



## FOREVER CHANGED

Historic storms wreak havoc on Peaks

By Ross Sneyd  
Peaks Island News

Big stretches of Peaks Island were permanently resculpted by a pair of storms that hit within days of each other during the second week of January.

Both brought howling winds out of the east and southeast, coinciding with a particularly high tide – a record in the second storm – that battered the shoreline, roads, homes, boats and beloved landmarks.

A cottage near Spar Cove was pummeled in both storms and left uninhabitable. A huge rock on Whaleback on the Back Shore was broken off and tossed aside. The bottom of the ramp onto Sandy Beach was ripped off. Picnic Point was left more like Picnic Island.

So many chunks of the sea wall along Seashore Avenue at Whitehead Passage were blasted away by the relentless waves that it was left looking gap-toothed and was essentially destroyed.

And Seashore Avenue itself was littered with rocks and seaweed, sand and driftwood that were carried up and into houses, along with floodwater, ruining at least one car and leaving homes a wreck. Stretches of the road were gouged away and had to be hastily refilled by the Island Services team to make it passable. A propane tank was washed from one house and an oil tank from another.

Jody Trinchet and her husband, from Boston, just bought their house across from the stone beach on Seashore in October. She chose to take a positive view as she stood outside watching the high tide begin to recede on

See **ROUNDUP**, page 12

Comprehensive storm coverage inside

## Sea washes away decades of family's memories

By Ross Sneyd  
Peaks Island News

Noon approached on Jan. 13, and along with it, high tide. Melissa Childs jumped from her spot in front of the windows that normally offer a panoramic view of Hussey Sound and neighboring islands, not to mention her family's beloved Surfcrest cottage next door.

On this day, the view was obscured by what seemed like a wall of roiling water.

"I don't want to hear gasps. I don't want to hear anything," she told her sons and other family members who stood watching the storm rage.

She retreated deeper into her house, mostly away from the view, poured herself a

See **WASHED AWAY**, page 15



Top: Waves crash into Surfcrest cottage at the height of the storm on Jan. 13. – **Liz Rollins photo**; Above: Melissa Childs continues to find family mementoes in the wreckage of the cottage three weeks later. – **Cara Dolan photo**; Left: Virginia Paton, Childs' grandmother, in the kitchen of her beloved cottage in a family photo.

## 'Man Overboard': Ferry crew springs into action to save man

By Scott Dolan  
Peaks Island News

ABOARD THE MACHIGONNE II – "Man overboard," Capt. Pat Nixon's voice came over the intercom.

Nixon had just seen a man jump from the Maine State Pier into the frigid water shortly after the 5:35 p.m. ferry to Peaks Island had pulled from its Portland berth on Jan. 24.

Deckhand Brady Kirk, who had also seen the man jump, was down the two flights of stairs from the cockpit to the

main deck at a sprint even before Nixon came on the intercom.

In the minutes of flurry that followed, the quick actions of Machigonne's crew saved the man's life. He was pulled from the water and was safely aboard by 5:43 p.m.

Some passengers with window views could see the man in the water. "There he is," one passenger said after sliding open a window. He pointed through the darkness to about 35 feet out. There was the

See **OVERBOARD**, page 16



Casco Bay Lines deckhands Rob Hannigan, left, and Nick Johnson pull a man who jumped off the Maine State Pier to safety on Jan. 24. – **Scott Dolan photo**

# New legal filings escalate Ryefield paper street dispute

By Scott Dolan  
Peaks Island News

A property dispute over who should own a “paper street” by Ryefield Cove escalated in February and brought into focus an island-wide issue about public access to Peaks’ seaside paths, wooded trails and neighborhood cut-throughs.

The dispute centers on a legal claim made nearly a year ago by the owners of 1 Ryefield St., who say they should own the paper street between their property and the waterfront because the city of Portland “vacated” the street.

Under Maine law, that legal claim made by Barbara Perry, Holly Perry and Phillip Arnold on Feb. 24, 2023, allowed neighbors one year to dispute their claim.

Some of their neighbors recently filed two legal challenges in the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds, one challenge by Dana Smith and the other by Russell Boisjoly and Carol Somers, in which they each assert that the public should continue owning the paper street, as it traditionally has.

A paper street is legally defined as any thoroughfare that appears in publicly filed legal documents, such as a subdivision map, that exists on paper but that was never completed or improved.

In recent decades, the city of Portland has been vacating its historic claims to such paper streets, thus allowing abutting landowners to assert that they should be the rightful owners of those legal no-man’s lands.

Smith, whose seasonal property at 105 Seashore Ave. is accessible by the Ryefield paper street, filed his legal challenge first, on Feb. 1.

He said he filed his challenge to try to “keep it the way it is” now – fully accessible to the public.

“If people can just start claiming these paper roads as their property, it sets a precedent for that to happen all over the island,” Smith said in a phone interview from his year-round home in Holden, Mass.

Boisjoly and Somers, of 87 Seashore Ave., filed their



The path that is the subject of a Peaks paper-street property dispute runs between the bottom of Ryefield Street and Seashore Avenue. – Ross Sneyd photo

challenge second on Feb. 8, using identical language to the challenge that Smith filed a week earlier.

If Smith or Boisjoly and Somers decide to pursue their challenges, they each have six months from the time they made their filing in the registry of deeds to next file a lawsuit in court.

Arnold said that he and the other owners of

1 Ryefield St. were not surprised to learn of the legal challenges against their claim and were waiting to see if others filed legal challenges before deciding their next steps.

“We knew someone would be filing,” Arnold said, citing comments by other islanders at recent Peaks Island Council meetings.

These developments come as the Council has also been discussing paper streets and formed a new committee on paper streets at its January meeting. That committee, chaired by Councilor Garry Fox, will begin assessing the status of all paper streets on the island.

After receiving a legal opinion from one of the city’s lawyers, the Peaks Island Council also decided to take no formal action in regard to the Ryefield paper-street dispute.

Council Chairman Peter McLaughlin shared a December 29 email from Portland Associate Corporation Counsel Amy McNally in which she discussed the history of the Ryefield paper-street issue and the city’s decision to take no action.

“Under Maine law, I am not confident any landowner ... (including the city) would be able to demonstrate a superior property right to that area in a quiet title action, so it does not seem to be in the best interest of the city to get involved in litigation related to this title dispute,” McNally wrote to McLaughlin.

McNally also wrote that the owners of 1 Ryefield made their legal claim only after the city became aware that the Perrys and Arnold filed for an after-the-fact building permit for a deck that encroaches beyond their property line onto the paper street.

The city determined it could not issue that deck permit until the legal question of who owned that section of paper street was resolved, McNally wrote.

As part of the Perrys’ and Arnold’s claim to own the abutting portion of the paper road, they’re also seeking to formally create a permanent public easement that would allow pedestrians to continue using a portion of the land.

## Finding the fun



Caroline Smart of Boston watches as her son Mac collects sea foam from a lawn overlooking Ryefield Cove. Her family was visiting Peaks when the second storm hit on Jan. 13. See more in story on page 12. – Ross Sneyd photo



### 30+ YEARS OF ISLAND BUSINESS

- PROPANE, OIL, KEROSENE DELIVERY
- 24-HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE
- MASTER OIL BURNER TECH
- PROPANE AND NATURAL GAS TECH
- COMMERCIAL EQUIPMENT
- HEAT PUMPS
- HOME STANDBY GENERATORS
- EFFICIENCY MAINE VENDOR

**PEAKS ISLAND FUEL**

**P.O. BOX 104**

**PEAKS ISLAND, MAINE 04108**

**PHONE #207-766-5700**

**EMAIL: OFFICE@PEAKSFUEL.COM**

**WWW.PEAKSFUEL.COM**

## Let’s celebrate!

Please let us know of births, graduations, significant anniversaries and other events worth celebrating on the island. Email to: [news@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:news@peaksislandnews.org) with **Celebrations** in the subject line.



