Peaks Island Times : Jan 1978

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FIFTH MAINE REGIMENT

COMMUNITY CENTER

Photo - Paul Whitney
MORE ON FOUR
EDITORIAL

The Peaks Island Times has made it through six issues - just barely! Many people do not realize how difficult it is to produce a finished product such as the Times. The staff has found itself writing more and more of the articles, and spending more and more of its time, for each issue. To continue as we are certainly limits the content of the paper as well as creates a strain on the people involved.

We are directly appealing to you to contribute to your newspaper... with articles (why not write of your winter activities off the island, or write about your remembrances of Peaks Island, or write about people on Peaks Island, or on and on and on...), and production time if possible. We would also like someone to help with our advertising - we pay 10% on any size ad which is published in the Times. Many of the organizations on the island have not yet been brought to the light of the public. We welcome a little expose of all groups and their history.

So please - help us to continue with a vehicle of communication so necessary to a small community.

Please watch for the opening of our very own Peaks Island branch of the Portland Public Library sometime in January 1978.

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Thank you, Ed.
US OR THEM?

Ben Lasky

Is it us or them? Are Islanders a bit touched or is it the rest of the world?.. While it is not quite that dichotomous a question, most mainlanders and tourists agree; the islander is a slightly crazed specimen of humanity.

Sitting in waterfront taverns, I have perchanced more than once to overhear the typical, layman's shallow view of the islander. According to this view, the islander is envisioned as one part moron, two parts hermit and three part masocist... and upon careful examination I have concluded this view is not entirely incorrect.

True, the rigors of island life do incorporate degrees of hermitage and masochism. And at times it is indeed moronic to willfully submit oneself to the inconveniences. The inconveniences; the pitiless feeling in your gut when you miss the 11:30pm boat. The humiliation of a fright charge on your pet goldfish. Being blown over by unobstructed north-east gusts of winter. And for some, the realization that a winter-water line will cost a paltry $25,000.00 to install.

Beyond inconveniences, it is true the islanders mentality is a bit more lightly than that of a mainlander. And due to spacial confines, it is true that those well guarded secrets do tend to surface with the regularity and magnitude of "Days of our lives".

But hold it right there! Who do they think they are? Before I defile the islanders existence any further, let it be known mainlanders are no closer to nirvana. They have problems not dissimilar to those of the islander.

Mainlanders too have inconveniences, for instance, the pitiless feeling in their gut when they get mugged in a subway. The humiliation of paying $4.00 for a one pound lobster. Being blown over by the unobstructive smell of a teeming metropolis. And for some, the realization that their water legally cannot be called water. Beyond inconvenience, it is true the mainlanders mentality is a bit more mechanical than that of the islander. And true due to spacial confines the mainlander never experiences the joy of discovering any well guarded secrets beyond "Days of our lives".

Actually, what it all boils down to is that the islander is somewhat moronic, hermit-like and masochistic. And so too, is your mainlander. But at least this plebian islander has the good sense to admit it.

Re recent calls heard for the resurrection of the town style meeting for Peaks Island:

As most of us are by now aware, until relatively recent years there was a Peaks Island Council, a publicly elected body of Peaks residents which held public assemblies in the "town meeting" style of local government. The concept of a town meeting combines a set of those particular attributes which can in a natural way be used to describe all islanders - fairness, openness, and individuality. A sense of heritage, of warm community generosity. A sincere desire to be heard and to have all others be heard. A need to feel a part of those decisions that affect the lives of those fortunate in having the privilege to call this uniquely beautiful environment "home".

For whatever reasons, this public body expired long ago, leaving nothing in its place to act as an acceptable and generally recognized public forum, nothing to unify and give definition and purpose to the rich diversity of our opinions. As a result, and with rare exceptions, our public opinion has been fragmented, insular, and at times hostile. And in recent years these effects have produced increasingly evident consequences. Government agencies alternately overlook us or attempt to foist upon us extravagant and ill-conceived projects with neither the knowledge of the island environment and its people nor willingness to learn. Meanwhile, the needs of the islanders - all islanders, not just here on Peaks - grow cancerously as they are persistantly ignored by government bodies too fat or busy to care.

Must we simply accept such shoddy treatment always as being unavoidable or routine? I think not. Many people noticed how abruptly some rather excessive and disastrous plans were halted when an eleventh-hour public meeting held at the Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center last August revealed a startlingly vociferous and popular opposition. True, this case is perhaps rare and isolated. But it serves demonstrably the the resurrection of the town meeting on Peaks Island - besides being of tremendous practical value - is indeed a real possibility. The democratic process of making public decisions thrives only because of individuals and their differences not despite them. 11/77 Steve Roberts
FIFTH MAINE REGIMENT
COMMUNITY CENTER:

Readers of the Peaks Island Times will recall an earlier issue featuring an article which heralded a "new chapter" in the Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center. That article, as well as facing the building in an historical context, tried to present an outline of a campaign intended to more firmly establish the Fifth Maine in the community as a working year-round center for community affairs. True, as its name attests, the Fifth Maine is in fact a community center. Most importantly, this Community Center is actually a legacy given by its former owners to the "community" of Peaks Island, and is being held in trust and operated by the organized membership. Apparently many residents have been unaware of this unique heritage, which gives all of us as residents a share in overseeing the manner in which this Center serves its community.

