1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Eagle Island (Admiral Robert E. Peary Summer Home)

Other Name/Site Number: Eagle Island State Historic Site

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior August 25, 2014.

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1.7 miles from Pott's Point, South Harpswell Not for publication:__

City/Town: Harpswell Vicinity:__

State: ME County: Cumberland Code: 005 Zip Code: 04079

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private:	Building(s): X
Public-Local:	District:
Public-State: X	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure:
	Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
buildings	2	buildings	1
sites	1	sites	0
structures	0	structures	1
objects	0	objects	0
Total	3	Total	2

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Sub:
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
LANDSCAPE	natural feature
Current:	Sub:
RECREATION AND CULTURE	museum, outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE	park, natural feature

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials:

Foundation:	fieldstone
Walls:	wood shingles
Roof:	asphalt
Other:	wood trim

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Eagle Island includes two houses built by Robert Peary on a seventeen-acre island that is maintained in its natural state. Located on the north end of the island, the two buildings are the Peary Cottage and the Caretaker's Cottage. The two wood frame houses are built in the Bungalow/Craftsman mode, reflecting the owner's desire for modest summer cottages designed in contemporary architectural fashions. Peary's cottage, the most prominently sited of the two, was constructed in 1904 and enlarged in 1912–13 after his last polar expedition. The additions included an extensive stone terrace and two circular stone rooms at the front of the house built as a study and a storage facility for North Pole artifacts. The house itself is two stories with a gable roof extending down to the first story incorporating a glazed porch on three sides. The glazed porches extend back along the sides of the one-story wing on the south side of the house. In close proximity is the Caretaker's Cottage, also built in 1904, a one-story hip roof house with a porch extending across the west facade that over-looks the ocean.

Eagle Island (Contributing Site)

The island is located in Casco Bay south of Baileys Island in the Town of Harpswell. It is twelve miles northeast of Portland and fifteen miles south of Brunswick. The island forms an irregularly shaped rocky mound that rises forty feet above sea level. Except for the north end where the two houses are located, it is covered with conifer trees and thick underbrush. The north end of the island is Y-shaped with a house on each branch. On the northerly branch is the Peary Cottage and on the westerly branch is the Caretaker's Cottage. In between the two houses are a sandy beach and a long wooden pier, constructed circa 1969, and a small wood "welcome center" constructed in 2012. The siting of Peary's own house is a reflection of his desire to capture the sense of a northern vista looking toward the vast expanse of the ocean and rocky islands mostly devoid of trees. This is reminiscent of the coastlines of Labrador and Greenland that he spent so many years exploring.

Peary Cottage (Contributing Building)

The Peary Cottage is the principal building on the island and occupies a commanding site on a rocky outcrop overlooking the water. This promontory suggests the prow of a ship at the north end of the island, and the siting of the house at this location was presumably intended by Peary in order to convey a sense of voyages on the open sea. The visual prominence of the house is enhanced by the tall foundation of coursed island stone that extends in front to form a long terrace with two circular one room wings, commonly referred to as "bastions." Each bastion is a full story in height. The east bastion is built into a section that forms a steep precipice above the water. On the west side the bastion is part of a terrain that forms a more gradual slope down to the water. The elaborate masonry of the terrace and bastions dramatically alters the visual relationship of the house to the island by providing a platform of coursed fieldstone carved out of the ragged shoreline.

The original wood frame house built in 1904 forms the core of the present building. Essentially, it was a single large living room with three bedrooms above. The sketch and floor plans Peary obtained from a Harpswell contractor, Leon B. Merriman, called for a living room that extended the width of the house with a large porch almost the same size extending across the front. The plans also called for a kitchen, a stair hall, a coat room and a small porch across the rear. A broad gable roof with wide over-hanging eaves encompassed the house on all four sides. In each gable end was a double hung sash flanked by oval windows. Wood shingles covered the exterior and a fieldstone chimney barely protruded from the center of the ridge line.

Peary departed from Merriman's proposal by eliminating the kitchen and closet in favor of a larger porch on the rear of the house. A photograph of the original living room fireplace shows an exterior door in place of the closet shown on the plans. Although not visible in the photograph, the staircase to the second floor was

presumably built in that corner. The fireplace was a simple design of pressed brick, and the walls and ceilings were horizontal boards. Peary also changed Merriman's second-floor plan by subdividing one room and adding a shed roof dormer with two double hung sash to create a third bedroom. Another change from the plans was to substitute single fixed sash angled to form diamond shapes in the gable ends for the oval windows featured in the original plans.

The changes that Peary made to the design of the 1904 cottage resulted in a house that was smaller and had less stylistic character than what was suggested in the original rendering. Without a kitchen in the house, meals were to be prepared and eaten in the Caretaker's Cottage. The inadequacy of this arrangement was partially corrected by the construction of a small wing with a kitchen and dining room in 1906.

After Peary returned from the North Pole the cottage was significantly enlarged. The small kitchen and dining room wing added in 1906 was detached from the house and a new wing added with a glazed porch on three sides and a deck on four sides. The enlargement of the 1904 house included adding shed roof dormers on both slopes of the roof (expanding the single dormer on the front). The house was also raised in height with the construction of concrete piers and a stone foundation. The new foundation exposed the basement level a full story above grade on the west side and includes a door and three small windows. The basement is now an open storage space but originally contained the cistern and an icehouse.

Soon after completing the improvements to the house Peary constructed the stone terrace and bastions. In addition to adding the two circular bastions, this stonework was built to act as a retaining wall to prevent the house from sliding into the sea in a heavy storm. On the terrace in front of the house is a flagpole also installed by Peary.

A stone staircase at the northwest corner of the house combines with the steps leading into the circular bastion, which contained Peary's study. The stone walls of the room have seven tall casement windows that swing inwards. The design for the muntin pattern of these windows alternates between diamonds and ovals. Peary's study had to be entirely reconstructed in 1990 when the roof caved in and the structure was damaged by water. The finish of floors, walls and ceilings in southern yellow pine was replicated.

The east bastion is on the ocean side and exposed more to the weather than the western side. For this reason Peary had windows that consisted of smaller oval panes of glass mounted in heavy wood frames, similar to ship portholes. Originally intended for storage, the east bastion became the museum to house Peary's artifacts. Only the walls survive as the roof and interior finishes are gone.

As remodeled in 1912-13, the Peary Cottage is two stories in front with a long one-story wing in the rear. The front section has a gable roof with shed roof dormers and a taller central chimney. A low-pitched roof perpendicular to the main section of the house covers the south wing. A second chimney rises from the kitchen. Both roofs encompass the front and side porches. Wood shingles cover the walls. The roof on the front section is wood shingled; the low-pitched roof of the south wing has asphalt shingles.

Windows are a prominent part of the house, as Peary wished to maximize ocean views from multiple vantage points. These windows are mostly double hung sash with fixed sash for the porches. The double hung sashes have a mixture of two over two lights, predominantly on the front section, and one over one lights in the south wing. The porch windows consist of large panes divided into large rectangular lights. In each gable end of the house are two diamond-shaped windows with multi-pane lights retained from the 1904 structure. Exterior doors are wood paneled with single panes of glass in the upper half. Storm doors are wood. Interior finishes throughout the house are southern pine yellow boards on the floors, walls and ceilings. The window and door casing are plain with no moldings.

The main section of the house forms the core of the 1904 building. The large living room remains the principal room but was expanded to allow for a freestanding five-sided chimney with three round arched hearths. This design is in the spirit of Arts and Crafts design and is quite unusual, reflecting an artistic creativity not normally associated with Robert Peary. Two of the fireplace hearths are faced with smooth tidal-washed stone while the third is the same granitic stone used in the foundation of the house. Above the fireplaces are double mahogany mantels. The chimney stack is faced with a combination of pine boards and smaller stone from the ocean. In the southeast corner of this room is the staircase to the second floor. Constructed of pine to match the walls and ceilings, the staircase has a railing with turned balusters and a newel post incised in a modest Colonial Revival style.

The staircase provides access to the second floor where there are five small bedrooms. The hall and all of these rooms have the same varnished wood walls, floors and ceilings, excepting two rooms with painted finishes. The addition of two shed roof dormers extending nearly the width of both sides of the roof allowed for the addition of two rooms and the enlargement of the three others.

The 1912-13 wing is one story high with a basement exposed a full story above grade only on the west side. In the section behind the living room and interior staircase are two small rooms, a bathroom on the west side and a maid's room (both now storage) on the east side. These rooms have doors opening out on to the glazed porch but no windows.

The next room in the wing is the kitchen. The kitchen extends the full width of the wing and has windows and doors on both the east and west walls. On the south wall, between the two doors leading into the dining room, is a plain china cabinet. Opposite in the center of the north wall is a large cast iron stove with the name, "Atlantic Queen." On either side is a cabinet with shelves in one corner and a built in sink cabinet with shelves above in the other. The stone sink was purchased from the Portland-Monson Slate Company. Water was brought up from the cistern by a hand pump manufactured by E. Swasey & Company of Portland mounted next to the sink. A late twentieth century white enamel electric stove is located on the west wall.

The dining room, like all interior spaces of the house, has walls, floors and ceilings of matched board yellow southern pine. The north end of the room has two matching china cabinets in each corner with Chippendale style broken pediments. Two paneled doors leading to the kitchen flank a tall pier glass mirror in the center of the north wall. These furnishings provide almost the only evidence of formal historical styles in the house. At the south end of the room are a bay window and a broad window seat. This bay window faces up island and is flanked by doors that provide access to the glazed porches. The bay window supplies direct light for the dining room, whose other windows open into the glazed porches along the side of the house.

The style of the house, both as originally built and as remodeled in 1912-13, derived from the Bungalow and Craftsman architecture popularized in magazines in the early 1900s. The most characteristic feature on the exterior is the broad gable roof with wide over-hanging eaves on four sides encompassing the central block of the house, including the porches. In keeping with Craftsman principles, the house was constructed using combinations of locally available material (island stone) and wood shingles rather than clapboards. Shed roof dormers were commonly used in Craftsman architecture, and ornamental touches kept to a minimum as in the use of diamond pane windows in the gable ends.

The interior, while not explicitly Craftsman in style, is expressive of that idiom. Constructed using economical materials, the interior finishes are southern yellow pine and almost entirely lacking decorative touches. Equally characteristic is the open floor plan centered on the chimney designed in a Craftsman spirit by Robert Peary. Also noteworthy in this regard is the study, constructed of stone with casement windows that have a simple decorative touch alternating between a diamond and oval muntin patterns.

Alterations

The Peary Cottage consists of the 1904 building and major enlargements undertaken in 1912–13. With shed roof dormers added to expand the second floor and a south wing added along with a new fireplace in the living room, little remains of the interior of the 1904 house. The basic configuration of the original house, however, is still clearly discernible from the exterior.

