



# 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

When I first read Admiral Peary's motto *Inveniam viam aut Faciam* (Find a way or make one) it seemed to explain a lot about his personality and why he was successful where others had failed. Dogged determination solves many problems. To make any substantive change on his Island requires that the "Friends" follow Peary's example. Eagle Island is a State Historic Site and change doesn't come easy. First we have to have the Bureau of Parks and Lands approval. Since Eagle Island is within the boundaries of the Town of Harpswell the Town's zoning ordinances and building permits apply. The DEP has a keen interest in shoreline protection so a permit is required from them. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission keeps a watchful eye on all "Historic Sites" so their approval is required, and if construction is involved, the plans have to be approved by a State certified Engineer. The array of permits required can be daunting. It is tempting at times to say "We can't get there from here" and just give up. But then, with the Admiral's motto ringing in our ears, we press on.

Case in point is our proposal to build a Welcome Center near the head of the pier near where Bob's workshop used to stand. We've been working since last September with the Bureau of Parks and Lands and later with the Town of Harpswell, to secure all these necessary permits. Thanks to a lot of good people we have made progress, but we are not there yet. We must now wait until June when the voters of Harpswell will be asked to approve an amendment to the shoreline zoning ordinance that should facilitate the final approval of our project. This will be called "The Eagle Island Historic District" and will be most helpful if we should ever need to make critical improvements to the site in the future. All of which suggests to me that we should add "patience" to the Admiral's "dogged determination" label.

*Harry Rich*

## The Eagle Island Docent Program

This very successful FRIENDS volunteer group is gearing up for the 2011 summer season and welcomes interested newcomers to join! Docents are the Island's ambassadors. The goal of the program is to make our visitors feel warmly welcome and have a memorable experience as they learn about Admiral Robert E. Peary, his family life on the island, and the beauty of the island itself.

A Docent day is a full day's commitment: 9AM to 5PM, usually weekends, and involves a boat commute from Dolphin Marina provided by Eagle Island staff. You must bring what you'll need for the day's outing. We cancel in bad weather.

No experience is necessary! We will give you plenty of training materials, orientation time and co-worker backup. You will have a great time yourself as you learn more about Peary and his beautiful island, and then share your knowledge and enthusiasm with the visitors.

For more information or to sign up contact Marnee Small, Docent Coordinator, 833-2853 or email [marnee26@comcast.net](mailto:marnee26@comcast.net).

## The Monument in Greenland



Photograph from Wide World  
THE PEARY MEMORIAL AT CAPE YORK, GREENLAND

(Photo taken at the dedication, 1932)

of the Admiral and others despite the fact that in 1932 money was very tight.

All the provisions, equipment, mortar and the non corrosive metal top for the monument were loaded on Capt Bob's boat the *Morrissey*. With Marie (photo at right) and her 2 sons Ed and Peary aboard, they left New York and of course immediately ran into heavy fog. Fortunately Capt. Bob had decided to take a cow to his mother in Newfoundland who although she drank almost all the ship's water, did provide a safe passage. She always moaned loudly whenever she heard a fog horn. When she was put ashore at Newfoundland, the rationing of water



Marie on the *Morrissey* doing all the paperwork

aboard ship was stopped but they certainly missed the automatic fog horn. There, they picked up Alexander M. Wells, the Master Mason and several other Masons as well.



EDWARD AND PEARY STAFFORD IN GREENLAND

Finally they arrived at Cape York and saw the enormous task of getting the materials 1000 feet up to the top of Cape York. They immediately went up and found all the stone that they might need scattered around the site. So now all they needed was to get the mortar up there as well. The plan had been to get as many Eskimos as needed to carry the material up to the top as well as to do the building of the monument under the direction of the Masons. Before they did that however they had to find food for everyone and so embarked on a giant and successful walrus hunt.



Capt. Bob, Peary Stafford, and Marie  
on shore in Greenland

Both Ed and Peary were expert marksmen and proved most helpful. Since Marie and Capt. Bob had been here many times, they had no trouble finding Eskimos that knew them and the Admiral too. The Eskimos used dog sleds to get all the material and provisions up to the heights and set up camp there. They had less than 6 weeks to complete the work. Meanwhile, Marie had the time to visit with all her old Eskimo friends and to introduce them to Ed and Peary. They all had a wonderful time.