To anyone who has noticed at this time of year, the Fifth Maine has customarily been a boarded-up and lifeless bulk, a reminder of warm weather and summer residents long since departed for home.

This year, however, the familiar pattern has been changed, and hopefully will not occur again. For although the building's windows have been boarded up against winter, the people of the Community Center have been keeping it open for limited - but growing use. So far since the traditional closing date of October 15th, the building has been used as a meeting place on several occasions, mostly by the planning committee which is supervising the activities of restoration workers supplied by the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (C.E.T.A.) program. Several meeting occasions of various kinds are anticipated, all of a public nature, for the winter and spring months ahead. One such meeting has already been set: On TUESDAY, JANUARY 10th at 7:30 an open meeting will be held for those residents interested in the formation of a Community Building Committee, which will make recommendations to the City Council on the expenditure of $235,000.00 of Community Development Program funds on Peaks Island.

And at 8:30 P.M. on the same date another open meeting of the on-going Water Quality Study Committee will be held. It is appropriate that the Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center be used as the public forum necessary to initiate these activities. Indeed it is rather symbolic of the Center's own revitalization.

The anticipated revitalization does not imply any quick, easy or cheap solutions to the serious problems facing the Center and those of us who are concerned for its welfare. As we are still learning, costs for necessary construction materials are painfully high, and rising. Despite such an obstacle, there remains much needed work on the building that can be accomplished using our own resources. Much of this work is largely of a preparatory nature relative to the major projects which must be performed if the building is to be properly rehabilitated. Critical repairs to the main roof, dining room roof, upper windows, foundation piers and heating system are now being performed. Other repairs will be made in the dining room, main hall, upper story and the exterior. Painting, insulating, servicing and remodeling activities will keep this years project schedule quite full. Simultaneous efforts will be made in the fund raising area to secure a sufficient amount of money from a variety of sources. Contributions will be sought from the Maine Historical Preservation Commission, City of Portland, Civil War groups and buffs from around the country, private foundations, businesses, all interested individuals and other potential sources.

Already, one anonymous donor, an exceptionally kind-hearted and beneficent lady long known for her interest in the wellbeing of the island community, recently contributed $1000.00 toward vital repairs.

Those persons who suspect that the rehabilitation of a building such as this one will require enormous amounts of effort and time, with an equal measure of luck, may complacently rest in the knowledge that they are correct. They may also rest in the knowledge that there are others who believe that such efforts are worth the time, especially for a goal with the potential to reveal an added and vital dimension not only for the Fifth Maine membership, but for all of the Peaks Island community. That "new chapter" is surely unfolding, although not without difficulty. None of us should expect miraculous transformations to occur, but neither should we expect to see our Community Center again respond only to the call of a frolicsome summertime.

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Steve Roberts
People become residents of Peaks Island and quite often even in this small community, they sometimes do not become known to everyone. So may I introduce Rev. Henry Huddleston and family of wife, Marjory; sons, Mark and Matthew and daughter, Holly. Also very much a part of their family is their dog, Heidi, the fattest, friskiest and friendliest of its breed anywhere around. Their cat, Herbie, with a mind of his own, left the family circle this summer while they were attending camp in E. Machias. They are very hopeful that he has found a home with a local woman who harbors thirty odd cats in her barn.

The Huddlestons joined the islanders last June 24th, when he became the pastor of the Hilltop Church. They made the long trek from Limestone, in the county which to Mainers has to mean the Aroostook.

Rev. Henry was born in Whitman, Mass., which is located halfway between Boston and Plymouth. The city is most famous for the original Toll House. He is not entirely unfamiliar with the coastal life for as a teenager he served as a deck hand on the ferries operating around Cape Cod. He also served his country in the Navy as a Seabee.

He gave credit to two strong forces in his life that caused him to get further education: the GI benefits and a sincerely concerned Jewish friend. Rev. Huddleston and his friend used to don their hats and join eight older men to form the necessary quorum at the Temple. He

Went to Northeastern University and the connecting Law School. Lastly he graduated from the Bangor Seminary.