The Peary Family made few changes to the house after Admiral Peary's death in 1920. The most significant was the alteration of the entrance to the front porch. In 1904, there was a wide opening between the shingled posts. After 1912 there was constructed an infill of three door frames. In the center was a paneled door and on either side were screen doors, presumably seasonal. The entrance now consists of a single door and wood in-fill. Most of the other changes to the house resulted from deterioration and lack of maintenance. The restoration of the study/library has already been noted, as has the loss of all but the walls of the museum. The deck that runs around the house was replaced with a new deck in 2001. Originally this deck was covered in canvas, but is now covered with a synthetic membrane.

Caretakers Cottage (Contributing Building)

This building was constructed in 1904 with the Peary Cottage. The house is a rectangular building, twenty feet wide and thirty-six feet long based on a plan by Admiral Peary. It is one story high with a hip roof over the main section and a shed roof on the rear wing. The front of the house facing the water has a porch supported on a coursed rubble stone foundation that is almost a full story in height due to the fact that the grade slopes away from the house down to the shore. Wood shingles cover the exterior walls. The porch itself is encompassed under the hipped roof, which supports a gable roof dormer. The only decorative feature of the Caretakers Cottage is the pointed arched skirting between the square porch posts. The wooden double hung sashes throughout the house have two over two lights. The house contains a living room, a kitchen and a bedroom with a sleeping loft in the attic space with the dormer.

Alterations to the Caretaker's Cottage have primarily been to the front porch. Originally, there were round posts instead of square, and there was a railing with closely spaced square balusters. A wide steep staircase with hand railing was located in the center of the porch, and there was a single door but no windows in the foundation wall. The shed roof wing on the rear of the house also appears to have been enlarged. A solar panel has been installed on the south side of the house to provide power for the occupant, but will eventually be replaced by an underground line.

Non-contributing additions to the island (noted on site map):

Pier. A wood structure on wood cribbing with a braced wood railing, approximately two hundred feet long, constructed circa 1969.

Welcome Center. A wood building, fifteen feet by twenty-two feet, shed roof, cedar shingle siding, windows with six-over-six double hung sash, constructed in 2012. This is located near the pier in order to provide orientation for visitors to the island.

There are also two small wooden outhouses for composting toilettes.

Demolished Structures

A small guesthouse on the east side of the island, known as the "Igloo," is no longer extant. Built as the kitchen and dining room wing in 1906, it was relocated and converted into a guest house after the 1912-13

enlargements. Its first location was behind the new wing. Later it was moved down to a ledge on the east side of the house. Also demolished is a small woodshed that stood to the rear of the house.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: __ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A__ B X C__ D__
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
NHL Criteria:	2
NHL Theme(s):	VII. Changing Role of the U.S. In the World Community, Expansion and Imperialism
Areas of Significance:	Exploration/Settlement
Period(s) of Significance:	1881–1920
Significant Dates:	1904
Significant Person(s):	Admiral Robert E. Peary
Cultural Affiliation:	n/a
Architect/Builder:	Leon Merriman, builder
Historic Contexts:	XIII. Science B. Earth Science 1. Physical Geography XVIII. Technology (Engineering and Invention) J. Earth and Space Exploration

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Eagle Island is nominated as a National Historic Landmark under NHL Criterion 2, *properties that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States*. From 1881–1920, Eagle Island was owned by Robert E. Peary, the foremost American Arctic explorer, whose multiple expeditions to the Arctic regions inspired the country. In 1909, he claimed the North Pole on behalf of the United States, accompanied by his assistant Matthew Henson and four Inughuit from Northwest Greenland.[1] Inasmuch as Peary's quest for the Pole was part of an international competition to reach the top of the world first and his success was regarded as highly important to the nation's interests, Peary's national significance can be classified under NHL Theme VIII: *Changing Role of the United States in the World Community—Expansionism and Imperialism*. The NHL Area of Significance for Peary is Exploration and Settlement and Eagle Island is the most representative property for his career as an explorer during the period of significance, 1881–1920.[2]

Eagle Island is the property that Peary owned and/or inhabited for the longest period of his life. The house he constructed on Eagle Island also served as the only constant "home" setting for Peary and his family during Peary's Arctic expeditions and their aftermath (1886–1920) during which Peary achieved national significance. He designed it to look north toward the open sea and sparsely inhabited islands that reminded him of northern latitudes. Peary called Eagle Island his "promised land," and Robert E. Peary, Jr., in an oft-quoted statement, reflected the importance of Eagle Island to his father and family when he said: "We stay in Washington every winter, but we really live on Eagle Island."[3]

Peary's exploration of the Arctic on behalf of American interests and the popular, organizational (e.g. National Geographic Society) and governmental support he received (most notably in the great interest and enthusiasm of President Theodore Roosevelt and major financiers among New York City's elite, concerned about the United States' standing in the world) illustrate the nation's expansionism and imperialism during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. As such, Peary made contributions under NHL Theme VIII, *Changing Role of the United States in the World Community*.

The Arctic and the Changing Role of the United States in the World Community

When Peary made his first expedition to Greenland in 1886, he was following a line of American explorers who had been traveling north since the mid nineteenth century. The expeditions of the first of these explorers were funded by a wealthy American shipping magnate, Henry Grinnell. Grinnell had sponsored two Americans, E. J. DeHaven and Elisha Kent Kane, to go North in search of an English exploring party led by Sir John Franklin that had failed to return from an expedition to locate a northwest passage (from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean) in 1848. Franklin's party was never found, but Kane and others who followed him expanded the purposes of their expeditions and gathered significant information about the Arctic's geography and natural and human history. These explorers secured some financial help for their expeditions from the American government, in part because of the interest of people like Secretary of State William Seward. Seward advocated the United States' purchase of Alaska in 1867 and saw that territory, along with Greenland, as important to the

[1] Their names were Urtauq, Igqiannquaq, Ukkujaaq, and Sigluk.

[2] This nomination greatly benefited from the expertise of Susan A. Kaplan, Director of the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine. Dr. Kaplan is the editor, with Robert McCracken, of the book *North by Degrees: Arctic Exploration and Its Impact on Society* to be published this winter by the American Philosophical Society.

[3] Edward P. Stafford, Peary and His Promised Land: The Story of a Love Affair Between a Man and an Island (Friends of Peary's Eagle Island, 1998), 19.

nation's defensive system and a means by which the United States could control both the Pacific and Atlantic approaches to North America.[4]

In the early 1880s two Arctic expeditions met with disaster. George W. DeLong launched an expedition to reach the North Pole by way of the Bering Strait. Off the Siberian coast some of the crew had to abandon the ship, locked in ice. In 1881 the vessel, known as the *Jeannette*, was crushed by ice and resulted in the loss of many lives. In the eastern Arctic, the United States funded an expedition to collect scientific information. Headed by Major Adophus W. Greely, and part of the First International Polar Year initiative, this expedition also met with disaster. Relief expeditions, scheduled for 1882 and 1883, to resupply and return the expedition to the United States, failed in their missions, resulting in the death of twenty of the twenty-six expedition members.

In spite of the tragic end of the Delong and Greeley expeditions, public fascination for Arctic exploration continued but governmental enthusiasm for and funding of Arctic exploration expeditions were greatly reduced. From the 1890s on and throughout the period of Peary's work, America's ambitious Arctic expeditions were organized and funded by individuals, private groups, and scientific societies.

Even without governmental financial support, national interest in Arctic expeditions continued and resonated with strains of American cultural and political identity. This resonance had much to do with the personality and exploits of Robert E. Peary, which were publicized extensively by the press. This man, who repeatedly and almost unbelievably survived by learning how to work in harsh Arctic conditions, wearing Inughuit clothing made of seal skins and eating local game, including musk ox and walrus, became a frontiersman in a new international frontier, just as the nation's own continental frontier was closing.

When Russia, Germany, and Italy sponsored expeditions north, the quest for the North Pole became an international competition. Other Americans, too, joined what one historian called the "northward armada"[5] and, according to press accounts wrapped in nationalism, sought to apply American ingenuity and the most modern techniques to the race to the Pole. Peary, however, garnered the most public interest and enthusiastic support at the highest governmental levels. People were fascinated by his ability to combine traditional Inughuit technologies and methods of travel and modern scientific advances and technologies. While the United States Government did not fund his expeditions, he was granted a number of leaves by the military and earned the admiration and support of President Theodore Roosevelt. His vast knowledge, determination, and characterization of the Arctic, presented in numerous lectures in public venues and private clubs, had attracted the attention of the New York City and Washington D.C. elites. Concerned about the United States standing in the world and worried that white American men were losing their "edge," millionaires including Morris K. Jesup, Thomas Hubbard, George Crocker, and Zenas Crane individually and as members of various social clubs, funded Peary's expeditions and lent their expertise and resources to promoting him in the media.[6]

The Arctic and American Expansionism

Peary, more than any other American Arctic explorer, held the nation's prestige in his hands as American purposes of expansionism and imperialism, so potently present in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, embraced Arctic exploration. Doubtless, those who advocated expansionism did not see as many advantages to America's presence in the Arctic as there were to expanded influence and markets in more hospitable and populous lands, such as Cuba, Panama, the Philippines, and Hawaii, which had also captured

[4] Glyndon S. Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 531-35 cited in Nancy Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration and International Relations*: *1900-1932* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 17.

[5] Fogelson, Arctic Exploration, 30.

[6] Lyle Dick, *Muskox Land: Ellesmore Island in the Age of Contact.* Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001.

America's attention. Nonetheless, Arctic exploration and claims by the United States could complete America's geographic dominance in the world and benefit America's military, business, scientific, and political interests. Visions of these benefits, cloaked in nationalism, are woven throughout writings and accounts concerning Arctic exploration generally and Peary specifically from his first expedition in 1886 to his death in 1920.