Top: Whaleback after the storm – Annie O'Brien ink painting

Left: Travers Tuttle cleaning up Seashore Avenue on Jan. 13. – Stacey Kors photo artwork

## Storm impressions, expressed in haiku

During COVID, children's book author and illustrator Annie O'Brien and I embarked on a weekly poetry project. We'd meet, choose a classic poetry form and each write a poem to share and critique.

Last summer, missing that creative companionship, we started a daily haiku practice.

Little did we know that Sarah Goodman Cuetara – Hedgehog, poet and co-creator of the small, independent press Wheeling Tern Books – was doing the same.

As the three of us had worked periodically on poetry together before, we decided to combine our efforts into a book. "Peaks Season," 90 haiku about summer on the island, will be published this summer.

When the board of Peaks Island News voted to print a special storm edition of the paper, I contacted Sarah and Annie to see if they'd written any haiku about the storm.

Here is a sampling of our efforts:

**1/10/24**  
wind gusts shake the house  
all night rain washed snow away  
the world is tattered  
–aob

**1/12/24**  
After the snow storm,  
the rain storm, and the wind storm,  
a blossom rolling.  
–sgc

**Seashore Ave**  
asphalt ripped apart  
a road of puzzle pieces  
that no longer fit  
–sgk

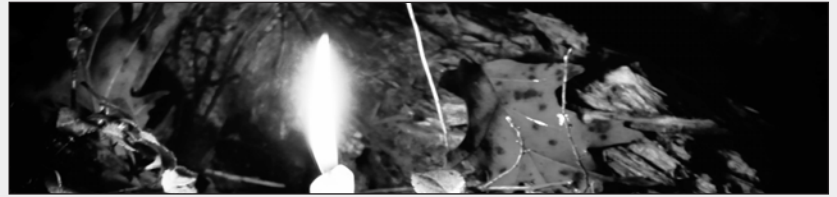
**The Day Whaleback Broke**  
ancient spine of stone  
how long did the surf pound you  
before this knockout?  
–sgk

**aftermath**  
rocks tossed, strewn, and piled  
pavement lifted, earth scoured out  
we pay reverence  
–aob

**1/14/24**  
Six gulls float in the  
flotsam of yesterday's storm.  
Not mourners, but quiet.  
–sgc



MEET THE CREATIVES BY STACEY KORS



## Considering green burial benefits starts with erasing misconceptions

There isn't a week during ferry commutes where talk of the environment or saving money doesn't come up. One inevitable part of life where we can find a little success with both topics is how we handle our own burials.

According to survey information collected by the National Funeral Directors Association, the average viewing and burial in Maine costs around \$8,000, including vaults and chemical contaminants that can impact the earth decades after we're gone. No one intentionally tries to do harm in death, but we've been conditioned to think this is the way to put human remains to rest since embalming became the norm in body transportation during the Civil War.

Before then, interment in the United States was familial, intimate – and people relied on what we refer to today as green burial. This is simply when you bury a body about 3 feet under the soil in a biodegradable shroud (100 percent cotton, etc.) or container (pine and willow caskets, for example). Over time, the body naturally decomposes and returns to soil.

That's it. To us, in a world where we have come to expect steel caskets and formaldehyde, green burial can seem like a magic trick. If we take time to really reflect on death, something most Americans avoid doing, then it becomes obvious that green burial is of course what people of the past relied on.

This is usually about the time when our misconceptions creep in. People often fear that green burials will contaminate groundwater. Even though many of us now die after long hospital interventions, unlike the people who came before us, we can rest assured that after a few years, the soil will sanitize these materials to a point where the earth is even safe enough to use for farming.

Another concern people have about green burial is that animals will disrupt graves. Yes, green graves are more shallow than 6 feet, but a scent barrier is created at 18 to 24 inches deep. If soil or mulch is used to seal the grave, this will prevent animals from even smelling remains.

Of course, there are some complications with green burial to consider. The first has to do with adjusting our preconceptions of what a funeral should be. Some green burial sites do not permit grave markers or headstones. Those that do, though, invite individuals, friends and family to engrave natural stones as markers.

Green funerals can be less fancy and may feel as though they lack emotional weight if not planned as such. Luckily, there are funeral homes in Maine that partner with green burial grounds and can assist with arrangements, including transportation of the body.

Unfortunately, since preservative chemicals are not used on the body, the funeral home may have a policy of closed

DYING TO KNOW BY BRIDGET JOYCE



caskets in lieu of viewings or wakes.

When planning your own wake at home, which is permitted in Maine, you may be able to have viewings of the body if the visiting time happens soon

after death and if the body of the person being honored is sufficiently cooled. The last, obvious barrier to green burial is how readily available modern burial is compared to green burials.

Maine currently has three all-natural burial sites: Rainbow's End in Orrington, Cedar Brook Burial Ground in Limington and the recently opened Baldwin Hill Conservation Cemetery that borders the Kennebec Land Trust in Fayette and is certified by the Green Burial Council.

There also are three hybrid cemeteries in Maine that offer green burial along with modern burial practices: Greenwood Cemetery in Bethel, Southern Maine Veterans Cemetery in Springvale and Burr Cemetery in Freeport. Having these six sites is a fantastic start, compared to some other states that have only one or two green burial options available.

Hopefully, in years to come, we'll enjoy even more options for green burial in Maine as more all-natural burial sites are established and modern cemeteries transition to hybrid models.

A transition back to traditional green burials is environmentally and economically sustainable with eco-friendly alternatives to embalming chemicals, such as mere refrigeration.

Then there is the money saved on containers and headstones and even the potential for foregoing grave-digging equipment if the plot is dug by hand. These kinds of cost savings ease the financial burden individuals and families face.

This is particularly important when we acknowledge how this could alleviate some of the hardships faced by those who have suffered historical and systemic hatred and unfairness. Embracing green burial could make death and dying more equitable in the United States.

The opportunity to return to a hands-on approach to death could help us all face our own mortality as well as let us cross the divide of time by re-establishing our connection to humans of the past.

Considering green burial is certainly not a solution to all our fears about death, but even to think about it, we provide ourselves time to reflect on how our own life and death are connected to one another and the earth – more than we probably will ever be able to fully understand.

Bridget Joyce has earned proficiency on the National End-of-Life Doula Alliance test and is enthusiastic to explore end-of-life topics in each issue of the Peaks Island News.

*Tribute:*  
**A poignant poem  
 for a longtime  
 islander**

Russ Edwards, a longtime islander who lived near Centennial Beach, passed away last year. At his funeral, his son-in-law Bob Pearson recited this poem in Edwards' honor.

**Flying Bridge**

By Bob Pearson

*For Dad, June 30, 2023*

"Good morning, Dad," as I step aboard,  
 "Where to this gorgeous day?"

"Let loose that line," he gently chirps,  
 "We're heading down the bay."

Our family fills the Pilgrim  
 And spreads out on the deck  
 My wife, when no one's looking  
 Sneaks me a little peck

He takes the wheel, we pick up speed  
 But the pickup's not too fast  
 "The journey is what comes first," he says  
 "The destination is almost last."

He's in his element with Ray-Bans on  
 There's navigation on the screen  
 We glide past a red pot buoy there  
 While this one here is green

We cruise past Evergreen, the Diamonds  
 Past Long, Chebeague and Crow  
 "That wasn't Muskie crying," he says  
 "Those tears were just melting snow!"