His first pastorate was in Berkley, R. I., pastoring the same church that Norman Vincent Peale served for his first assignment. Then according to the Methodist tradition he began his moving about. The next church was in E. Mansfield, Mass. where he was in the process of growing tomatoes under glass. The third move was a long one to the parishes of Patten and Smyrna Mills, Maine. Then he was deep in potato country. His fourth move was another big jump to Washington County. This time he was not too far from the sea. There he served a total of seven churches scattered between Addison, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Harrington, and Millbridge, Maine. He found the adults in each of those towns very competitive with the neighboring town and a strong reluctance to mingle because it wasn't the custom. However the youth groups were very sociable.

CONT. PAGE 7

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an honest attempt to
re-establish quality
and craftsmanship as
primary goals in the
building trades.
Since the first issue of the "Peaks Island Times" in June, articles have been written each month concerning the need for a means of enhancing the communication channels among the residents of Peaks Island and those levels of government having a direct effect on our lives.

As Rev. Michael E. Davis stated in June, "I think if I were asked to share one personal dream for the island it would be that we have some sort of island council again. It would be an open forum with no dues and regular meeting times. Perhaps we could elect representatives who could form listening posts for community concerns to be discussed at a council meeting. It would not represent any one political or economic viewpoint but could provide a forum for all. An island council could give increased credibility to spokespeople from the island to the city and state by voting on stated positions and presenting a unified voice. It could provide a place for us to get to know each other and work together to deepen our sense of community and insure the quality of life on the island."

Since these words appeared in the "Times", two crucial issues occurred which impacted all citizens of the island; the water quality study and the public safety building. The manner in which these issues were presented to the island proved to many of us the need for improved input into the decision making process which affects us all.

In the last two months numerous citizens of the island representing no existing organization have been discussing the problem of communication. From these discussions two ideas have evolved:
1.) To have a Town Meeting where information could be shared, ideas and problems discussed and solutions decided upon.
2.) To have island selectmen who would be responsible for working with City and State groups and communicating island needs.

Although these ideas are still in the formative stages, we have been impressed with the response and enthusiasm generated so far.

On January 22nd at 2:00 P.M., we invite all islanders to the Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center to discuss their approval, disapproval or ideas for improving the concept.

If the response from the meeting and from other means used to contact as many islanders as possible is positive, we will move to hold the first Town Meeting in either February or March.

Join us on January 22nd to give your ideas and feedback. You will be heard.

Rob Tiffany
In the first issue of the Times, I wrote about two pieces of legislation that the Island Citizens Assn. was hav- ing sponsored in the then current session. The two bills were voted out of Committee with a study recommendation, and we are now trying to have the same two bills reconsidered. The legislation is as follows:

L.D. 937 - An act relating to transportation to Islands in Casco Bay. Sponsored by: David Brennerman and cosponsored by Merle Nelson. This bill allows for limited flexibility in transportation on Casco Bay by island residents who wish to travel at times not covered by Casco Bay Lines. The purpose of this bill is to allow boats to carry 6 or fewer persons for compensation.

L.D. 1015 - An act enabling creation of a transit district in Casco Bay. Sponsored by: Larry Connolly. The purpose of this bill is to establish a transit district in Casco Bay. It will run as a nonprofit, publicly owned mass transit district.

We now need support of islanders. If you want to see either or both of these bills become reality, please write to the following address and express your opinions:

Ted Potter
Office of Legis Assistants
Room 427
State House
Augusta, ME 04330

I think it is very important for the people in the Bay to realistically attempt to provide the best, most convenient and cheapest transportation to the Islands. A problem exists and we are attempting to solve it.

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Church News Cont.

That area is noted for its blueberries. It produces 90% of the blueberries in the USA. From there he headed north again to Limestone to be the minister for the most northern United Methodist Church in New England. Life in Limestone and Caswell was totally landlocked. It was a fairly large church with 388 members, mostly residents of Limestone, with a slight influence by Loring Air Force Base.

This year he reversed himself with a very long move south to Peaks Island. In his opinion this area is comparable to the scenery and lifestyle of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard on Cape Cod and he is quite at home. He has become conscious of three divisions of people. The lines are not that abrupt but he feels them. The influx of summer residents is quite cosmopolitan. Then we have our solid permanent residents made up of our older folks and young families who are involved in the activities of the island. In the past few years we have been receiving many new young intellectuals — doctors, lawyers and other professionals. He remarked on the particularly high quality of life he has found on Peaks. There is so much concern and interest for the growth and character here on this bit of rock in Casco Bay.

At Brackett Memorial his only goal is to fully support the on-going programs. He did feel that perhaps the youth groups could be brought closer to the study of the scriptures and to move away from just recreational activities.

When you see a jolly man, quite a bit over 6 feet tall and beside him a lady with twinkling eyes walk up to them and you will meet two very friendly and folksy people.

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