On all save his first Arctic expedition Peary was aided by a young black American who is associated with another site that has been designated as a National Historic Landmark. With no formal education, Mathew Henson's intelligence and native abilities made him an outstanding explorer in his own right. Henson's achievements as a fellow explorer are such that his only known surviving residence was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1975.[7] Henson was first hired by Peary as a servant in 1887 for an expedition to Nicaragua to find a location for the canal. He quickly proved indispensable to Peary, who relied on his skills under extremely difficult conditions, stating that, "He has in those years always been with me at my point farthest north. Moreover, Henson was the best man I had with me for this kind of work, with the exception of the Eskimos …"[8] It is not possible to fully appreciate the bond that must have developed between the two men without understanding the physical hardship involved in polar exploration. On his penultimate trip, Peary suffered frostbite to the extent that he lost all but two small toes, yet, with Henson's help, he managed to press on and return on his own two feet. Under these difficult conditions, even explorers as driven and courageous as Peary could not survive without the help of men like Henson. However, while Peary had great praise for Henson, his typically racist attitudes (such as a supposed lack of leadership abilities due to Henson's race) led him to claim sole "discovery" of the North Pole.[9]

Peary's explorations of Greenland, which began in 1886, yielded hitherto unknown geographic information, including Greenland's insularity. He also charted Greenland's northernmost coastline, revised maps, and described lands not charted previously. Disputes arose over the complete accuracy of some of his data. Nonetheless, publishers incorporated the results of his early expeditions into revised editions of atlases. The prestige of having Peary's discoveries appear on maps that were sold in other countries was appreciated by publishers as well as the federal Department of War, which congratulated Peary and expressed gratitude that "the successful advance [into the Arctic] was led by an American."[10] In 1903, as Peary prepared for another expedition and secured a three-year paid leave of absence from the Navy, acting Secretary of the Navy Charles H. Darling continued to link mapping with national interest and possession by affirming that discovery of the North and South Poles was all that was left to complete the mapping of the world and should be done by "our countrymen" as a matter of "national pride."[11]

Peary's reports of discovering other lands in the course of his quests for the North Pole also brought great affirmation of America's destiny in the world. In 1906, Peary claimed to be the first to discover Crocker Land, a landmass he sighted while looking west from Cape Thomas Hubbard, Axel Heiberg Island. Later this "land" was proven to be non-existent; in fact it is recognized to be a *fata morgana*, or recurrent mirage. But, while the discovery appeared real, the press praised Peary for his accomplishments and described him as "the embodiment of the resolute masterly American spirit now revolutionizing the world."[12] Peary believed that the United States had a "privilege and a duty" to lead the movement to unlock the North and South Poles, the North Pole first because it was our "national northern boundary." He felt it would be a "splendid feat for this great and

[7] This is Apartment 3F in the apartment house at 246 W. 150th Street, New York City.

[8] Robert E. Peary, *The North Pole: its discovery in 1909 under the auspices of the Peary Arctic Club.* New York: F.A. Stokes Co., 1910, republished by Dover in 1986, 272.

[9] Ibid, 272-273.

[10] Cora to Peary, 14 December 1901, Brainard to Peary, 12 May 1902, letters sent, Peary Papers, National Archives quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration*, 33.

[11] American Geographical Society Bulletin 35 (1903), 374-76 quoted in Fogelson, Arctic Exploration, 34.

[12] R. J. McGrath, "For the Conquest of the Pole," *Review of Reviews* 32 (1905), 43-48 quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration*, 35.

wealthy country, if having already girdled the earth, we might reach north and south and plant 'Old Glory on each Pole'."[13] Writing in the preface to Peary's book, *The North Pole,* after Peary's claim to his ultimate discovery, National Geographic Society President Gilbert H. Grosvenor linked America's expanded interests in the North Pole, as represented by Peary, to the expanded interests of the Old World, as represented by European explorers, four centuries earlier:

> It has been well said that the glory of Peary's achievement belongs to the world and is shared by all mankind. But we, his fellow-countrymen, who have known how he has struggled these many years against discouragement and scoffing and how he has persevered under financial burdens that would have crushed less stalwart shoulders, especially rejoice that he had "made good at last," and that an American has become the peer of Hudson, Magellan, and Columbus.[14]

The expansionist and nationalistic zeal of Peary, the press, and Peary's governmental and private supporters also swept into American business spheres. Peary relied on traditional dog-pulled sleds to transport people and supplies once he had progressed by ship as far as possible into ice-choked Arctic waters. But, after claiming the Pole in 1909, he promoted American prowess in connection to his ship, the *Roosevelt,* the first ship built explicitly to engage and not avoid ice. The *Roosevelt*, wrote Peary, had been built with "American timber in an American shipyard, engine by an American firm with American metal and constructed on American designs." The expedition, a symbol of American advancement, was made in this "American-built ship," commanded by an American whose goal was to "secure if possible an American trophy."[15] The vessel, launched in 1905, turned out to be quite innovative (e.g., auxiliary boiler to give vessel power to crash into the ice, both boiler and sail, crew quarters designed realizing people would be living on the ship for 15 months, rudder positioned in an effort to protect it and propeller from ice damage, etc.). It ran into problems on its maiden voyage in 1905–06 (rudder and propeller did get smashed), and it limped home with all its crew. Taking note of the problems the vessel had suffered, Peary convinced the Peary Arctic Club to fund renovations. The vessel performed perfectly and as it had been intended in 1908–09.

Peary's nationalism was also expressed in having his wife, Josephine (who traveled as far as Greenland in one expedition), sew him a large American flag that he carried with him whenever he went north, often tucked into his clothes. At each of his farthest north points he would cut a section from the flag and place it in a cache with a record. When he reached the Pole he cut a diagonal section from the flag and planted it with his record on the sea ice.[16]

While these sentiments reflected Peary's patriotism, (as well as a need to appeal for financial support), he was not driven to rely entirely on modern devices. Indeed, Peary's success as an explorer derived from recognition of the value of traditional native methods of travel and survival in the Arctic. At the same time, Peary's own native intelligence as a mechanical engineer enabled him to derive his own solutions. For example, he designed a field stove that burned alcohol and turned ice into boiling water in a matter of minutes and then extinguished itself.

Peary's accomplishments also derived from his careful planning. Where possible he carefully planned his itinerary to exploit the locations of different kinds of game animals. In 1900, he first experimented with a

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[13] Peary to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* 10 October 1903; Peary to Angelo Heilprin, February 24, 1904, letters sent, Peary Papers, National Archives, quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration*, 35.

[14] Robert E. Peary, *The North Pole,* Preface by Gilbert H. Grosvenor (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001) lvi.

[15] Ibid., 19.

[16] Eventually, the family mounted the flag, minus its parts, and donated it to the National Geographic Society. Robert MacMillan and other explorers have recovered a number of the cut sections.

system of using relay parties. Starting with a large number of men and sledges, he would deposit foot depots along the route, sending back small parties with just enough food to return on their own.[17]

Peary sailed the *Roosevelt* as far north as he could and froze it into the ice to serve as a base of operations and a way to exit the Arctic (he was not going to suffer Greely's fate and rely on relief expeditions). He realized dog sledges were the most effective way to cross the land and sea ice. Over many years he had experimented with and documented sledge designs and the performance of various kinds of wood. The design he used in 1908–09 was an Inughuit design, enlarged and fashioned from oak and tested on previous expeditions. Peary's papers at National Archives are full of sketches and notes regarding sledge designs.

Further mingling of Peary's explorations with expansionist business interests came with Peary's need to raise money to finance his expeditions. He appealed to the nation's business leaders. One was Morris K. Jesup, a wealthy New Yorker who had made his fortune in banking and railroad supplies and was president of both the American Museum of Natural History and the American Geographical Society. Jesup placed his full support behind Peary. Jesup quite literally saw his interests expanding into the new northern frontier when Peary named the most northernmost point of Greenland Cape Morris Jesup. Another businessman who volunteered to help Peary raise money for his work appealed to potential contributors by:

> describing Peary's technical competence and suggesting that "to the individual of means, as a business proposition, the financing of such an expedition means an instant and worldwide reputation of the highest character," and an opportunity, if Peary reached the Pole of being famous long after Carnegie and Rockefeller were forgotten.[18]

After he claimed the North Pole in 1909, Peary also lent his name to a wide range of product endorsements, such as Kohinoor pencils, Wear-Ever aluminum cooking utensils, Thermos bottles, Kodak cameras, and Winchester rifles. With Peary's endorsements that these products had functioned well in the world's harshest environment, the advertisements implied that these items would be of good use in other world locales that could serve as new markets for America's expanding businesses.[19] In the use of public endorsements of various products, "the explorer was an undisputed pioneer, in the nascent field of commercial product endorsements."[20]

Peary and the Arctic's Indigenous Peoples

Peary, besides emphasizing the importance of establishing American sovereignty over as much territory as possible, wanted his expeditions to be remembered for their scientific achievements.[21] He had his crew taking tidal readings and recording temperatures and barometric pressure on a 24-hour basis, charting lands and waters, collecting specimens of Arctic flora and fauna, and studying Inughuit. The scientific records were deposited with various science societies but only recently have their real value become evident. Scientists studying the changing climate are using historic records, such as these for comparative purposes.

Peary realized that one way to get his American crew competent traveling and living in the Arctic was to send them on scientific expeditions, along with Inughuit, months before their sledging over the sea ice would begin. The teams of Americans and Greenlanders kept in shape over the winter, working on the land rather than sitting around in cabins as other explorers had done. Also, the Americans and Inughuit learned to work together and

[17] Dick, Muskox Land, op. cit., 234, 236.
[18] Thomas Whitelaw Reid to Peary, January 7, 1904, letters received, Peary Papers, National Archives, quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration,* 34.
[19] *Hampton's Magazine Advertiser,* December 1909, 39, 45, 48, 49, 51.
[20] Dick, *Muskox Land,* op. cit. 264.
[21] Fogelson, Arctic Exploration, 35.