We laugh at ballot questions  
 Designed to make everyone guess  
 Vote No for Yes and Yes for No  
 Their intent they'll never confess

We talk about the what-ifs  
 And campaigns that come and go  
 And the leaders that get voted in  
 What they did and didn't know

His stories just keep flowing  
 As seasoned as they are  
 Like fireflies meant for keeping  
 I'll save them in a jar

'Round Hope and Sand and Little Bang  
 Then Stave and Upper Flag  
 His advice to me is try to zig  
 When everyone else will zag

We arrive at Eagle Island  
 Whose owner had an audacious goal  
 To stick a pin in the top of a map  
 And be the first to claim the North Pole

We'll have some lunch and stretch our legs  
 And maybe a beer or two  
 Then it's time to go, he'll let us know  
 We bid the island adieu

We cast away and begin our return  
 Retracing the course that we took  
 When we get home he'll sit by the fire  
 And relax with a drink and a book

But for now let's soak up the day  
 And ride the tide on the run  
 As we catch the breeze and savor the trip  
 And feel the warmth of the sun

"Hey, Dad, what do you say."  
 "Can a day get any better than this?"  
 "Hell, no," he smiles from the Flying Bridge  
 "Up here it's heavenly bliss."

*Editorial:* **It comes down to this:  
 We're a community that's in it together**

**By the Editorial Team**

Within hours of both storms that devastated Peaks Island last month, Public Works crews were out in force, joined by neighbors, friends and families who jumped in to help move rocks and the remarkable wrack that surged out of the sea onto what many of us think of as our island fortress.

The storms were a stark reminder that we live on a barrier island, open to the ravages of the North Atlantic, whose once more-predictable cycles of waves and wind are changing in our lifetimes.

We may be frustrated about how to deal with those changes in the natural world. But we also have no doubt that the community that we so treasure on Peaks is ready to rise to the challenge.

Certainly, we individuals can do only so much to alter the course of planet-wide climate change, though many of us are trying to do our part in ways small and large.

But there is plenty we can and did do as a community to get through this latest onslaught of weather terror.

Let us remember that we're all in this together, and to get through it, we must celebrate and embrace the com-

munity that is so valuable and important on an island.

Community is important wherever you live, of course. But never quite as key as when you live on an island at the edge of the Gulf of Maine, an arm of the ocean that is warming and rising faster than almost anywhere else on Earth, according to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, among others.

There will be many debates and decisions in the coming years about how we can make Peaks Island more resilient against the changes facing us. But we will be well served if we can keep our humanity and community at the center of it all.

There have been so many examples since mid-January of how we've cared for ourselves that we need to remember.

We can help each other pick up and clean up. We can gather at New Brackett Church for a community conversation to process the pain and suffering.

We can show up at Peaks Island Council meetings and other gatherings to keep the flow of information robust.

In other words, we can continue to draw together as the community that drew us all to this rock to begin with.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Offering kudos, clarification ... and some concern**

Congratulations! I know what it takes to publish a community newspaper – a lot of work!

Two comments: While your story on island newspapers correctly stated that David Tyler and I started the Island Times in 2002, it went on to say, "The paper grew to cover other islands but published its final issue in May 2013 owing to declining ad revenues."

In fact, I published the newspaper with David beginning in 2002 and ending in 2009, some while after David moved on. In 2009, I handed it off to islander Kevin Attra, who then ran it alone through 2013. David and I published our first issue with 24 paid advertisements. Strong ad revenue continued. I gave a thriving, award-winning newspaper away in 2009 only because I needed to spend more time with my family and I was no

longer living here year-round.

Second, I find the story about paper roads naming a family and confusion around who owns an abutting paper street to be worrisome. It doesn't provide any historic detail; quoting people saying this is not a dispute between neighbors, that it is instead about public access to our shorelands, which is alarming. Such statements warrant a deeper investigation.

There is a backstory here that, if properly understood and laid out, would provide factual guidance that would allow for informed, critical thinking by all, including the Peaks Island Council.

Best of luck. I look forward to reading future issues.

**Mary Lou Wendell**  
 Ledgewood Street

**'What I wish I'd said' about contributing**

First, let me congratulate Peaks Island News on a successful launch. It appears that it will be a wonderful forum for discussing emerging issues and needs of our community. A great newspaper requires a great reading public. Hopefully island residents from the youngest readers to the oldest will continue to embrace this treasure.

Second, in my column from last month, I urged this community to consider the potential benefits of building endowed funds within existing nonprofits and The Peaks Island Fund, the organization that focuses on raising money for the emerging needs of our charities.

What I wish I'd said is this: to reach "Take Off," that point where growth of a community chest becomes ex-

ponential, we all need to contribute. The essential step each of us can take is to make sure we have a will and that it is up to date with our wishes for sharing assets with the island community.

Whether you have millions or hundreds of dollars in your estate, give some of it back to the island that has been your home. If you don't have a will, you don't have a say. An estate plan is an expression of your will, your legacy. "Any donor can give any asset to any charitable purpose."

Contact Perry Sutherland at [executivedirector@peaksislandfund.org](mailto:executivedirector@peaksislandfund.org) for free advice.

**Bill Zimmerman**  
 City View Road

**Corrections  
 policy**

Peaks Island News is committed to providing readers with the most accurate and factual news possible.

We know mistakes happen, and we do our best to correct them as quickly as possible. If you spot a factual error, please let us know at [news@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:news@peaksislandnews.org).

We'll run a correction in the next print edition.

**Send in your letters**

Peaks Island News welcomes letters to the editor.

Please keep them to 250 words or less. And email them to: [news@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:news@peaksislandnews.org)

[peaksislandnews.org](http://peaksislandnews.org).

Peaks Island News reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity and grammar.

Extra, Extra!

Our next issue is **mid-March**

Send news submissions  
 by **March 1** to:  
[news@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:news@peaksislandnews.org)

Send advertising submissions  
 by **Feb. 26** to:  
[support@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:support@peaksislandnews.org)

## Peaks Island News

This newspaper is a nonprofit organization  
*Created By Our Community  
For Our Community.*

All members of the Peaks Island community are encouraged to have a voice in this paper, to contribute their ideas, writing, photography, illustrations and energy.

### Our Mission

We aim to create a true community newspaper, delivering news about Peaks Island people, schools, businesses, government, organizations, current events, arts, history and island culture, while being supported by the people who live here and advertisers that connect businesses with locals and visitors alike.

### Board of Directors

**President**

Scott Dolan

**Vice president**

Rhonda Berg

**Treasurer**

Susan Hanley

**Secretary**

Bridget Joyce

Stacey Kors

Ross Sneyd

### Editorial Team

**News Editor**

Ross Sneyd  
802.249.7506

**Graphic Designer & Editor**

Patricia McCarthy

**Copy Editor**

Stacey Kors

**Photographer**

Cara Dolan

**Photo Editing**

Cecilia Bohan

### Contact us

Comments, letters to the editor and corrections are welcome. Contact us:

news@peaksislandnews.org  
802.249.7506

P.O. Box 26 • Peaks Island, Maine 04108

### Advertise in Peaks Island News

Peaks Island News is distributed for free in multiple locations on the island and on the mainland. Advertisers reach readers and other businesses through their advertisements, which are not tax deductible. For rates and details, visit [peaksislandnews.org/advertise](http://peaksislandnews.org/advertise).

### Advertising Representative

Rhonda Berg  
support@peaksislandnews.org  
207.756.3450

[www.peaksislandnews.org](http://www.peaksislandnews.org)

### Voluntarily 'subscribe'

Peaks Island News is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible as allowed under law and may be made online at [peaksislandnews.org/support](http://peaksislandnews.org/support) or by mail. For information, email [support@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:support@peaksislandnews.org), or contact Board President Scott Dolan at 207.210.4496.



Children who grow up on Peaks Island learn early on that the shoreline is ever changing. – Cecilia Bohan photo

# Learning to live on the edge, where we can grow and change

My first job after college was as youth minister at a church on Cape Cod. It was my first time working closely with kids growing up on the edge, in a littoral sense.

Living on the coast can help us understand that the margins are not just limitations. Often, they are opportunities to learn something new.

One Sunday morning at that coastal church, the kids and I were looking at maps in the back of the Bible in an attempt to orient ourselves to the seemingly far-off stories we were learning. I was trying to teach the young people the difference between a political map and a geographic map, and I used the distinction that I had been taught (and accepted).

