Island History

QUO1E...from Peaks Island, an Affectionate History: "FROM THE WHARF, THE ROAD UP THE HILL TO ISLAND AVENUE STILL HAS THE ORIGINAL COBBLESTONES. (A ROUGH BUT HISTORIC STRETCH)."

Why if we have since the beginning of time been trying to protect the history, culture, and environment of our island, are we now going to remove the cobblestone portion of Welch Street coming up from the dock?

We know the City of Portland has protected their cobblestone streets in the Old Port (Moulton Street, Wharf Street, etc.). Nantucket protected their Main Street, Newport, along the waterfront, numerous streets in Boston and all the other Port communities in the United States and around the world. It appears to be one more of the benefits taken away from Peaks Islanders without an Island vote. The cobblestones can be taken up and re-laid in conformance with standard specifications for that type of construction. Some people have related that it is a safety factor, that the stones are too slippery to walk on. After they relay the stones there will be a sidewalk on both sides of the road this should take care of that problem.

I'm questioning where our tax dollars are going. It would cost less money to pave Welch Street than to replace the cobblestones, but look around, we have 55 gallon drums for

Our Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center

Did you know that as residents of Peaks Island we are inheritors of a unique NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK which was deeded to our island community in 1956? That's right! WE are responsible for the maintenance and operation of a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Some of you may ask, "What's so special about an old wooden building that looks like it has seen better days?" Those in the know will reply, "Plenty!"

Following the Civil War many regiments built memorials to their fallen comrades. Other groups of veterans built Grand Army of the Republic halls to serve all veterans living in a particular locale. They functioned much like our American Legion hall here on the Island. Most of these have disappeared, victims of neglect or fire. Yet the Fifth Maine has remained in constant use. It has become an integral part of our community.

Built in 1888 by veterans themselves as both a memorial and as a vacation home for them and their families, it continued to be used by their descendants until 1956 when it was given to the people of Peaks Island. It was their wish that the building be preserved as a museum and, at the time, continue an active roll in the community. The result was the formation of a nonprofit corporation, The Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center. Membership is open to all though it is not necessary to become a member in order to participate in the center's activities and programs.

The building itself is unique in that few structures of this type and age remain. It is also unique in that few, if any, Civil War Memorials function as a community center. Our members are committed to the continued preservation of the building and insuring that the Fifth Maine retains an active roll in the community. To that end we need your help. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer in many different ways.

We also need your financial support. In the past islanders have donated over $150,000 of their own money towards the restoration and preservation of the building. Their generosity coupled with various grants have funded the work thus far. However, much remains to be done. Our stained glass memorial windows have begun to deteriorate. Without remedial treatment in the very near future, we will lose them. It is up to us as conservators of this historic property to raise the needed funds. Please call me at 766-2308 for more information about this project or the Fifth Maine in general. Or if you prefer, send your tax deductible donation to P.O. Box 41 Peaks Island, Me.

The Fifth Maine represents a part of our community's heritage. We hope that you will consider helping us to preserve that heritage.

For the Fifth Maine,
Kim Erico MacIsaac
Peaks Island Opinion

A place where we can agree to disagree; this is the intellectually open environment we value in our community, and hope to nourish in this forum.

We depend upon our sponsors for funding. Thank them for making this forum financially possible.

Staff:
Editor/Publisher: Jenny Yasi
Design/Production: Albert Presgraves, Marty Burnette, Norm Proulx
Finance Officer: MaryJane Burnette
Illustrations Editor: Julie Weisburg
Writers and Illustrators: Alex Agnew, Terry Cline, Marjorie Erico, Robert B. Love, Donna Marchinetti, Kim Erico Malsac, Albert Presgraves, and Jenny Yasi.
Board of Advisors: Rev. Gretchen Hall, Kathy Caron, Cynthia Cole, Laurie Cox, Ellen Tripp, Betty Heller, Steve Schuit, Albert Presgraves
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Please call Jenny Yasi: 766-2604
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Battery Steele News

What's happening with the STAR Foundation and Battery Steele? Without going into the long version of the story, here is a very brief status report.

STAR Foundation is ready to sell Battery Steele. When it was purchased, there were several restrictions placed on the deed including a prohibition against dividing the property for residential house lots. These deed restrictions are enforced by the Oceanside Conservation Trust, who recently received a letter from STAR Foundation requesting permission to cut a five acre lot from the property and sell it. The remaining 8 acres would be deeded to the City of Portland or some responsible Island organization for public use. The Oceanside Conservation Trust is not inclined to give STAR permission to sell off the 5 acre lot, unless it is the only way for the rest of the property to be controlled by a group that will take care of it.

A group of people on the Island have formed the "Battery Steele Association," and would like to see Battery Steele controlled and managed by Islanders in a responsible and environmentally appropriate way. Membership is open to all Islanders. The current group does not want to see a major part of the property sold for another house lot on the back shore. This means that a substantial amount of money will need to be raised in order to buy the entire property as it now exists.