Peary could be assured his crews were self-sufficient and comfortable working in extraordinary environments. Indeed, MacMillan noted that his first year in the Arctic was under Peary's direction and he reached higher latitude than previous explorers had reached, but they suffered while he was "having the time of my life."[22]

In the fledgling science of anthropology, Peary's work was similarly relative to his own expeditions. Nonetheless, with regard to his complex interactions with the native Arctic Inuit, Peary made important contributions while showing that he was at once ahead of his time and still very much a part of it. Peary was responsible for introducing the Inughuit to the curious eyes and minds of the American press and people. In many respects, Peary engendered popular respect for the Inuit. He adopted their modes of travel, clothing, and food, and more than any other explorer, based his success on Inuit methods of survival in the harsh Arctic environment. He wrote about them with affection and adopted an enlightened approach that eschewed missionary zeal to change the Inuit way of life. As Peary wrote:

> Much nonsense has been told by travelers in remote lands about the aborigines' regarding as gods the white men who come to them, but I have never placed much credence in these stories. My own experience has been that the average aborigine is just as content with his own way as we are with ours, just as convinced of his own superior knowledge, and that he adjusts himself with his knowledge in regard to things in the same way that we do. The Eskimos are not brutes; they are just as human as Caucasians. They know that I am their friend, and they have abundantly proved themselves as my friend.[23]

Peary involved the Inughuit of Northwest Greenland in advancing his own goals, taking Inughuit men, women, and children with him on the *Roosevelt* and transporting them from Greenland to Ellesmere Island so that they would be available to drive dog teams, build igloos, hunt, and make clothing as needed. He also fathered two children by an Inughuit woman. The Inughuit were respectful of Peary because of his contributions to their well-being. Peary's words about the Inughuit cannot help but sound patronizing to the ears of people in the present day, but his writing gives some idea of the changes, largely perceived as positive at that time, that Peary brought to the Inuit culture:

> My various expeditions into that region have had the effect of raising the Eskimos from the most abject destitution, lacking every appliance and accessory of civilized life, to a position of relative affluence, with the best material for their weapons, their harpoons and lances, the best of wood for their sledges, the best of cutlery, knives, hatchets, and saws for their work, and the cooking utensils of civilization. Formerly, they were dependent upon the most primitive hunting weapons; now they have repeating rifles, breech-loading shotguns, and an abundance of ammunition. There was not a rifle in the tribe when I first went there. As they have no vegetables, and live solely on meat, blood, and blubber, the possession of guns and ammunitions has increased the food-producing capacity of every hunter, and relieved the whole tribe from the formerly ever-present danger of starvation for a family, or even an entire village.[24]

Peary's Arctic Claims, International Relations, and U. S. Defense

The era saw no greater exponent of America's new, bullish role on the world scene than Theodore Roosevelt. A strict proponent of the "strenuous life" and hero of the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt, even during his candidacy for governor of New York in 1898, intoned: "There comes a time in the life of a nation, as in the life

[22] Donald B. MacMillan, *How Peary Reached the Pole.* Originally published in 1934, reissued with a new introduction by Genevieve LeMoine, Susan Kaplan, and Anne Witty, McGill-Queens University Press: Montreal, 2008.

[23] Peary, The North Pole, 44.

[24] Ibid., 48-49.

of an individual, when it must face great responsibilities. We have now reached that time. We cannot avoid facing the fact that we occupy a new place among the people of the world, and have entered upon a new career."[25] A member of the Explorer's Club like Peary, Roosevelt believed that the growth of the United States was a result of physical accomplishments and heroic struggles. In this, he saw Peary's work as especially important to set "an example to the young of our day which we need to have set amid the softening tendencies of our time."[26]

As President of the United States between 1901 and 1909, Roosevelt was in office during much of the time that Peary was engaged in his quest for the North Pole. The two men kept up a correspondence about Peary's work, with Roosevelt providing steady encouragement and affirmation. Peary, in turn, paid the President a great compliment by naming his specially designed, custom-built ship the SS *Roosevelt* in honor of this most prestigious of supporters.

By the time that Peary actually claimed the North Pole for the United States in 1909, Roosevelt was out of office, having been succeeded by William Howard Taft. Accordingly, when Peary returned from his last expedition after planting the American flag at the North Pole, Peary telegraphed President Taft to notify the President that he (Peary) had claimed the North Pole for the United States. As historian Nancy Fogelson describes and analyzes in her book Arctic Explorations and International Relations:

> Taft answered, thanking Peary for his "interesting and generous offer," adding that although he did "not know exactly what [he] could do with it," he was proud that Peary had added "luster to the name American."[27] Taft may have been nonplused by Peary's gift, but in his annual message for 1910, he noted that arctic exploration was a complete success for the United States. Peary's "unparalleled accomplishment" in reaching the North Pole had "added to the distinction of our Navy, to which he belongs, and reflects credit upon his country." The official strong praise and clear acceptance of the feat as both Peary's rightful due and American prize, gave notice to other nations that exploring the Arctic was one way of furthering the country's national interests.[28]

The personal glory sought by Peary for reaching the North Pole was almost immediately compromised by the claims of Dr. Frederick Cook. The controversy over who actually reached the Pole first was debated internationally, each man having his champions. The debate continues to this day, although if there is anything like a majority opinion it is that neither man actually reached the pole. Dr. Cook, who claimed to have reached the pole a full year before Peary, (both men publicized their claims at the same time due to the slowness of travel in the Arctic), is less credible due to the lack of men and equipment available to him.[29] Two publications by British Arctic explorers take opposing positions. Sir Wally Herbert, the man who led the first team to cross the Arctic Ocean (and the North Pole) on foot claimed Peary could not have reached the Pole, in part because it was physically impossible to travel there and back in the time he claimed. Tom Avery, replicating Peary's methods and means of travel, followed the same route and proved that it was possible in the time claimed.[30]

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[25] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Scribners, 1926), 16:441-450 quoted in H. W. Brands, *T. R.: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 366.

[26] Roosevelt to Peary, March 24, 1907, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, University of Cincinnati Library, quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration,* 35.

[27] Peary to Taft, 8 September 1909, Taft to Peary, 9 February 1910, William Howard Taft Papers, University of Cincinnati Library, quoted in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration,* 37.

[28] *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), xvii, cited in Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration,* 37.

[29] Cook's reputation also suffers from fraudulent episodes in his life, before and after the North Pole claim.

[30] Herbert, The Noose of Laurels, op. cit.; Tom Avery, To the End of the Earth Our Epic Journey to the North Pole and the Legend of Peary and Henson. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009.

It is clear from Peary's own writings that he was obsessed with being the first to reach the North Pole, as well as being preeminent in his other Arctic achievements. This attitude was also revealed in his testimony before Congress in the following excerpt from and exchange with Congressman Ernest Roberts:

> Mr. Roberts: I am going to take the liberty of asking you why, when you went to the pole on your final dash, you did not take with you some of the members of your party in order that there might be credible corroborative evidence if the question was ever raised as to attaining the pole? I do not know whether you care to answer that question.
>
> Capt. Peary: I have not the slightest objection to answering that question, Mr. Roberts. The pole was something to which I had devoted my life; it was a thing on which I had concentrated everything, on which I had expended some of myself, for which I had gone through such hell and suffering as I hope no man in this room may ever experience, and in which I had put money, time, and everything else, and I did not feel that under those circumstances I was called upon to divide with a man who, no matter how able and deserving he might be, was a young man and had only put a few years in that kind of work and who had, frankly as I believed, not the right I had to it. I think that conveys my idea.[31]

While Peary was alive, his claim was substantiated by the United States Congress and other privately initiated inquiries. Lyle Dick has written extensively on the public relations machine financiers of his expeditions set in motion to make sure this was the case.[32]

As for the glory of the United States in acquiring the Arctic for American interests, future years saw conflict, compromise, and perhaps some of the confusion that President Taft expressed when he said that he didn't quite know what he could do with the prize that Peary presented to him. Following Peary's claim of the North Pole for the United States, Canada expressed annoyance that American interests were encroaching on lands that were contiguous to, and therefore should be controlled by Canada. The antagonism between Canada and the United States increased with continuing press reports that described Peary's accomplishments in terms of national possession. In 1912, a Canadian explorer, Joseph Bernier, accused the United States of stealing Canadian Polar Regions. Controversies continued over specific claims to lands as Canada stepped up its exploratory and, in one case, colonization activities.

Advances in aviation following World War I brought a new type of interest in the Arctic as the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, Germany, and Italy realized the importance of access to the Arctic region as necessary to the development of air routes between Asia and Europe. In an important historical work on this subject, one historian explains the evolving situation:

> Competing interest in the Arctic became an important issue between the United States and Canada early in the 1920s as each country defined the region north of its continental borders to the North Pole as an area of political and economic importance. Canada was primarily concerned with establishing uncontested sovereignty over the North American archipelago. The United States, preferring an open door policy to the general area, was reluctant to recognize a Canadian sphere of influence. However, …the United States adopted a position of non-recognition rather than express outright objections. By 1930, despite non-recognition by the United States, the

[31] Cited in Appendix II, Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels*, 343-344.

[32] Lyle Dick, "How and Why America's Elites Made Robert Peary a National Icon," in press in *North by Degree*: *New Perspectives on Arctic Exploration*, Susan A. Kaplan and Robert Peck, eds. American Philosophical Society.

> Arctic was effectively divided into sectors extending around the Arctic Circle and encompassing an area from the subarctic to the North Pole.[33]
>
> It was evident by the end of the 1920s that aviation development had advanced to the point where aircraft would soon become crucial economic and strategic vehicles and the Arctic…would become a "Northern Mediterranean" between Europe, North America, and Asia. In the 1930s, the Arctic, once an area of both cooperation and contention between the United States and Canada, had become a target for private organizations and governments representing most of the industrialized countries of Europe, which hoped to benefit from access to natural resources and transportation routes, and to establish a presence that could be strategically valuable in developing long-range defense plans.[34]

Such defense plans continued through and after World War II, especially with the emergence of Russia as a political and military adversary. The United States and Canada cooperated during World War II to build the Distant Early Warning radar line, which was a base of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD). Later decades found American Arctic activity focused on the establishment of defense facilities, with the area from Greenland to Alaska becoming part of a major strategic air route between Russia and the United States. As a result, the Arctic became a defense perimeter during the years of hostility between the United States and Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War came the beginning of the end of the Arctic as a critical part of America's defense system.

As the Arctic's future was shaped by aviation in the years following Peary's claim to the North Pole, so was Peary's place on the national stage concerned with aviation matters until his death in 1920. Peary had conferred with the Wright brothers in Ohio and later wrote that he had realized my place was to help write part of the book of America's place in the airplane industry."[35] With the outbreak of World War I, Peary strongly advocated for an up-grade to America's aerial defenses, which then ranked behind those of most nations. He also became a strong proponent of increased military preparedness through expansion of the Navy. At the National Archives, there are a series of photographs of Peary at Eagle Island modeling a flight suit he designed, showing the range of motion a pilot would have. The inventor in him never stopped. No longer designing camp stoves that that were light and super-efficient, or sledges, he was now preoccupied with details critical to flight and superior American air power.

Peary continued with advocacy of military preparedness and spoke widely on the subject. He urged the creation of a Department of Aeronautics ranked equally with the Navy and War Departments rather than the air service being held partly by the Navy and partly by the Army, as was then the case. This department would eventually be realized with the creation of the United States Air Force. In the meantime, an Aerial Coast Patrol was organized with Peary as chairman. This fledgling effort did not grow in size or effectiveness as Peary had hoped, but it did succeed in providing 300 trained aviators who later became available for service when the United States entered World War I.