A political map reflects human change. The proud names of empires in LARGE FONT, the seemingly sharp dividing lines between political entities, the names of towns, cities and regions: these things all change throughout time.

But beneath these changes is the underlay of something that is steady. A geographic map does not change over time. While political maps show that human decisions come and go, geographic maps illustrate how the land itself always stays the same.

But the kids absolutely would not have any of what I was saying. They completely disagreed with the idea that geographic features don't change over time and they rejected the entire premise of my lesson.

One fourth-grader acted as spokesperson for the group and helped me understand.

"The shape of the land changes all the time, and it doesn't even take that long. You just have to pay attention. We know because last year in science class we went to the beach every Friday and measured things. We kept journals, I still have mine. I can show you. The land doesn't stay the same; these maps in the Bible are just wrong. Everything is always changing."

Thank G\*d for science. I'm so glad those young people had the patience to convert me.

Although I grasped what they were saying, my first response was to hold on to the understanding I had brought to the room with me. But by the end of the lesson they helped me appreciate that the complexity they observed was worth engaging. I didn't need to defend my position just because I remembered someone teaching it to me. Like the land, I, too, could change.



PEAKS  
ISLAND  
PERSPECTIVE

BY  
WILL  
GREEN

Of course, there is no clear distinction between politics and ecology. Human decisions and geographical features are not separate realities that belong on separate maps. That's just not how life actually works.

There are almost always multiple factors that contribute to change. Any child growing up along the ocean knows this. All they need to

do is pay attention. And even adults can be reminded that our artificial constructs don't always hold up.

Two historic storms last month have many of us feeling on edge. The feeling is connected to many factors challenging us: political change, climate change, economics, ecology, it's all connected. It has me thinking about those kids who taught me their important lesson.

The edge can be where we learn new things and grow. We need to thoughtfully observe our environment, record what we observe, think about what we record, and learn to change as we amend the incorrect paradigms offered to us.

I suspect that we feel on edge not only because we are observing change around us, but also because we are coming to terms with the need for change in our ways of knowing.

Our definitions, assumptions and received understandings are changing as well. Some of the lessons we used to believe in won't hold up much longer. There is no clear line between politics and ecology. It's all connected.

A little over 10 years ago, I lived in a small town way out in Boston Harbor. My favorite way to walk from the parsonage to the church was directly along the seawall. Most of the structure was precast concrete, but some of it was large, jagged riprap. The path changed many times over my years there.

In order to keep using the same path I loved, I had to learn to be unsure. Even the largest rocks could break, move, or (most dangerous of all) become slightly loosened and wiggle just a little. Instead of a false sense of safety, my body learned a constant sense of change. Being on the shore is always teaching us a new way to be sure.

*Will Green has been pastor of New Brackett Church since 2019. He can be reached at [newbrackettchurch@gmail.com](mailto:newbrackettchurch@gmail.com).*

### Note to readers

We promised to publish every other month in 2024 when we launched Peaks Island News in January. Then the storms hit, and we knew we had to cover

them. That's why you're seeing this February issue.

We'll be back next month with our regular issue and every other month after that.

# Planning takes center stage in wake of storms

By Ross Sneyd  
Peaks Island News

A pair of ferocious storms that battered Peaks Island and the entire Maine coast in a period of days left many convinced that the day of reckoning with sea-level rise and climate change has arrived.

“I think it’s going to really promote interesting conversations about our next steps as a community,” said Ellen Mahoney.

She co-chairs the Maine Islands Coalition, which has already begun those conversations in Augusta and up and down the coast.

From their home on Seashore Avenue near Table Rock, her family also has a front-row seat to the consequences of these storms. The road past their house was torn up, and chasms were left behind by the receding tide. Rocks and pavement littered their driveway and yard.

“It’s a bigger question than about how you fix the road,” she said. “It’s whether the road can be fixed, whether the road should be fixed, what is the next right thing to do.”

Those were among the many questions posed by islanders at the January meeting of the Peaks Island Council, and Island Services Director Bill Patnaude did his best to address them.

But with the disaster still so fresh, he had to confess that there were few answers, at least for the long-term. The immediate response is by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. And in terms of roads and infrastructure such as sea walls, FEMA is focused on restoring what was there before the storm hit, not on how to rebuild for a more dangerous future.

“We have to restore it to what it looked like on Jan. 12,” Patnaude said of the federal rules. “We’re going to repave a road and replace a sea wall.”

Still, there is a joint effort by



People gather to watch as the tide goes out at Picnic Point on Jan. 13. – Ross Sneyd photo

Maine’s 15 so-called “unbridged” islands with year-round populations to do better resilience planning. The PIC voted to back a grant application from the islands for a separate FEMA program focused on planning.

Some of that discussion around the future and planning got started on Peaks last year with the publication in July of the “Peaks Island Environmental, Cultural and Issues Assessment,” a thorough look at conditions, threats and opportunities on the island.

Patty and Bill Zimmerman initiated and underwrote the 60-plus-page assessment, which was prepared by FB Environmental Associates and Mohr & Sereidin Landscape Architects.

The Zimmermans have a unique perspective on recovering from storms. Their home on Sanibel Island in Florida was wrecked when an 18-foot tidal surge from Hurricane Ian swept over the low-lying barrier island in 2022.

Their experience of losing pretty much everything in the storm, from

kitchen appliances to treasured family art, helped to inform the work on Peaks.

The assessment identified eight areas needing attention in the realm of “climate resilience preparedness.” These range from developing a climate action plan to incorporating “green building solutions.”

A map of areas vulnerable to sea-level rise predicted what happened Jan. 13, highlighting the stretch across the Back Shore that was devastated, along with Picnic Point, Centennial Beach and City Point. As many as 76 buildings could be affected under the worst sea-level rise scenario, according to the assessment.

“You can hope between now and 75 years from now there will be innovations” in resilience to mitigate that potential outcome, Patty Zimmerman said. She worries that Peaks needs better plans for evacuations, warnings and possibly rescues. “I think the biggest thing is keeping people safe,” she said.

And although the situation is sobering,

the Zimmermans want to be positive.

“I don’t think we need to panic or cast a sense of doom,” Bill Zimmerman said. “It’s not our point. Let’s not wait for the next disaster without at least hatching some sort of a plan.”

They both believe that conversations about what we face and what we can do will go a long way toward addressing climate resilience – as well as many more issues addressed in their report. Toward that end, the council has already tackled some of the topics raised by the assessment and a follow-up questionnaire from the report’s authors will be available for islanders to answer in coming weeks.

And the PIC also is cosponsoring “a post-storm conversation” with the Peaks Environmental Action Team. The plan will be to hear input from islanders as well as from experts in the field of resiliency.

“This is not new,” said Timmi Sellers of PEAT. “It’s not going away and we should educate ourselves as much as we can.”

## TEIA bounces back again and is ready for summer fun

By Julia Nord  
For TEIA

The clubhouse at Trefethen-Evergreen Improvement Association at the end of Trefethen Avenue has seen plenty of storms in its 112-year history.

But the Jan. 13 storm was definitely one for the record books, as many of our Peaks Island neighbors know very well. The tide and storm surge came several feet above the floor of the clubhouse’s lower level, and washed out the footings of some supporting posts under the building.

TEIA is a volunteer organization that runs multiple activities and programs in the summer months. Most of its members live off-island in the winter, but there is a core team of year-round islanders. This team kicked into gear during the storm, both to document what was happening and to work on repairs.

The damaged supporting posts were repaired, and the building is on firm footing for the 2024 summer season.