A public meeting is scheduled for June 14, probably at the Fifth Maine to present more information about the situation. Look for posters announcing the meeting. In the meantime, if anyone has questions, you can call me at 766-2604, or Ralph Ashmore (2981), or Jonathan Stevens (2561), or Claudia Whitman (2418).

Albert Presgraves

Friends of Peaks Island Animals

Toward the end of this past winter, The Friends of Peaks Island Animals was asked to rescue a domestic rabbit that had either been released by a family on Peaks or escaped (apparently with no attempt by its owners to recover it). Other people helped keep it alive by putting out food for it until our group was able to rescue it in late March, by which time the rabbit was suffering from an eye abrasion. The rabbit was taken to the Animal Refuge League's shelter in Westbrook and was adopted within a week. (Another rabbit owned by the same family was not so lucky; it, too, ended up outside and on its own in the fall and disappeared this winter.)

Domestic animals, whether they're rabbits, cats, dogs, etc. do not revert to the wild upon being released or abandoned. The traits and skills that give wild animals a fighting chance of survival are bred out of domestic animals to make them suitable pets. Most abandoned or stray animals live and die in pain from cold, hunger, disease, injuries, and infections.

Of course, accidents happen; but putting or leaving a pet out to fend for itself nearly always condemns the animal to suffering and death. Pet owners have a responsibility to treat their pets with sufficient care (an to see that their children do too) so that such a life-threatening fate does not befall their pets.

If your pet does get into a situation where it's forced to fend for itself, or if you know of someone's pet in these circumstances, please call us right away at 766-5606 so that we can try to rescue the animal before it gets sick or injured or too frightened of people to be rescued. People cause most of the suffering that befalls animals, but we can work together to prevent or relieve that suffering.

The Friends of Peaks Island Animals meets every second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Senior Center; please join us.

Donna Marchinetti
History

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trash cans, see if you can find any in the Old Port area or throughout the City, paved and concrete sidewalks where Portland has brick sidewalks, abandon vehicles in the parking lot and all over the Island. Have you ever noticed the flower plantings (roses, tulip beds, geraniums, marigolds, etc.) in downtown Portland, the Old Port, going out Brighton Ave, Deering Oaks, Washington Ave, etc... Where's our flowers? I have asked the department of Public Works, George Flaherty for four years for flowers which I would plant.

Furthermore, Peaks Island since it's hey day in the late 1800's was the entertainment center of New England (Little Coney Island), to a lot of us a summer retreat. One of our major pastimes was meeting with friends from all over the country, toasting marshmallows, cooking hotdogs, and good old Maine Lobster Bakes over an open fire, telling all about our winter. Old Paradigm:
no more beach fires, which has action And now because of a few Conditioned past x present action individuals the city is telling us been a tradition since the New Paradigm:

Opinions

April Survey:
Last month we asked for suggestions for a guiding principle for the Peaks Island opinion. We got two wonderful responses:

From Marjorie Erica:
For the mission statement I would like to suggest the following as the #1 guiding principle because if one does not respect themselves to begin with nothing will work:
To respect ourselves and our properties, to show respect to all peoples, their properties, values, and their religious beliefs, to respect the laws, law givers and law protectors, to show respect for our flag and country.
Thank you and keep up the good work of the Opinion.

From Terry Cline:
Old Paradigm:
Conditioned past x present action = Anticipated Future.
New Paradigm:
Lessons from past x desired future = Present Form & Action.

Planting Seeds

I’m pulling two children in a bike trailer behind me, headed to drop one off at kindergarten, and one at Martha’s. It’s the perfect Maine morning. The sunshine has a cool blue tinge, budding leaves layer a soft green behind tulips and daffodils. My legs are strong, my children bright and cheerful. I am living a life I love, planted in a spot that is nurturing and safe.

The kids are loud in the playground as we arrive, stampeding around the Principal as he swings one end of a jumprope. Our bicycle settled out of the way of the stream of parents and kisses and lunchboxes, we unsnap a helmet and seth belt to drop off our six year old. Sophie kisses her sister, then me, tosses the Beauty and the Beast backpack over one shoulder and charges into play.

I am grateful for the scale of this neighborhood school, grateful for the creativity and warmth set by the the parents, Principal and the teachers. With fewer than one hundred students, it’s not too surprising to hear the fifth grade teacher greet my kindergartener by name, but still it makes me smile, and deepens my sense of gratitude as I slip back on the bike and down the hill.

Martha’s garden, when we arrive, is newly fenced with fishing net. “It as least gives the children a visual boundary, though they could climb out from under it if I wasn’t watching!” Her eyes twinkle, looking across rainbows of tulips and daffodils in bloom. Three year old Elizabeth, wearing a cape and tophat, waves a scarf out the door at me. Martha’s home has expansive views of the bay, and a dappled sunporch with sand box and water table. We hear soft music, and smell buttered toast. My youngest chirrups a gleeful goodbye, skipping up the stone walk, and now the morning is mine.