Peary saw the Arctic as relevant to his military preparedness assertions and presaged later issues concerning the Arctic and national defense. This connection came particularly with the decision by the United States to give up all claims to Greenland as part payment for the Danish West Indies (the Virgin Islands). Concerning this decision, which Peary disagreed with, Peary observed that "stranger things have happened than that Greenland,

[33] Fogelson, Arctic Exploration, 162.
[34] Ibid., 165.
[35] Cleveland City Club speech, 24 March 1917, Peary Papers, quoted in Weems, *Peary: The Explorer and the Man,* 307.

in our hands, might furnish an important North Atlantic naval and aeronautical base" and that Greenland, in hostile hands, "could be a serious menace."[36]

During World War I, Peary also warned of pending U-boat attacks on the East Coast, as well as air attacks on American cities. Despite being criticized for being unrealistically alarmist, Peary maintained that the country commanding the air would command all. One of Peary's biographers, John Edward Weems, draws a fitting conclusion to Peary's connection with the security and defense of the United States:

> If Peary still had doubters [about the importance of the United States' command of the air for its national defense], they vanished quickly with the passing years, and in the early period of the Second World War his prophecy was to be given an enduring stamp of verity.
>
> On February 19, 1942, with Japanese air and naval forces on an inexorable advance in the Pacific, planes from Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's carrier fleet raided the Australian port of Darwin and sank a dozen ships caught in the harbor. Among the losses was the United States destroyer Peary, named for the civil engineer who had retired a rear admiral.[37]

Description, Chronology, and Historical Development of Eagle Island

According to family tradition, the close association between Robert E. Peary and Eagle Island began in the early 1870s when, as a high school student in Portland, Maine, he and his friends explored the islands of Casco Bay. As Peary's daughter later wrote about uninhabited Eagle Island: "From the first it fascinated him; it was so symmetrical, so ideally situated with nothing between it and the sweep of the Atlantic. Often he took a small boat and rowed over to Eagle Island from Haskell's Island [the largest island near the mainland], clambering around the rocks and ledges laid bare by the tide or wandering through the woods. He soon decided that Eagle Island was undoubtedly the most attractive of all the reputed three hundred and sixty-five islands in Casco Bay."[38] Peary's geographical proximity to Eagle Island continued from 1873–1877 with his move to Brunswick, Maine to attend Bowdoin College. But it was not until 1881, after Peary had moved to Washington D.C. to work as a cartographic draftsman with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, that he purchased the island.

Twenty-five-year-old Peary purchased Eagle Island for $200 from George W. Curtis of Harpswell. Eagle Island had been in the Curtis family for 113 years, following its sale in 1768 by "yeoman" Enoch Harvey to Paul Curtis and Michael Curtis for "Seven Pounds Six Schillings & Eight Lawfull Money."[39] The deeds of sale from both 1768 and 1881 refer to the island as Eagle Island. Neither deed, however, indicates the island's historical use or the existence of structures prior to Peary's ownership. Residents of coastal Maine were known to graze livestock on offshore islands during the colonial and post-colonial period, but late-nineteenth-century photographs of Eagle Island show dense forests of full-grown conifers and hardwoods, suggesting that the island's vegetation had been growing free of significant clearing or grazing activities for many years.[40]

Under Peary's ownership, Eagle Island continued free of change by human hands for another 23 years until 1904. Then, after three major expeditions and three other shorter trips to Greenland (the most recent expedition had lasted four years), Peary organized and implemented the construction of two buildings on Eagle Island.

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[36] Letter to the editor, 1916, quoted in Weems, *Peary: The Explorer and the Man,* 315.

[37] Weems, Peary: The Explorer and the Man, 317.

[38] Marie Ahnighito Peary, *The Snow Baby's Own Story* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), 214.

[39] Deed of Sale, Enoch Harvey to Paul Curtis and Michael Curtis, 12 July 1798, transcribed in John D. Cowden, "Baseline Floristic and Ecological Survey of Eagle Island, Casco Bay" (honors paper, Bowdoin College, 1995), 65.

[40] Ibid, 14.

Peary planned one building as a seasonal residence for his family and the other as a caretaker's cottage that could be used year-round. Although Peary later expanded the family's residence, the 1904 buildings essentially exist today. With construction of a residence for himself and his family, Peary put his own stamp on Eagle Island and manifested the strong emotional ties that he felt to this place above all others.

Peary took on the task of providing a residence for himself and his family during a three-year hiatus between a Greenland expedition lasting four years and another that would last for one year. Peary had intended to reach the North Pole during the four-year expedition from 1898–1902 and made several attempts to that end. He was unsuccessful, however and returned after extensively exploring and mapping the northwest coast of Greenland and reaching the "farthest North" of any explorer to that time. Upon his return, Peary underwent extensive surgery on his feet (they had been severely frostbitten during the expedition and eight of his toes had been amputated), resumed his duties as a commander in the U.S. Navy, and then, through the intercession and support of President Theodore Roosevelt, was granted a three-year leave of absence from the Navy to continue his Arctic explorations.

The leave of absence was meant to give Peary time to try again for the North Pole and make exhaustive preparations, including fund-raising, for that journey. It also provided him a valuable opportunity to plan and supervise two major construction projects. Ironically, one project was the construction of the house on Eagle Island that would nurture both Peary and his family until his death in 1920, while the other project was the construction of the *Roosevelt*, the ship that would take Peary on two subsequent Arctic expeditions, resulting in painful periods of separation from his home and family.

A Cottage on the Cliffs—The First Construction Project on Eagle Island

In an essay about his grandfather and Eagle Island, Edward Peary Stafford described the genesis of Peary's cottage on the island:

> In the typically thorough manner of the trained engineer, Peary spent the winter and spring of the year collecting drawings, specifications and prices on cottages that interested him as best suiting this very special location. By May, he had selected the cottage he wanted, a builder he trusted, and settled on a price, $1,500, for a large cottage on the northeastern promontory and a second, smaller, caretaker's cottage to be built on the snug grassy area on the sheltered western side.[41]

Peary contracted with Harpswell resident Leon B. Merriman to construct the two buildings and furnish all labor and materials. The deadline for completion of the work was set in the contract for July 1, 1904 and the sequence of payment carefully articulated:

> ...seven hundred dollars when said buildings are boarded and shingled; three hundred dollars when said buildings are finished inside; five hundred dollars forty days after the same are completed in accordance with the terms of this contract.[42]

Attached to the contract were plans for the two buildings, with each plan bearing the initials of both Merriman and Peary as agreeing to those specifications.

The plan that Peary chose for his summer cottage was a typical bungalow-style dwelling of the time. He did, however, make a few modifications in his own hand, including an additional room on the back. He also drew in

[41] Stafford, *Peary and His Promised Land*, 7.

[42] Contract, Merriman and Peary, 28 May 1904, copy in Eagle Island Collection, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, Augusta, Maine.

Peary's involvement in the layout of the smaller and simpler caretaker's cottage appears to be as the building's designer.[43]

Construction proceeded rapidly, considering the difficult logistics of island work. The contract was signed on May 28, 1904 and by July 4, 1904, the Peary cottage was complete enough for the family to have a housewarming and move in. Peary and his family had stayed in a small hotel in South Harpswell during the construction so that Peary could be nearby to supervise the work. Workers, mostly from Harpswell, lived in tents on the island during the project and construction materials were transported by barge from Portland.

Sitting on the cliffs of Eagle Island, the Peary cottage seemed to grow out of the island itself, wrote Edward Stafford in his essay, *Peary and His Promised Land: The Story of a Love Affair between a Man and an Island*:

> The cottage on the cliffs was precisely that, not the mansion of a great man, not even a house in the common usage of that word. It was a kind of pointed cubicle perched on a bare ledge of the point...[44]

The cottage, looking northeast across ledges and islands marking the eastern boundary of Maine's Casco Bay, embodied much more than architectural integrity and a dramatic situation. The modest cottage built in 1904 allowed Peary and his family to experience Eagle Island fully and create an actual home there that, to the present day, sustains strong emotional ties with the Peary family. In her book *The Snowbaby's Own Story*, Robert E. Peary's daughter, Marie Peary Stafford, described the importance of Eagle Island as the family's first home in her writing about the years following her father's return from Greenland in 1902:

> Next in order of importance (she described her brother's birth in 1903 as the most important), was the fact that we Pearys acquired a real home, a permanent place which was our very own and in which we could keep all the things we were always collecting about us.
>
> Hitherto, we had either lived in rented apartments wherever my father's naval duties called him, or, when he was north, at the home of my grandmother in Washington…

But when he returned from the north in 1902, he had been away from home and friends and family for four consecutive years and he longed for a place of his own where we could all be together and enjoy each other in the little time that was left us, for he was planning to go north again as soon as he could raise the money.[45]

From Peary's Eagle Island Home—Development Schemes for Casco Bay's Islands

Peary departed for his seventh trip to the Arctic in July 1905 and returned in December 1906, after another failed attempt to reach the Pole. At the age of 50, after great hardship and with his family entreating him to stay home, Peary's future Arctic explorations must have seemed in doubt. But, his resolve to reach the North Pole did not falter, as he expressed during an award ceremony when he received the National Geographic Society's Hubbard Medal in late 1906:

> To me the final and complete solution of the polar mystery which has engaged the best thought and interest of some of the best men of the most vigorous and enlightened nations of the world for more than three centuries, and today quickens the pulse of every man or woman whose veins

[43] In the Eagle Island Collection at the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands is a plan in Peary's hand shows the floor plan of the cottage with the layout of the rooms and relevant dimensions. Confusingly, it is titled, "Plan of Cottage for Chas. Percy at Eagle Island."

[44] Stafford, *Peary and His Promised Land*, 8.

[45] Peary, *The Snowbaby's Own Story*, 213–215.

> hold red blood, is the thing which must be done for the honor and credit of this country, the thing which it is intended that I should do, and the thing that I must do.[46]

Thus began another exhausting round of lectures and fund-raising appearances, planning for the next expedition, and supervision of repairs to the *Roosevelt*. Peary had hoped to leave for this final expedition in 1907, but delays in completing the work on the ship and a shortage of funds postponed his final departure until July 1908.

Somehow, in the midst of his multi-faceted preparations for the next Arctic expedition, Peary found time to initiate an ambitious development project for several of Eagle Island's neighboring islands in Casco Bay. In March 1907, Peary began a series of correspondence (some letters were written from New York, others from Eagle Island) with Captain Charles Morrill of the Harpswell Steam Boat Company regarding Peary's interest in purchasing islands. As expressed in a letter to Morrill, "I will also suggest that you look up the addresses of various prominent yacht clubs along the coast from Portland to New York," wrote Peary, "in readiness to write them in regard to Basket Island after I have had suitable photographs made to accompany your letters."[47]

Although he acquired sixteen islands, in the end, Peary's ambitious plans for these islands came to naught. He maintained their ownership throughout his life, harvested wood from them, and even kept some of his dogs on one. But, no other plans were realized and gradually Peary's heirs sold the islands after his death.