TEIA’s Board of Governors also convened in virtual meetings after the storm to discuss impacts and review options for further structural assessments. The board approved hiring a structural engineer to provide more



From left, Alex and Colin Meharg stand with Winter Rollins in the lower level of the Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association on Jan. 13. Two hours later, at high tide, they would have been knee deep in sea water. – Liz Rollins photo

specific recommendations about how to strengthen the building for the future. TEIA also submitted a damage report to the state to help with state-wide assessments and submissions for federal assistance through the Federal

Emergency Management Agency.

Built originally as a dance hall with a still-stunning maple wood floor, the clubhouse is today a hub of summer activity on the island, with sailing, tennis, boating and now pickleball.

TEIA youth camps are a hugely popular island institution, and a companion organization, Friends of TEIA, raises money so it can offer “camps” to local children who want to come learn to sail or play racket sports.

TEIA also offers a variety of educational and cultural activities open to all, including concerts, dances, art shows and lessons, lectures and the annual fair, and is a popular wedding venue during the spring and fall shoulder seasons.

To keep all this going for another 112 years, TEIA is working to understand funding requirements for stabilizing the foundations of the building and making it more weather-resistant. TEIA is funded completely by its members and its programs, so finding ways to expand those as well as to identify other sources of funding is critical for TEIA’s long-term preservation.

If you’ve never been to TEIA, come see us this summer. We held a virtual open house earlier this month, and there will be an on-site open house on May 24, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend. Email: [infoteiaclub@gmail.com](mailto:infoteiaclub@gmail.com) or go to [teiaclub.org](http://teiaclub.org) for more information.



Above: Storm damage to the sea wall along Seashore Avenue was extensive. – **Beth Rand** photo; Left: Public Works crews began plowing rocks and boulders off a partially flooded Seashore Avenue at Great Pond Road on Jan. 13. – **Ross Sneyd** photo

## Portland leaders promise storm recovery help

By **Ross Sneyd**  
Peaks Island News

Some of Portland’s top political leaders have promised to do their best to deliver the resources Peaks and the other Casco Bay Islands need to recover from the January storms and potentially strengthen them against future disasters.

“You have an entire delegation that’s going to work on your behalf,” Maine House Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross told a capacity crowd at the Community Center three weeks after the storms. “I don’t have to live on Peaks Island to work on your behalf.”

The speaker and Portland Mayor Mark Dion headlined the Feb. 3 meeting, which included five other state representatives and senators who represent different parts of Portland.

Dion said his focus was on rebuilding streets, sea walls and other city infrastructure. The immediate goal, he said, is not to make the island more resilient to future storms driven by climate change.

“I’ve heard my colleagues here talk about build back better,” he said. “That’s great. I want to make sure the road’s fixed. So as a mayor, I have a different orientation. I want to get these tasks done. If they find me money – and I’ll work with them to find it – then we can build back better, more

### THE TOLL

Mayor Mark Dion outlined damage to public infrastructure and initial estimates for repair costs:

**\$2.55 million**

Repaving 1.7 miles of Seashore Avenue

**\$8.75 million**

Repairing sea walls

**\$25,000**

Repairing Ocean Spray & Picnic Point roads

**\$17,500**

Cost of materials used for initial repairs

resilient. Accessibility with the islands and to the mainland to me is Job 1.”

Federal Emergency Management Agency recovery money is focused on returning roads and other infrastructure to what existed before a storm.

“Obviously that’s not enough, and we have to push for more,” said Peter McLaughlin, chairman of the Peaks Island Council, which hosted the meeting.

There are other pots of money that might fund elevating a road or rebuilding a sea wall to make it better equipped to handle stronger storms.

Talbot Ross said there was money from the federal government’s “Build Back Better” infrastructure law that might be tapped, and she advocated meeting with Maine’s congressional delegation to find more funding. She also said legislators would use a supplemental budget pending now in the House and Senate to direct money to the islands and other coastal communities.

“You can be best assured that we will be fighting to make sure that the damage that happened on this island and all the other islands does not get left out of the equation of what’s been happening along the coastline,” she said.

Rep. Charles Skold, who represents Peaks and other islands in the Maine Legislature, said patience would be required.

“We’ll work with what we have in the near term, as well as keep our eye on the long term,” he said. “It’s not a one-year process to build back. We need to start having the vision of that long-term change.”

## So much uncertainty stirs need to assess mental health services

By **Geoff Phillips McEnany**  
For the Peaks Island Health Association

As humans, we like constancy. We like to know that the sun will rise in the morning, that there will be food to eat, clothes to keep us warm during these winter days and that the ferry will be on schedule. We like the comfort of familiar surroundings.

No matter what season it is, there is contentment in a walk on the Back Shore, joy in taking the kids and the dogs down to Sandy Beach or being able to stroll out to Picnic Point on a whim.

Many island families have known these simple, familiar sights for centuries. We’d be hard pressed to find any islander who has not enjoyed a majestic display of the surf at Whaleback, where Peaks Island families have gathered for generations. It is quintessential Peaks Island.

Our love of the familiar notwithstanding, things recently changed suddenly, powerfully and unexpectedly on Peaks Island. Two enormous, back-to-back storms battered the shores of the island within one week in January. Both storms left their own devastations, especially for those who live on the shoreline between Sandy Beach and the Ice Pond.

Grief was palpable on the island after that first storm, and it intensified after the second. Conversations with fellow islanders revealed some common

threads: Feelings of powerlessness, resignation and fear of the future were the most common themes.

Peaks Islanders found themselves victimized by two natural disasters, a powerful wakeup call to uncertainty. Whaleback was cleft by the massive waves hitting our shores. Large sections of the sea wall were destroyed. Picnic Point is now an island at every high tide. Houses were imperiled, and important roads were washed out.

Social media was teeming with posts of the destruction. Islanders obviously had a lot to say, but it seemed there was no central place where islanders could physically gather to talk about what happened. Launching a collaborative effort, the Rev. Will Green joined with the Peaks Island Health Association to host two community conversations at New Brackett Church, creating a place where islanders shared their storm experiences with neighbors.

There is healing to be had in such conversations. Rev. Will and I cohosted the sessions. Themes of living with uncertainty prevailed. But islanders are resilient, and action often gives a sense of mastery over uncertainty, where human beings and human doings come together for the common good.

There was discussion of the need for an action plan, and the best resources to mobilize a hopeful plan for the repair and preservation of the island.

But how about a plan to help islanders who are vulnerable to living with the challenges of uncertainty?

What about a plan for those who are experiencing depression, anxiety, panic or other symptoms associated with the storms? Insomnia, worry, fear, substance misuse/abuse or other symptoms are fueled by uncertainty, and can trigger episodes of mental illness.

Mental health is an area of particular vulnerability in the aftermath of natural disasters. For the Peaks Island Health Association, these storms led us to begin discussing the need for mental-health services on Peaks Island. Comprehensive mental-health services provide treatment for psychiatric conditions and offer supportive/preventive services that aim to bolster health in times of ongoing uncertainty.

Community conversations were an example of a supportive service to help islanders; it was the power of neighbors helping neighbors in a time of need.

As always, The Peaks Island Health Association is here to help keep high-quality health care close to home for Peaks Islanders. We maintain that commitment as we move forward to better understand ways of evaluating mental health needs on Peaks Island. We share in the uncertainty of the natural environment but will continue to work to improve the climate of health care for all islanders.

# Captivating students

*PIES gym becomes a magical ballet workshop*

Peaks Island Elementary School's gymnasium was transformed into the rehearsal hall of a Portland Ballet troupe late last month.

The dancers enthralled students with works from "The Nutcracker."

"My goal in bringing the ballet to the island was to give the kids an up-close-and-personal experience of the music, dance, costumes and the

discipline of ballet itself," said PIES music teacher Faith York. "Those folks at the ballet were amazing with the kids, in every way."

It turns out the community was, too. York posted a GoFundMe request for donations to pay for bringing the ballet to the school. Within 24 hours, she had \$1,883 in hand from 32 different donors.



