ran out before practice made perfect! It was no surprise that Dave was on hand when the "bitch-u-thane" had to be laid down. Many



volunteers contributed to the building project; some came on a regular schedule. Some came almost every working day, others contributed just a few days when they could. But whenever there was a tough job, or a nasty job, like slathering roofing cement, or a tedious job, like hand cutting shingles around an immovable rock, Dave was the one of the volunteers there to take it on. The Friends volunteers are truly an amazing group. Steve was often heard to say at the end of the day, "I don't care what others say but you guys do a great job!" Only the latter was true.

"We should have left earlier-- we should have known better!" Dick's 'after the horse escaped' advice was barely audible over the sound of the wind and water punishing the boat as it plunged through the seas that had grown increasingly angry during the afternoon. Late summer often brings stormy seas to Casco Bay and a northwesterly wind directs them right at the island float. But summer was coming to an end all too soon, time was running out, and volunteers were working every possible day to get the Welcome Center shingled, closed in and protected prior to the island's closing. Dick, who had seen such weather many times during his years as leader of the Friend's work crews, was right on both accounts. Fortunately, all four boats returning volunteers to their respective home ports made it home safely. We had had good luck with the weather all summer and our luck held, with this day the only day that conditions made a work day questionable.



"We're both getting older and slower, but the brush strokes are still there", Wayne was encouraging his colleague, Stewart, whom he had pressed into service to tackle the painting that needed to be completed before the island closed for the summer. And what a stroke of luck it was to have them volunteer at a critical time! They both had been professional painters during the summer in their early teaching years, and their expertise is clearly evident in the staining and painting of the trim and window and door casings and, especially, the varnishing of the front and rear doors that now look suitable for an America's cup yacht. The protection of the new windows and trim was the top priority, but their experience and effort have given the Welcome Center not only protection, but the look of professional care. Funny how it makes all the other construction look so much better!

".....", Virtual silence from inside the building as Shirley and Janet were intently staining and polyurethaning the inside of 9 windows. While chatter was ongoing and continuous outside as shingle after shingle was nailed to the siding, there was silence within. When chided for their lack of contribution to the chatter, the girls simply responded that the pounding on the four walls surrounding them made conversation within impossible. But the task they faced must have been daunting as well. Nine large windows, each double hung with 6 over 6 panes in each window, amounts to 108 panes and each mullion had to receive two coats. Now double that for the outside of the windows as well. There couldn't have been much energy left for chatter! Yet



another example of when a job needed to be done, volunteers stepped up to assure it was accomplished.

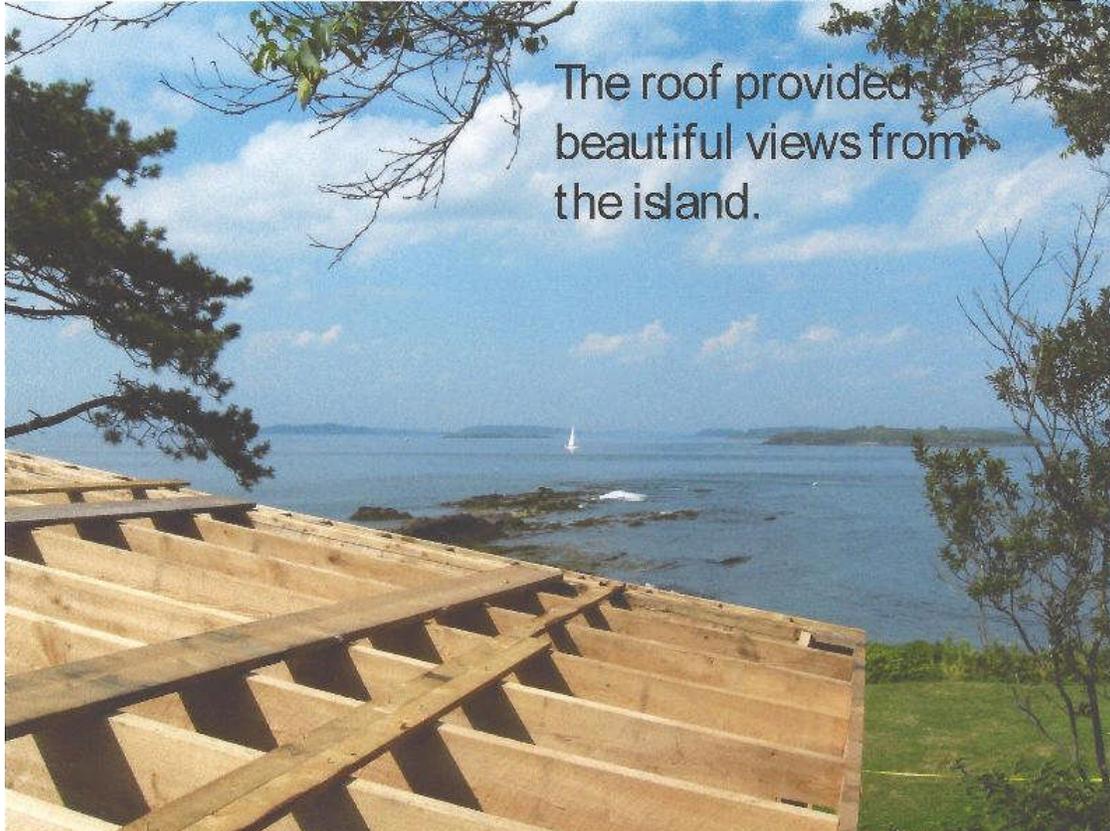
"That's it!" Nick announces to co-volunteers as he takes the last shingle just cut by Steve, starts two nails in it, and hands it up the scaffolding to Bob and Steve (the second of three Steve volunteers) so that all four volunteers can share in getting that last shingle into place. Not planned, not orchestrated, just seemed like what should be done -- and indicative of the teamwork that characterized this project throughout the summer.

It was an amazing phenomenon, really, to be part of and to experience. Different volunteers showed up every day, some experienced, most with no prior skill or training; most beyond (some well beyond) retirement; but all with energy, a disarming sense of humor, and a commitment to contribute as a team member to

do what needed to be done. How does this happen? It can't be required; it can't be mandated; certainly shouldn't be expected. Could it be that Eagle Island is indeed, a magical place?

In any case, the Welcome Center now has built into it the volunteers' shared commitment to help celebrate an American hero and preserve and protect Admiral Peary's Eagle Island. It will be a suitable center for the Friends' docents to continue their characteristic Eagle Island welcome to all visitors.

*Steve*



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## Thank You



We are extremely fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers who look at spending a day working on Eagle Island as a vacation. We try to take every opportunity to say thank you but that never seems enough. First and foremost we are grateful to our members who generously give us the dollars that allow us to perform all the projects and jobs we do on Eagle Island. We are grateful to the intrepid docents and the wonderful job they do. We are grateful to those hard working guys and gals who each year make "trail day" such a great success. We are grateful for the volunteers who work with the flowers and more importantly with the gardens which were so difficult this year. And most

important we are grateful for those expert carpenters and workers who put the Welcome Center together, under very difficult conditions. And last we are grateful to Zane Wallace the new Park Manager, who helped us put this all together. Our volunteers gave us something on the order of 4000 hours of work this year and Zane and his assistants were always there to help us along. This is in addition to his own important work. Volunteers truly are the heart and soul of everything we do on the island and the generosity of our members make it all possible. You all have our admiration and most sincere thanks. *The Friends*

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