Remodeling and Expansion—The Second Construction Project on Eagle Island

Peary's eighth and last expedition to the Arctic finally resulted in the attainment of the goal that had consumed most of his energies for nearly two decades—the hoisting of the United States flag at the North Pole on April 6, 1909. It wasn't until early September that his return trip brought him to Labrador where he was able at last to cable the news to the world that he had reached the North Pole. His victory, however, was immediately tarnished. Peary learned that Dr. Frederick Cook, a well-known explorer and the surgeon on Peary's 1891 expedition, was receiving a tumultuous hero's welcome in Denmark after announcing that he had reached the Pole a full year earlier. Dismayed, outraged, and fiercely defending his claim, Peary pronounced Cook a liar and withdrew to Eagle Island where he refused to be personally drawn into the mounting controversy and the maelstrom of public opinion against his claim.

The controversy slowly began to move toward resolution when the National Geographic Society's "sub-committee on research" examined all of Peary's records and instruments and decided in his favor. The Royal Geographical Society of London expressed a similar opinion, as did the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. The matter progressed into the halls of Congress in January, 1911, with hearings on legislation to recognize Peary's achievement of the Pole, promote him to rear admiral, and place him on the Navy's list of retired officers. In March 1911, the legislation passed with fulsome Congressional acclaim and the nation's thanks to Peary.

With his name cleared and his goal secured in the view of most Americans, if not posterity, Peary was able to devote time to Eagle Island. In the spring of 1912, he initiated an ambitious remodeling and expansion of his cottage on the cliffs. Once again, Peary contracted with Leon B. Merriman but this time, Peary apparently did most of the design himself.

Peary's improvements extended to every corner of the house and its environs. Concerned about the susceptibility of the island's soft schist ledge to erosion, Peary designed and had built a massive stone seawall

[46] Peary, typescript of speech, 15 December 1906, quoted in Weems, *Peary: The Explorer and the Man,* 227.
[47] Peary to Morrill, 8 July 1907, R. E. Peary Collection.

that extended around the cottage on three sides to protect it from the battering surf of winter storms. Made of local materials, the stone wall appeared then as today to be a natural part of the island. Similarly, two circular bastions, one on the east side of the house and the other on the west side, were also built of stone. The expanded cottage's most unique features, one bastion held Peary's office and library and the other became a museum for artifacts and equipment from his Arctic work.

The cottage itself was raised about four feet and a large cistern, fed by rain gutters and roof drains, was built in the cellar space created. Hand pumps in the kitchen and a new bathroom brought the water up for washing. A saltwater tank was installed in the attic. With water pumped from the sea to flush the toilet and a new septic tank, the cottage's bathroom facilities were up-graded.

The cottage's living spaces also saw change. The roof was raised and dormers installed to provide two additional bedrooms. The wide front porch was glassed in and an ell added to the rear of the house to create a spacious dining room and porches. The living room was expanded and a three-sided fireplace installed, each side faced with a different type of stone from the island.

In his more commodious home on Eagle Island, Peary spent as much time as possible every year—generally from about the first of May to November or December—until his final summer there in 1919.

Eagle Island—A Long-standing and Important Association with Peary

Peary owned Eagle Island for nearly 40 years. Once his cottage was built in 1904, Peary inhabited the island seasonally, with the exception of his years in the Arctic. Eagle Island is the only property so intimately associated with Peary during the period that he first achieved national significance, with his first Greenland expedition in 1886, to his death in 1920. The only possible exception to Eagle Island's primacy in Peary's life during this time is the vast and ever-changing Arctic itself. A monument on the 1,500-foot headland of Cape York, Greenland (a project organized by Peary's daughter in 1932) marks the association between Peary and that forbidding land of ice.

During his period of national significance, Peary owned and lived in only one other place, a five-bedroom, three-story townhouse built in 1913 at 1831 Wyoming Avenue in Washington, D.C. Peary purchased that residence in 1915 and went there to live each winter thereafter. He died in this house on February 20, 1920. Today, the house still stands and a plaque marks it as Peary's residence for the years from 1915–1920.

Following Peary's death, Eagle Island continued under the ownership of the Peary family until 1967 when Peary's two children, Marie and Robert, Jr., donated it to the Maine State Park Commission (present-day Bureau of Parks and Lands, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry). While the island was still owned by the family, family members spent summers there as much as possible and the island never stopped playing an important part in their lives. As Edward Stafford, Peary's grandson wrote:

> With Peary gone, Eagle Island became more important than ever to his family. Each spring, we arrived there at the earliest possible moment, driving down the long Harpswell peninsula and competing excitedly for the first glimpse of the green trees and the white cottage out in the bay. Each autumn we left on the last possible date, heavy hearted and wet of eye. No one ever said so, but looking back, I think at some deeply subconscious level, we felt were coming back to him in the spring with joy and leaving him sadly in the fall. No other explanation accounts for the

> devotion all of us felt—and still feel—for that seventeen acres of woods and beaches off the coast of Maine.[48]

The Integrity of Eagle Island

The passage of time and the necessity of providing visitor services to this publicly-owned state historic site have brought some changes to Eagle Island since its period of significance from 1881–1920. But largely, the island, its environment, and its buildings maintain an important high degree of integrity that enable Eagle Island to serve as the nation's only historic site for the interpretation of Peary and indeed, the only historic site in the United States open to the public that is associated with an Arctic explorer.[49]

The greatest integrity lies in the island itself. The environment of the island has remained unspoiled and the lush balsam fir and hardwood have continued to grow without major change. The views of the Atlantic Ocean and islands distant and near are little changed from the views that Peary saw as he stood at the windows of the cottage or walked the island's paths.

Only three structures have been added to the island since Peary's death—two small composting outhouses for public use and a pier to facilitate safe public access to the island (Peary had actually been planning a pier and float himself for the island).[50] In 2012, a small wood building, called the "Welcome Center" was erected near the pier to provide visitor orientation in a location other than the Peary Cottage. Until that time orientation, including a video history of the island, had been inside the Peary Cottage. Constructing the Welcome Center helps maintain the historic integrity of the house by removing electronic equipment, and by providing another venue for people who are only interested in the island trails.

Some buildings or portions of them have changed. For example, one, the "igloo," that served first as a summer kitchen and then was moved to the island's eastern cliff to function as a guesthouse, was destroyed by winter storms and removed. The roof of the east bastion had, prior to the state's ownership, caved in, leaving that unique structure no longer able to function as an intact room. It remains in that condition today. The west bastion, Peary's library, nearly met a similar fate. But, under state ownership, the roof was stabilized and the interior of the library, including stained glass windows, reconstructed. Family members removed the furnishings for the room prior to state ownership. But some furnishings have been replicated (Peary's desk) or returned, either by the family or from other places in the cottage (his desk chair and book cases), and the room is now interpreted as it was used by Peary—his personal library and retreat with commanding views of the ocean.

Peary's cottage itself has undergone some change since his death, but in its elevation, size, room configuration, and interior and exterior materials, the cottage maintains the appearance of the remodeled and expanded building that Peary designed and had built in 1912 and 1913. In the years following Peary's death and until the property came under state ownership in 1967, the Peary family continued to spend summers in the cottage. They painted two of the upstairs bedrooms and moved, removed, or replaced furnishings. The cottage that Peary envisioned, built on a bluff, facing northeast and surrounded by rock walls and decks to evoke a great ship, remains unchanged.

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[48] Stafford, Peary and His Promised Land, 23.

[49] Dr. Susan Kaplan, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine was the first to observe that Eagle Island is the nation's only active historic site that is open to the public and associated with an Arctic explorer. Matthew Henson's apartment in New York City, an NHL, is privately owned.

[50] Solar panels have been installed adjacent to the Caretaker's House, on the outhouses, and on the Welcome Center.

Similarly, the caretaker's cottage has changed little in its form and configuration. It continues to be used today as the summer residence for the state-employed park manager who oversees the island's public use.

Eagle Island—Providing Peary's Physical and Emotional Solace

During the final years of Peary's Arctic exploration, particularly following the construction of his first cottage in 1904, Eagle Island became the antidote in Peary's mind for the separation from his family, difficulty, privation, danger, and great pressure to succeed that he faced in the challenging environment of the Arctic.

Indeed, Eagle Island was not far from his mind during his expeditions from 1905–1906 and 1908–1909. He had a photograph of Eagle Island, along with photos of his family, in his cabin on the *Roosevelt*, along with a pillow, made by his daughter Marie, filled with scented pine needles collected from Eagle Island. He referred to these, and their restorative effects on him, upon his return to the *Roosevelt* following an especially treacherous ordeal traversing "a hell of shattered ice" and giving up, for the time being, on a push to the Pole:

> What a delicious thing rest is. With Jo's picture on the wall above my head, with my face buried in Ahnighito's (Marie's) pillow of Eagle Island needles, and its exquisitely delicious fragrance in my nostrils, I for the moment echo from the bottom of my heart Ootah's remarks, I have got back again, thank God!"....Since reaching the ship I have had an aversion to pencil and paper, and have only cared to lie and think and plan. To think after all the preparation, the experience, the effort, the strain, the chances taken, and the wearing of myself and party to the last inch, what a little journey it is on the map and how far short of my hopes it fell. To think that I have failed once more; that I shall never have the chance to win again. Then to put this useless repining aside, and plan for my western trip, and when I have done my duty by this, to plan for mine and Eagle Island.[51]

Earlier on that same trip, when he was more hopeful of the journey's success, Eagle Island once again became a focus of Peary's release from the burdens of Arctic exploration:

> Then I think, what will be the effect if some insuperable obstacle, open water, absolutely impossible ice, or an enormous fall of snow knock me out now when everything looks so encouraging? Will it break my heart, or will it simply numb me into insensibility? And then I think, what's the odds, in two months at the longest the agony will be over, and I shall know one way or the other, and then whichever way it turns out, before the leaves fall I shall be back on Eagle Island again, going over the well-known places with Jo and the children, and listening to the birds, the wind in the trees, and the sound of lapping waves (do such things really exist on this frozen planet?)[52]

Peary returned to Eagle Island, and in its solace made plans for his final attempt to reach the North Pole. To this end, the *Roosevelt* steamed out of New York harbor on a hot July afternoon in 1908. The *Roosevelt* paused in Oyster Bay on Long Island where President Theodore Roosevelt and his family came aboard to tour the ship, shake hands with the 22 expedition members, and wish Peary well. From there, the *Roosevelt* proceeded to Eagle Island, its last port in the United States, to pick up a spare rudder and then headed further north.

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[51] Robert E. Peary, *Nearest the Pole* (New York: Doubleday, 1907), 168-169, quoted in Weems, *Peary: The Explorer and the Man*, 222.

[52] Ibid, 111-112, quoted in Wally Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels: Robert E. Peary and the Race to the North* Pole (New York: Athenaeum, 1989), 171.