Top: Portland Ballet dancers perform Jan. 25 at Peaks Island Elementary School. Below, from left: 4th-graders Owen Stevenson and Evans Shaw and 5th-grader Emmett O'Brien examine a real Nutcracker doll prop, and Ballet Artistic director Nell Shipman shows students a ballet costume. – Cara Dolan photos

## Getting to know Portland Ballet founder Eugenia O'Brien, aka Gigi

**By Emmett O'Brien, Grade 5**

Most people call her Genie O'Brien, but I call her Gigi. Long before I was born, my grandmother started the Portland Ballet and the Portland School of Ballet.

She was in charge of it for 35 years before she retired in 2014. I interviewed her because the Portland Ballet came to our school. I'm sorry I didn't get the chance to see her dance, but I'm glad she has the time to be my grandmother.



Eugenia O'Brien

**Emmett O'Brien:** How and when did you start liking ballet?

**Genie O'Brien:** I started liking ballet when I was 6 years old because my big sister did it.

**E:** How old were you when you started doing ballet?

**G:** I was 18 when I started doing ballet. When I was young, we moved to New Hampshire, and there wasn't a ballet school. So I had to wait until I went to The Boston Conservatory to study dance. But throughout my childhood, I studied music and did theater.

**E:** How old were you when you stopped being a ballet dancer?

**G:** I was 65.

**E:** What was your favorite part about being a ballet dancer?

**G:** I enjoyed being on stage and hearing live music with an audience. When I was dancing, I liked knowing where I needed to be on stage and when I needed to be there – that made it fun.

**E:** How did you think of starting Portland Ballet?

**G:** I wanted a way to reach a community I loved with stories and artistic sharing. Dance is music, drama and art all in one, and a way to welcome all that Portland offers. It was my gift to Portland, Maine.

**E:** What was your role at Portland ballet?

**G:** I was founder and CEO of a non-profit corporation. I was also the artistic director for everything on stage and in the studio.

**E:** What is your favorite part about teaching ballet?

**G:** I loved watching lessons "click" for a student and seeing them succeed. The catnip was figuring out a way for them to succeed.

**E:** Is there anything you recommend to new ballet dancers?

**G:** I think ballet dancers should listen to music and let their imagination go wild. Dance is storytelling, focus and agility.





## Beauty amid the fury



Top: Waves crash on the Back Shore on Jan. 14, a day after the second of two back-to-back storms. – **Stacey Kors photo**; Left: Seashore Avenue was reduced to a single lane in the days after the storms. – **Sage Hayes photo**; Below: Whaleback emerged from the storms reshaped. – **Sage Hayes photo**; Bottom: Benches are pounded on Seashore Avenue as the ocean surges over the sea wall. – **Beth Rand photo**



**VINAL ENERGY**

SERVES  
MAINE  
ISLANDERS  
ALL DAY  
EVERY DAY

207-613-7460 • [vinalenergy.com](http://vinalenergy.com)



**Peaks Island Local Printer**

LOCAL • FAST • RELIABLE

Free Delivery to Casco Bay  
Lines on all orders over \$25.<sup>00</sup>

business cards | posters | newsletters | reports | manuals | booklets | envelopes | postcards  
banners | rack cards | brochures | forms | promotional items | menus | lawn signs | laminating  
letterhead | foam core | presentation folders | labels | scanning | post it note pads | booklets  
calendars | invitations | handouts | tabs | binding | direct mail | legal briefs | blueprints

17 WESTFIELD ST, PORTLAND, ME 04102

ORDERS@XCOPY.COM • 207.775.2444 • WWW.XCOPY.COM



# COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL EXCAVATION

Sewer, water & septic • Service tapping & connections

Construction & site work • Retaining walls & seawalls

House lifting, conventional & ICF foundations and repair

## LANDSCAPING

Fencing

Sodding

Any size tree  
& shrub planting

## HARDSCAPING

Stone walls

Patios & walks

Complete driveway  
installation & repair

## MASONRY

Chimneys

Stone veneer

Complete  
stone work

# WE DIG PEAKS ISLAND



Reach us at 207 400-6252 or [kampmasonryandlandscaping@yahoo.com](mailto:kampmasonryandlandscaping@yahoo.com)



IT'S  
A  
LIVING  
BY  
SUSAN  
HANLEY

# Public Works foreman Jamie Semon leads a hard-working team that makes it all work

We take many things for granted in this world, and the crew at the Department of Public Works is probably one of them. That is, until last month.

While trash pickup, snow removal and street cleaning don't command a lot of attention, storm cleanup does. Last month, there were appreciative audiences watching crews reconstruct part of our shoreline and repair washed-out roads. DPW love was in the air.

Jamie Semon took it all in stride, ducking my compliments about the DPW's terrific response to the storm. He credited the entire Peaks Island crew and hoped they could all get a mention. Hearty thanks go out to Marty Mulkern, Travers Tuttle, Donovan Black, Rob Henry, Mario Proia and Nick Quintana, too.

Although soft spoken, at 6-foot-3, Jamie has a commanding presence. He developed his leadership skills in the Marines, where he served as a team leader on the front lines in Iraq. He was only 19 but rose to the challenge.

After he came home, he joined the National Guard. When I asked him about his wartime deployment, he was stoic and humble. No dramatic stories. No retelling of life-or-death moments. Just an acknowledgement that it was serious business, and it was hard.

Since returning home, Jamie has kept busy with his family, work and a variety of side gigs. But I got a sense of his affection for Peaks when he summed up his job by saying, "I just try to keep the island looking beautiful."

**Susan Hanley:** Were you born on Peaks Island?

**Jaime Semon:** I was born in Philadelphia, and I used to summer up on the island because my dad moved here. After my parents divorced, my brother Jeremy, who was just 17 months older than me, wanted to move to Peaks Island with my dad. I just wanted to do whatever Jeremy did. So, I moved here to live with my dad and my stepmom when I was 10 or 11.

**SH:** What was the first job you ever had?

**JS:** My first paying job was at Shop and Save, what is now Hannaford's. I worked in the fish department when I was in high school. But my dad wanted me to keep busy, so he told me to find an older person on the island and help them around the house — just as a volunteer, not for money. I also worked for Amy Brown, helping her around the house. She was nice and I kept helping her for years, even after I had my own family.



Foreman Jamie Semon, shown here at the transfer station, aims "to keep the island looking beautiful." — Susan Hanley photo

**SH:** When did you start working for the city?

**JS:** Twelve years ago. When I came home from the military, I worked for Plante's for a bit, but then they didn't have enough work, so I got laid off. Then, A.J. Alves asked me if I wanted to do the summer temp job at the transfer station. I did that for two summers. At the end of the second summer, a full-time position opened up, so I applied for that. That was in August 2012.

**SH:** Did you have to get special training to drive backhoes and the snowplow and other huge trucks?

**JS:** Everyone who works for the Public Works Department has to get a commercial driver's license (CDL). You take a written test, get your permit, and then you have six months or a year to pass your driver's test, including a skills test where you have

**It's a Living**

Americans are an industrious lot, and Peaks Islanders are no exception. Some of us work on the island; some commute. Some have one job; some have three. Some have part-time professions; some have full-time passions. But all of us are busy. Busy. Busy. Busy figuring out inventive, resourceful ways to earn a living while we enjoy island living.

to be able to back up a tractor trailer through an S shape and then back up to a loading dock to within 6 to 12 inches. Even though I've driven bigger and heavier vehicles in the military, that didn't count toward my CDL. In Maine, you don't need a CDL to drive a front loader. Anyone can get into an excavator and start digging.

**SH:** What is the hardest part about your job?

**JS:** I would say the hardest thing is getting the equipment we need to get the job done, like a dump truck, a grader and a roller that we share with the other islands. But we have a great team working together, and we make it work.

**SH:** Do you work on other islands?

**JS:** Yes, we do road repairs and heavy-item pickup on Cliff and the Diamonds. Rob McAndrews covers the Diamonds, and Bill Blomquist covers Cliff, but when they need a bigger crew, we go out there.