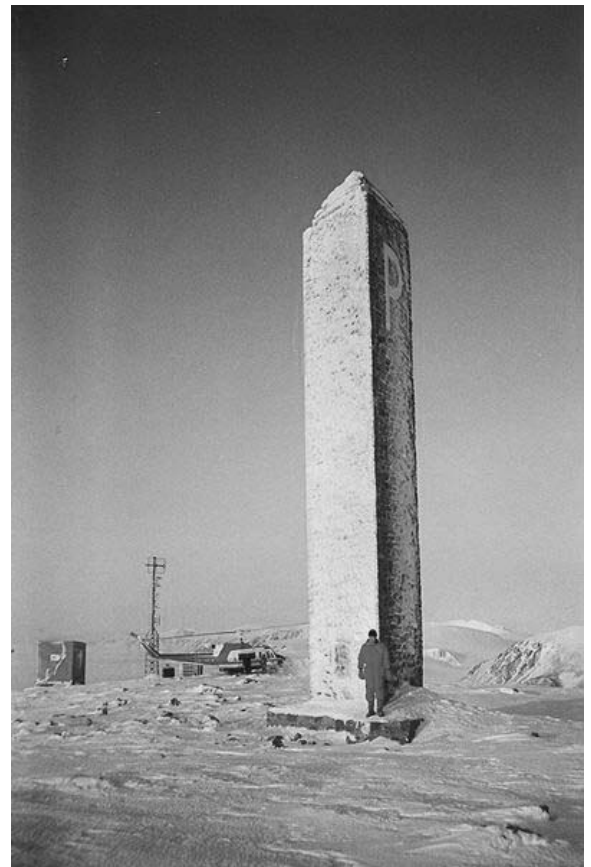
Finally with the monument almost complete, Marie decided it was time to distribute her gifts to the Eskimos. She had brought a recording of the Admiral's voice for Ootah one of the four Eskimos with him at the pole. In Marie's own words--

*"At the beginning when my father had started to speak, Ootah had given a little gasp but whether it was surprise or emotion, I couldn't tell. Slowly, and with a little shake of his powerful frame, Ootah wrenched himself back to the present.' You have given this record to me?'" he asked.*

*Yes, I said, I brought it just for you. 'May I do anything I wish with it?' he asked again. Why, of course, I answered. Without another word Ootah removed the record from the phonograph and broke it into pieces across his knee. Turning to me, he said, 'to hear Peary's voice and know I will never see him again, that I could not stand..' Then silently he left the cabin."*

*"All through the summer of 1932 the Eskimos put their own interests aside and worked faithfully at building the monument. When the work was completed, two weeks ahead of the scheduled time, I wanted to pay them for their labor, not in money, but with what were to them priceless treasures: guns, ammunition, wood for harpoon handles and sledge runners, steel for fox traps, and needles for the women. But when I offered these things to them, they were indignant to the point of anger. They said, 'You built this here because you love Peary, and we have worked on it because we love Peary, and for a work of love, no one accepts pay.' To my mind this was the finest tribute my father ever received."*

Excerpted from two books by Marie Ahnighito Peary Stafford: "The Snowbaby's Own Story" (1934) and "Discoverer of the North Pole" (1959).



The Monument as it looked in 1999

## Eagle Island Welcomes You!

Eagle Island, Admiral Robert E. Peary's summer home and now a State of Maine Historical Site, welcomes all visitors to the 2011 summer season! And to make sure your welcome is a memorable start to your visit, we plan to construct a Welcome Center, to be located as you walk off the dock onto the island. The Welcome Center will be placed near the site of Robert E. Peary Jr.'s workshop which he built as a young man under the watchful guidance of his father. The architecture of the Welcome Center will conform to the original workshop and the interior will display many of the tools characteristic of the tools from the original workshop.

As you walk onto the island and into the Welcome Center you will be able to view the 10 minute video, "Admiral Robert E. Peary- A Man and His Island" which chronicles the background of this American hero, his discovery of the North Pole, and his love of Maine and his Eagle Island. You will also be able to pick up an audio wand that offers a self guided walking tour of the Peary Museum and the island trails. Much of the audio is narrated by Cmdr. Ed Stafford, USN, Retired, a grandson of the Admiral, who led personal tours of the island for many years and whose stories of summers on the island as a young man have captured the imagination of generations of visitors.

The Friends of Peary's Eagle Island, a nonprofit support group, whose mission is to celebrate an American Hero and to preserve the State treasure that is Eagle Island, is working with the State of Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands to make the Welcome Center move from the drafting table to a reconstruction of the original workshop. The materials and much of the labor will be supplied by Friends volunteers. Construction can begin once the citizens of the Town of Harpswell approve an amendment to the Harpswell Shoreland Zoning Ordinance establishing the Eagle Island Historic District as a shoreland zoning district. Voting on this amendment will take place during the June Special Town Meeting. Your support for this amendment is encouraged to enable the Welcome Center to be built as near to the original site of the Peary workshop as possible, while meeting State Department of Environmental Protection requirements and Harpswell shoreland zoning criteria.

And so, assuming the project is approved, **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS**, to help with the construction of the Welcome Center. If you can donate your time and energy to this project, mostly on weekdays during the summer, please call me. Expertise recommended: ability to use a hammer in one hand while keeping the fingers of the other hand 'out of harm's way'! Eagle Island looks forward to welcoming you this summer-as a visitor, as a worker, as a Friend

*Steve Ingram*  
833-6182

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