Eagle Island, with Peary's waiting family in residence, was the scene of great excitement and celebration when news reached Mrs. Peary that her husband had claimed the North Pole. While staying on Eagle Island during this time, Peary also quietly organized his records to defend his claim. In early October, the National Geographic Society, Peary's most ardent organizational backer, issued an invitation to Peary to appear before the board and justify his claim. The society subsequently appointed a sub-committee to examine Peary's records the following month and, as one of the committee members later wrote, "Mr. Peary came from his home near Portland, Maine, and brought his records in a gripsack and his instruments in a trunk."[53] Following the National Geographic Society's examination, which found in favor of Peary, other organizations conducted their own investigations and finally, in March 1911, Peary was exonerated by Congress and finally claimed unalloyed credit for reaching the North Pole.

During the time that Peary's claims were swirling in doubt across the nation, Eagle Island provided refuge and solace for the explorer. In addition to assembling materials for his defense, Peary spent valuable time with his family. As he wrote in October 1909:

> The quiet, undisturbed time which I am now having is very pleasant to me. It is particularly agreeable to have this opportunity after so many years of effort, of being with my wife and children in our island home, with no thought of the future to disturb either of us, and with the feeling of intense satisfaction and content that results from having done the thing that one has started out to do.[54]

He also very likely spent time designing the modifications to his cottage. It was probably during this time that Peary drew one version of a floor plan (undated and unrealized) for the remodeling and expansion of the cottage. The floor plan shows a square building, with walls five feet thick and 75 feet long. Ed Stafford, describing the evocative structure as a turreted stone castle, continues the description:

> On the two eastern or seaward corners, the sketch shows circular towers with diameters respectively of twenty-seven and thirty-three feet, and on the north corner, above the beach, a larger tower forty-five feet in diameter.[55]

Most enigmatically, the sketch bears the label, in Peary's hand "Chateau D'If." The sketch is likely from the period following his return from the North Pole and serves as a poignant indication of Peary's emotions during those years when his claim on the Pole was in question. The sketch also shows the intimate connection between Eagle Island and the explorer. "Chateau D'If" was the island fortress in which Alexandre Dumas's hero, the Count of Monte Christo (in a book by the same name), was imprisoned on false charges and from which he escaped to seek vengeance on his enemies.

Once Peary's claim seemed secure and the honors of gratitude of the nation bestowed on him, Peary was free to turn his full attention to his family and Eagle Island. He designed and orchestrated a major remodeling and expansion of his cottage. In 1912, he hosted a reunion on the island of his Bowdoin classmates. Visitors to Eagle Island, wrote his biographer:

> found a warm, relaxed Peary—quite a different man from the reserved exclusive figure often seen elsewhere. There, where he was on his own ground and loved every foot of it, he was "the most companionable of men," as one visitor commented, going about the island with almost

[53] The Peary Hearings, Committee on Naval Affairs, Subcommittee on Private Bills, 11 January 1911, 84, quoted in Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels,* 301.

[54] Ibid, 300.

[55] Stafford, Peary and His Promised Land, 21.

> boyish abandon. "To see Peary as I saw him last week," the same visitor continued, "is to understand the man."[56]

Peary spent his last summer on Eagle Island in 1919. He had been diagnosed with incurable pernicious anemia late in 1917. The disease slowly sapped his strength and his condition worsened. In the words of another biographer:

> ...during his last summer on his beloved Eagle Island, knowing he would never be well again, he spent most of the time lying in the sun on a musk-ox rug laid out on the lawn. The island which had given him strength, however, could do no more than comfort him and ease him nearer to the end, and on 20th February (after leaving the island in October and returning to Washington D.C.), the spirit finally departed the body of this exceptional man.[57]

Conclusion

Much of what has been written about Admiral Robert E. Peary concerns the controversy of reaching the North Pole and the competing claim by Dr. Cook. Peary's noted significance extends well beyond this controversy, for reaching the site of the North Pole (there is no land) had little practical significance. As one scholar has documented, Peary's approach to collaboration with the Inughuit was significant, and, "he can be credited as the first Western explorer in the High Arctic to extensively integrate Inuit and Inughuit strategies into a program of arctic survival."[58] Furthermore, Peary understood the value in mobilizing support in the popular press to gain public support for his expeditions to advance the standing of the United States in a world of aggressive imperialism.

> In the early twentieth century, the United States required a triumphant hero to represent its self-image as an emerging world power, and Peary obliged his country's need by providing both a polar victory and a narrative to support it. In fulfilling the larger master narrative of this country's triumphal ascendency, his influence may have been largely symbolic, but the symbolism of his North Pole conquest resonated long after this pivotal moment in the construction of American national identity.[59]

[56] L. M. Harte, Portland Sunday Press and Times, 28 September 1913, quoted in Weems, Peary: The Explorer and the Man, 297
[57] Herbert, The Noose of Laurels, 329
[58] Dick, *Muskox Land,* op. cit., 263.
[59] Ibid., 264.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
X Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
X Other State Agency (Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands)
X Federal Agency (National Archives-Peary Papers)
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 17

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	415245	4840690
B	19	414600	4840380
C	19	415090	4839680
D	19	414660	4839910

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary includes the entire land area of Eagle Island.

Boundary Justification: The two houses and island encompass the entire land mass owned and occupied by Robert E. Peary during the period of significance.

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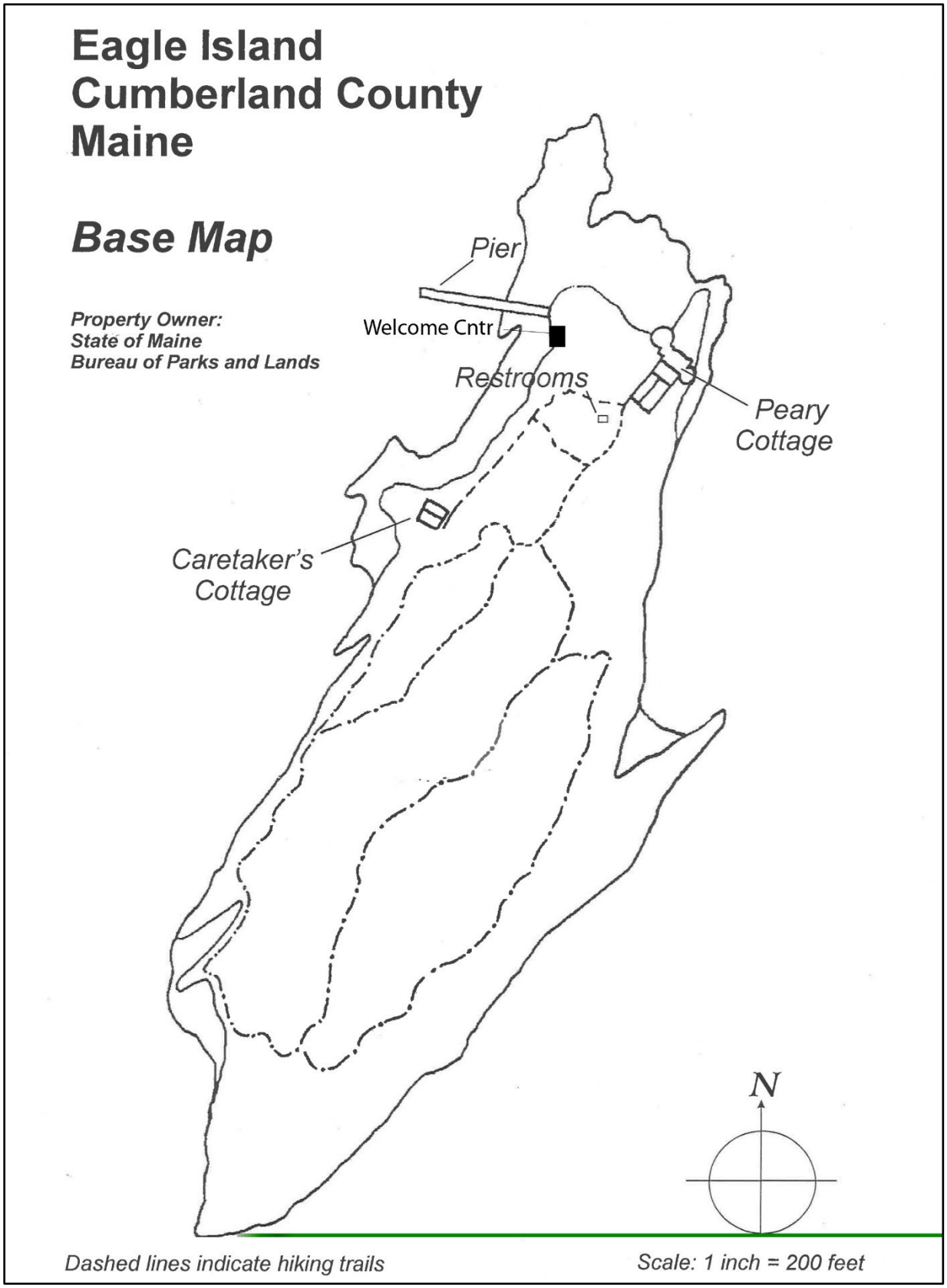
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Washington, DC 20005