My sense of home and family

is more expansive than it has ever been, in this decade I have lived on Peaks Island. What once felt to me like an isolated enclave, my living room, garden, and sense of family, has blended into a fabric of community, into a network of families.

As I pedal home, I overflow with gratitude. While it is easy in this world to give in to feelings of darkness and depression, and our media teaches us to deepen that darkness with many negative actions, there is a courageous network of people here who encourage one another through the overwhelming task of staying sane in the nineties. How can any family thrive and grow without the care and commitments made by other families? What looks so easy this morning, a principal swinging a jump rope, a father kissing his son, a young woman’s understanding of spunky children, is really the flowering of thoughtful and sustained efforts of the part of many individuals.

At home, I feel the good things created by my neighbors. No, Peaks Islander’s don’t always ‘mind their own business’ The shared concern when one of us suffers, the shared celebration when one of us is happy, the sense that one person is everybody’s business: this deepens our lives.

Today some neighbors are planting zucchini’s, some coaching baseball, some scheduling the talent show. In all these efforts, the rewards are shared among us all. I’m beginning to see how the effort it takes to be a good parent, to learn how to truly love, to nurture the peace and safety within a family, like a stone dropped in water, ripples into our community. To become “solid as a mountain and fresh as a flower” (as Thich Nhat Hahn describes it) how can we do this alone? How lucky we are to share this place!

Jenny Yasi

Dear Peaks Island Opinion:

Good news! The stars and skies and beautiful ocean will once again be visible at night on the back shore! The City has agreed to turn off 8 streetlights on Seashore Ave, on a trial basis starting this summer. As Peaks Island residents know, the back shore has always been almost entirely unlit at night except for the stretch of road along the shore from Joe Bean’s house to Marianne Green’s next to Onway Road. Now most of this beautiful stretch of shore will be open to the night sky as desired by year round residents of this part of Seashore Ave. The City pays CMP $10 per month per light in electric costs and has agreed that the money saved can be transferred to lights in other areas of Peaks Island where they may be needed or wanted. Year-round residents living in sight of these lights support the trial changes. Other interested Islanders may contact the City or residents of the area.

submitted by Alex Agnew

June 1994
Herbalist Deb Soule of Avena Botanicals (of Rockport, Maine) will be here, teaching a class on Medicine Garden Design on Sunday June 26, with Jenny Yasi in her Peaks Island garden. The fee for the day long event is $50 - or some garden work exchange is available. This is a great chance to spend time with a nationally recognized herbal master, and to play outside in the flowers. Lunch is vegetarian potluck. Call Jenny (766-2604) for more information.

The Opinion is trying to pull together a directory of volunteer island organizations, and community services. If you serve as a volunteer coordinator or contact person for an island based group or service (such as food co-ops, study group, health or special interest, service group, etc.) please call Jenny (766-2604) or Mary Jane Burnett (766-4436). We would also be thrilled to list your business in the directory at a reasonable rate. Call Jenny or Mary Jane for details.

As an example of the type of entries we expect in our directory: Peaks Island Cruising Club. Call Ned Shenton (766-5080) to find out all the perks you could get by setting sail with this group.

Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association offers sailing lessons, tennis, and summer day camps. Bob Cary is membership coordinator 766-5548

Is a Garden Club forming?! Call Clare Cary for more info 766-5548

The City of Portland’s Islands Advisory Council meets on the third Wednesday of each month, at 4 p.m. in the Casco Bay Lines conference room. They are open to the public.

Welcome back to summer residents! If you (or year-rounders) are interested in participating in the Maine Council of Churches sponsored ‘Study Circles’ on island issues, please contact Rev. Charlie Hale, 766-5013. They are a fun way to get to know you neighbors in a cooperative dialog format.

Are you interested in listing your event or organization here? Care to join our community of financial sponsors, or can you volunteer? Poets, philanthropists, cartoonists or other interested persons, Call Mary Jane (766-4436) or Jenny (766-2604).

Casco Bay Lines News
- Summer Schedule starts Friday, June 17. It includes a boat: at 8:45 pm from and 10:15 pm to Peaks, 7 days per week!
- The Machigone II got nice, new paint job. The seats weren’t done right at first, but they were all re-painted by the Contractor.
- CBITD is sponsoring meetings on the Islands this summer. The Peaks meeting is on Thursday, August 4, 7:45 at the Community Center.

Everyone Please Note:
The Island speed limit is 20 mph. We care about our children and pets, and we encourage people to enjoy the Island by foot or bicycle.

Congratulations to Susan Merrow & John Carroll on the birth of Hugh Thomas, 8 lbs 3 oz, on May 18.