**SH:** How did the two recent storms affect your crew?

**JS:** The Wednesday storm with the high tide was surprising, but we've had those high tides before, and we've had to plow the rocks off the Back Shore road before. On Saturday, we decided to try to get ahead of the rocks piling up on the road and we took the backhoes out during the storm. I was on the Back Shore road pushing rocks when a huge wave came in and actually moved the backhoe across the road. So I headed for higher ground. On Sunday, we worked to get road access all the way around the island so that emergency vehicles could get through. In some places it was only one lane. We went back on Monday and built the road back to have two lanes around the island. For jobs like that, we need a dump truck. We rebuilt all the roads on the Back Shore with just two one-ton trucks. Again, the team made it work.

*Susan Hanley has been figuring out what to do for work ever since the arrival of her third child put her blossoming career as a world-famous photolithography engineer on hold. Inexplicably, her interests in textiles, needlework, writing, history, and all things French have coalesced into her current job as a teacher. It's a living.*

**JDG**  
JDGLENN & ASSOCIATES, PC

**MASTER ACCOUNTING  
AND TAX SERVICE**

**Peaks Island Premier  
Accounting Company**

**Servicing Individuals  
and Businesses**

Joan D. Glenn, CPA  
MOBILE 801-278-8700

17 Sandpiper Rd  
Peaks Island

**RCM CONSTRUCTION  
GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

- Complete Interior Renovations
- Kitchen & Bath Remodels
- Custom Tile Showers
- Hardwood & Tile Floors
- Windows & Doors
- Decks

207-807-5940  
bobmcauliffe13@gmail.com

**Share your  
Ferry Tales**

Want to let your neighbors in on a funny, light or useful snippet you learned aboard a Casco Bay Lines ferry?

Send it in!

Email to:  
news@peaksislandnews.org

# Peaks certainly has seen its share of powerful storms



**HISTORICALLY SPEAKING**

**BY SUSAN HANLEY**

Either of the two consecutive storms that hit Peaks Island in January would have been considered historic. The one-two wallop left islanders stunned, filled with a combination of anxiety and awe, as they witnessed the power of the windswept sea that moved beaches, boulders and buildings.

Islanders shared videos on social media when the record-setting tides overwhelmed roads and homes.

One of the earliest storms to make news for Peaks Island arrived on May 7, 1851, and set the bar in Portland for over 50 years. At the time, the local press referred to it as “the great ocean inundation,” with rising tides overrunning Portland streets. High winds and extreme tides flooded first-floor shops, but it could have been worse. Just 133 miles south, the fierce seas off Cohasset, Mass., swept away Minot’s Ledge Lighthouse and its keepers.

Many a storm has stranded islanders on the wrong side of the water – stuck in town when they want to be home or stuck on the island when they need to be in town. Being stuck may be inconvenient, but staying put until the storm is over is sensible.

In April 1887, the Steamer Express headed for the islands in a developing blizzard. After leaving Trefethen’s Landing, she made her way toward Long Island with 15 passengers and the mail. Near Pumpkin Knob, an immense wave swept everything on the deck into the sea, blew open the cabin door, threw the passengers to the floor and pushed the bow 6 feet under water. Remarkably, Captain Oliver managed to turn the boat around and get back to the safety of Portland, where one passenger said he “never expected to reach land alive.”

Wharves and landings bear the brunt of raging seas. On Dec. 27, 1909, “a furious gale” dropped a foot of snow, with tides reaching nearly 14 feet – a record at the time. The high seas washed away a 125-foot section of Trefethen’s Landing, leaving the waiting room stranded out in “the

roads,” the channel between Peaks and the Diamonds. By spring, new pilings and planking were installed for the 1910 tourist season.

Trefethen’s Landing was swept out to sea again during a storm on Dec. 1, 1944. The storm, described as “the worst in half a century,” also destroyed seawalls in Kennebunk, tore apart the breakwater at Wells Beach, smashed fish houses on Chebeague, tore fishing boats off their moorings and dragged homes on Goose Rocks Beach out to sea – all of which sounds eerily familiar. The landing was repaired, only to be lost again in a December 1959 storm. It would never be rebuilt.

Evergreen Landing was not washed away completely, but storm damage did contribute to its demise. Repairs to the landing from 1944-49 cost Casco Bay Lines \$6,609, while trips to the landing during that same time brought in just \$3,940.

On July 1, 1950, Casco Bay Lines abruptly stopped all service to Evergreen. Public outcry led to a public hearing, after which the Public Utilities Commission sided with Casco Bay Lines. Although it rapped Casco Bay Lines’ knuckles for shutting down the landing without a public hearing, the PUC approved its permanent closure. By October 1960, the island had just one ferry landing.

Back-to-back hurricanes took their toll during 1954. Hurricane Carol, with wind gusts up to 75 mph, hit the island on Aug. 31, dropping 2 inches of rain in 12 hours. High winds toppled dozens of trees and shattered homes. No one was more surprised (or lucky) than Mrs. Murphy, who popped next door to chat with a neighbor when the 18-foot square tower from the Eighth Maine Regiment Building went flying by. It landed in her kitchen, where she had been standing just two minutes earlier.

Twelve days later, Hurricane Edna arrived. On top of 74 mph wind gusts, the storm dropped 7.5 inches of rain – water the already saturated ground couldn’t possibly hold. The embankments at the front of the island were washed away in the runoff, leaving eight homes along Island Avenue precipitously close to falling into the harbor. As little as 2 feet of land was all that stood between the houses and a 60-foot drop off. The families appealed to Gov. Burton Cross for federal disaster funds to erect retaining walls and replace the embankments.

Shoreline erosion during storms is nothing new. The landscape we per-



*Top: In the days before snowplows, a brigade of snow shovelers cleared roads and sidewalks on Peaks Island. Here they are meeting in front of the Island Hall and Fire Barn in 1922. Middle: Portland Harbor rarely freezes over these days, but in the winters of 1933 and 1934, the Coast Guard cutter Ossipee was needed to create channels through heavy ice up to a foot thick. Bottom: The Great Blizzard of February 1978 left Peaks Island covered in snow. Frigid temperatures filled the bay with ice sheets. – Photos courtesy of the Fifth Maine Museum*

ceive as immutable is, in fact, partly the result of storms shaping our island for thousands of years.

In 1910, the city of Portland proposed building a public park on Long Point (aka Picnic Point) since the city owned the property that formerly belonged to Henry M. Brackett. The city balked at the cost of bulkheads needed to protect the land, noting that, “the point was twice its size 25 years ago and was washed away by winter storms.”

Many islanders will recall more recent storms like Hurricane Bob (August 1991), when the ferry landing was underwater; the Patriot’s Day Storm (April 2007), when the island lost both electric and water service; and the ice storm of 1998, when the island miraculously did not lose power even though most of New England seemed to.

As we reflect on the storms of January 2024 and look ahead, there is much we can learn from the storms of the past.

## ROUNDUP, continued from page 1

Jan. 13, leaving all kinds of detritus in her yard and up against her garage.

“We had no water in the basement from the 10th,” she said, gesturing to neighboring houses. “They had a lot of water.”

The evidence was everywhere. This stretch of Seashore Avenue became an island as the waves crashed into the wetlands behind these homes and surrounded them. Rocks from the beach were tossed into houses. Water flowed in.

The sight of the storm doing its damage was unbelievable, said Dominique Gonzalez, who walked down to Seashore near where she and her husband

used to live before moving a little farther to the interior of the island.

“We actually saw the road get washed right before our eyes,” she said. “It was just insane. Because the road was inundated and the water kind of hung out for about 30 seconds. All of a sudden, when it receded, we said, ‘Did it take the road with it?’”