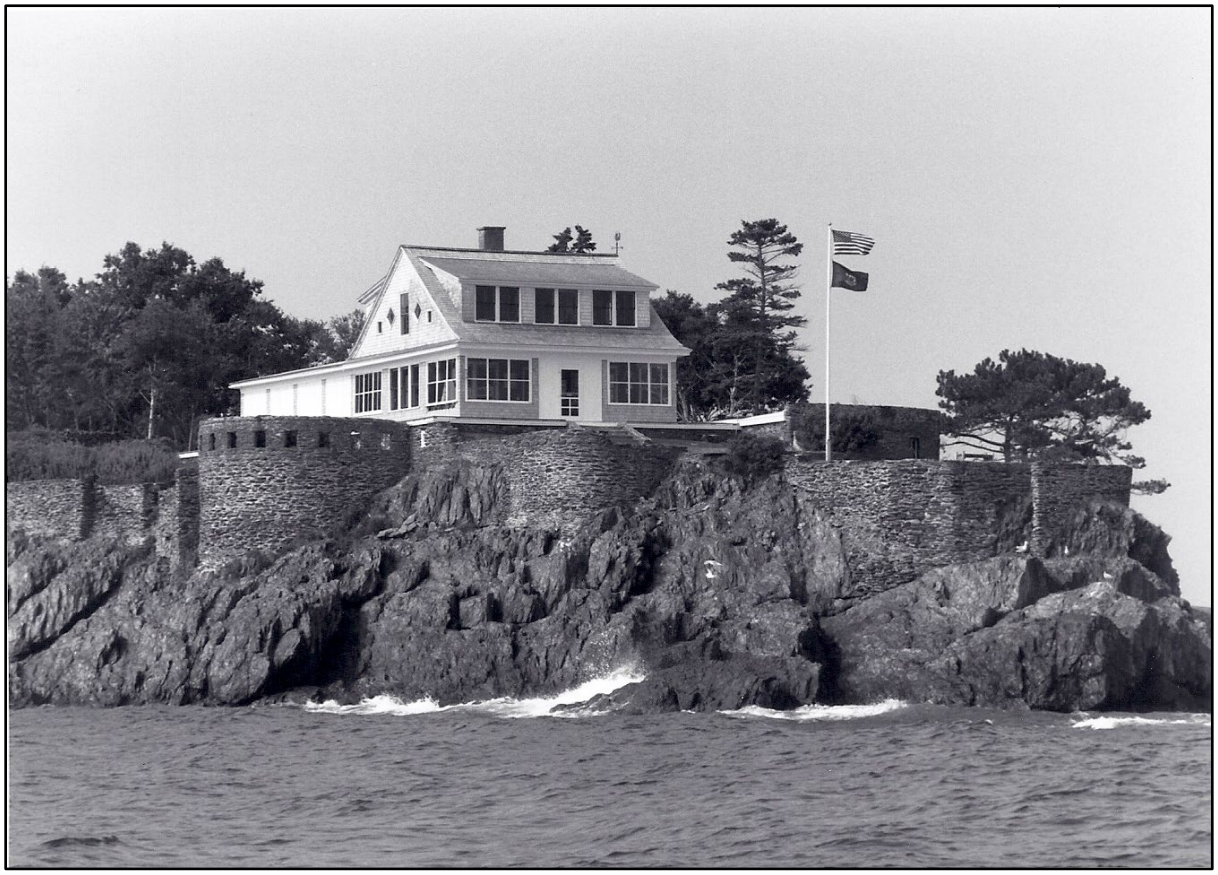
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August 25, 2014

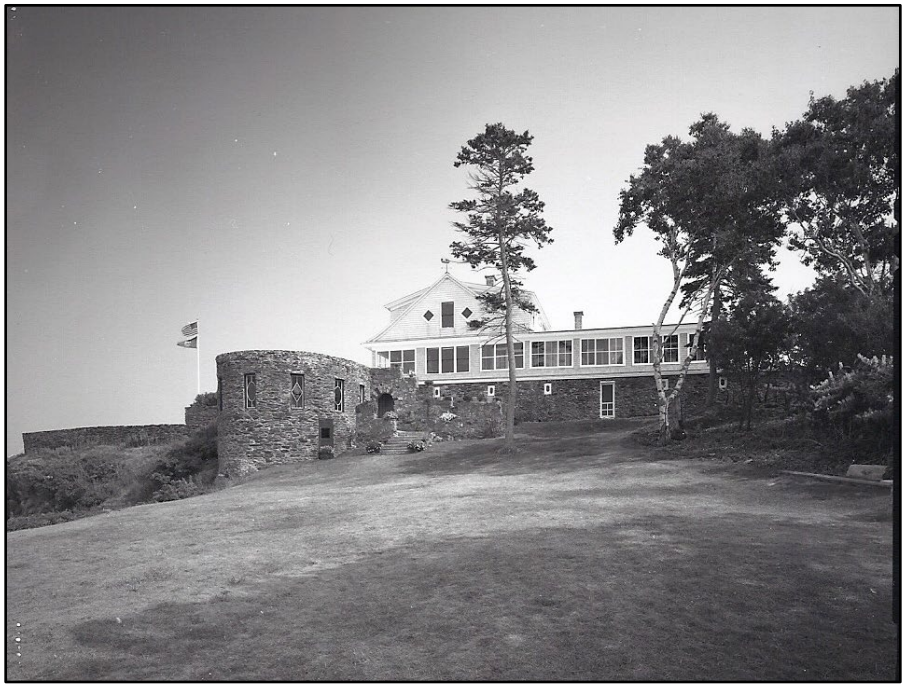

Ministerial Island
Bates Island
Eagle Island
Haddock Rock
Little Mark Island
Eagle Island Ledge
Whale Rock
Mink Rocks
Broken Cove
West Brown Cow
Haskell Is
A
B
C
D
SOUND
FORTLAND CITY BOUNDARY
EAGLE ISLAND
S. HARPSWELL VIC.
CUMBERLAND CO., ME
UTM: A) 19/415245/4840690
B) 19/415600/4840380
C) 19/415090/4839680
D) 19/414660/4839910

USGS Map


Eagle Island
Cumberland County
Maine
Base Map
Property Owner:
State of Maine
Bureau of Parks and Lands
Pier
Welcome Cntr
Restrooms
Peary Cottage
Caretaker's Cottage
N
Dashed lines indicate hiking trails
Scale: 1 inch = 200 feet



Peary Summer Home, Eagle Island
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



West elevation
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



"Bastion," Peary Study
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



Peary Study-Library
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



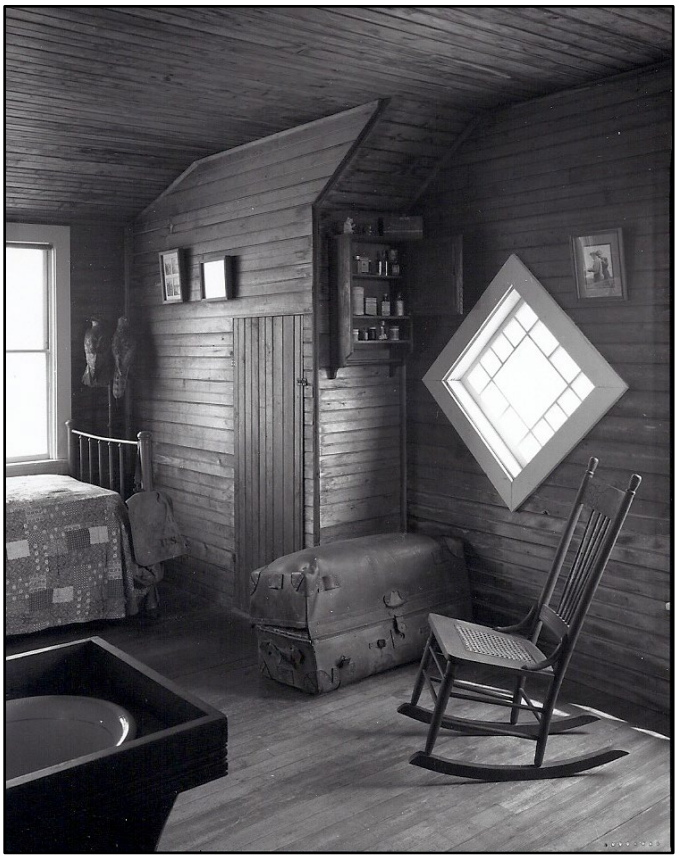
Interior front porch looking into living room
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



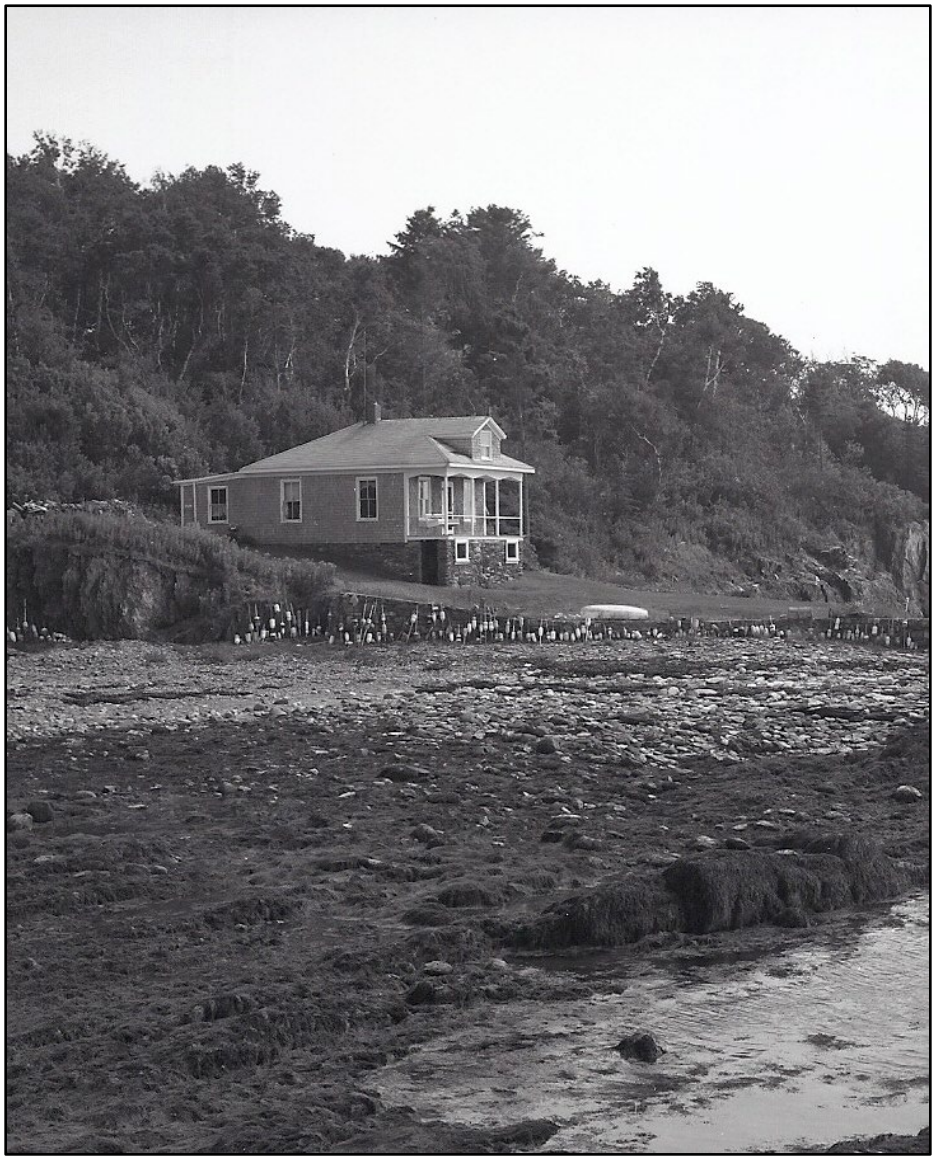
Living Room, looking toward staircase and kitchen wing
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



Kitchen
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



Peary Bedroom
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001



Caretaker's House
Photograph by Brian Vanden Brink, September 2001