Another family from Boston tried to take a positive view, having little other choice. Caroline Smart, her husband and son decided to spend the Martin Luther King Day weekend at Peaks, in a rental on Seashore looking toward Ram Island and the lighthouse.

“We came out here not paying attention to the coastal flood warnings.

It’s been exciting,” she said as her 4-year-old son Mac used his bucket to scoop sea foam that was blowing across a lawn. “I feel sorry for people who are homeowners out there because it looks like there’s some real damage.”

There was definitely damage. Within days, a call went out from some homeowners to feel free to haul rocks and debris from their yards. Island Services had already put the road back into reasonably passable shape, and many islanders leaned into the cleanup, helping to carry the sea’s deposits from yards before a weekend snowstorm buried them.

What was stunning to so many was that these storms hit one right after

the other. Many fear that this is a disquieting harbinger of what’s to come as storms become more frequent and violent, driven by rising seas and a changing climate.

“The destruction is really unimaginable. We thought that was unimaginable on Wednesday (the 10th), and this is worse,” Ellen Mahoney said as she stood amid the chasms in Seashore Avenue near Table Rock after the Jan. 13 storm. “I mean, the road is totally destroyed. Look at this huge piece of pavement leaning against the tree.”

The future, she said, is here. “Until it actually happens, you really can’t imagine what it might be like. And now we’re living it.”

# Island artist's contributions include storm-inspired poetry



**POETRY  
LANDING  
BY  
JESSICA  
GEORGE**

Liz Rollins practices many facets of artistry. Beyond the disciplines of theater and song, Liz is a teacher both on Peaks and on the mainland.

Here, she has been teaching islanders how to safely sail, how to be directed, how to manage others, how to sing, how to perform, how to get into a costume sewn by her own hands and how to act on the stage – which she has personally set for decades. In short, Liz gives all kinds of people a chance, confidence and skills to play and be themselves.

As the events manager at Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association, Liz is chiefly the protector of ceremonies and children on the sea in a sailboat. She also does all the scheduling for children and adults alike.

Her days are packed full to the brim, yet she still somehow finds time to sing and write about the magic she senses through all she navigates. We're delighted to feature her storm-inspired poetry this month.

*(This is one-half of a performance-duet poem: the voice of the wind is improvised throughout.)*

## Gale Force by Liz Rollins

This, an elderly lock,  
Worn from a hundred years of storms,  
Lets the glass chatter and smack  
In the ancient window frame.

The Winter Ghost howls down the  
empty chimney  
— that leads to nowhere.  
Mysteries in the yard clatter and flack  
In the wild wind, untamed.

Oh! For silence again!  
My once quiet mind is wracked with  
fierceness!  
Incessant! Incensed unrest!  
I look her in the face and –  
She laughs.  
I am driven to inexplicable tears.

It is the sound of sin.  
The sound of every indiscretion,  
every evil,  
every sarcastic, pointed thought . . .  
They are hurled back at me  
as screams of passion.

With infinite power,  
She attempts to cleanse us of our  
global stupidity,  
our worldly destruction – our daily  
apathy.  
Even Nature is livid with our  
inexcusable hubris.

“I’m sorry!” I scream. (shouldering  
the faults of all humanity)  
But the whipping continues.  
I am lashed with a thousand invisible  
ribbons of steel.  
“I’m sorry.” I cry, begging.

Leaning into her strong arms for  
forgiveness,  
I am dropped like the toy of a toddler  
who reinvents  
her fickle tantrum.

Gone are the billowing pillows of the  
summer breeze,  
Those that tease and spin the leaves  
of willow.  
Summer’s delicacy – bitten raw.

I can’t sleep, for the barrage  
continues.  
The berater finds new teeth with the  
rising tide  
and the ebbing moon.  
I am reduced to a lunatic,  
EYES WIDE  
Raving nightly at the unseen stars.

I am so small.

My solace comes in knowing  
that when the winds at last subside  
and

peace  
and  
quiet

reign with grace  
I will be scoured clean of my human  
pride  
left white and naked  
a humbly penitent child of  
Nature.

*Jessica George is an artist, poet,  
singer, certified nursing assistant and  
mother of 10-year-old Naomi. Your  
submissions for Poetry Landing  
are welcome at dreamstreampoeetry@  
gmail.com.*

## Pitching in



Eliot Grady, left, and Chadai Gatembo join other islanders cleaning up the Back Shore after the January storms. – Candace Myers photo

EYE TO THE SKY

PISCES

February 19th ~ March 20th

**The Sun** arrives in the sign of Pisces in the middle of February, entering the twelfth and final phase of the zodiac. Its symbol, the fish, represents a full submersion in the sea of consciousness. Often accused of being “spaced out” or “dreamy”, the Piscean spirit has simply shifted its attention to inner depths—the currents of the psyche. But even fish require air; plunge too deep beneath the waves and one risks being flooded with vain fantasy or unhinged paranoia. It is the task of the Pisces, and of consciousness itself, to breach the surface of the water and bring to light what has been seen below. The sun in Pisces serves to remind us that unless we give life to our innermost dreams, we will be forced to live split between our interior and exterior worlds. Whether by making art, building a structure, singing your heart, or simply speaking your mind, one must find a way to turn inside out, or else float adrift in an untethered daydream.

**The Moon** will crest the Eastern horizon just before 6:20 p.m. on Saturday, February 24th. This full moon bears many names: Snow Moon, Ice Moon, Hunger Moon, and The Moon of Purification and Renewal. The Cherokee deemed it The Bone Moon, as it marked the time when winter food supplies ran thin and people began to chew on bones for sustenance. This full moon can best be seen from the Back Shore and will pass into the sign of Virgo as it waxes, making it an ideal night to hatch a plan or create order out of chaos.

**The Storm** is closely tied to the symbol of The Tower in the Tarot and other forms of medieval card-based divination. A great surge of energy is embodied in the image of waves, wind, and lightning, threatening the structure the ego has built to defend itself. This natural upheaval of the unconscious is destructive and even world-shattering. It breaks our understanding of what is solid in order to reveal a truth: that the tower is a necessity for survival and also a farce, built on the hope that it will never fall. It is only in the storm’s wake that a stronger tower can be built, if only to fall again.

Eye To The Sky is brought to you by Bryce Montana Snyder, seasonal island resident and surveyor of the stars.

YOUR  
CARD  
HERE

Just \$35 for a black-and-white business-card ad  
and \$45 for color in Peaks Island News  
[support@peaksislandnews.org](mailto:support@peaksislandnews.org)  
or 207-756-3450 for details



Judy Nelson empties kitchen scraps into compost bins at the Trott Littlejohn Park dropoff point established by the Island Compost Project. – Cara Dolan photo

## Island Compost Project: Composting's old as dirt – and new again

By Will Crosby  
For the Island Compost Project

Most mornings, I have the good fortune to crack a fresh duck egg into my frying pan. They're big, and rich, and the yolks are a scrumptious shade of orange.

But the shells? They are ethereal: creamy white with an opalescent swirl that makes them appear to be carved from onyx. Even after cracking them open, they are almost otherworldly in their perfection.

Dropping them in the trash, with the plastic bags and greasy wrappers, seems downright blasphemous. There's got, I thought, to be a better way.

I had resisted composting – ugh, one more thing to do – but duck eggs finally got me motivated. No prob: A couple of YouTubes and I'd bang together a standard pallet-sided pile in the yard, and turn those gorgeous shells into fresh soil for the garden.

But as I looked into it, I found that composting isn't just a good thing to do, but newly important as part of the global effort to combat pollution and climate change.

So a community solution made sense, and it turned out that a bunch of other people were already thinking the same way.

With the support of the Peaks Island Council, we found one another, joined forces, and the Island Compost Project was formed.

### A little background

Composting is literally as old as dirt. The first soil started to coat the barren surfaces of Earth about 400 million years ago, the byproduct of microbes that evolved to feast on formerly living things.

Prehistoric farmers found that plants grew best out of their garbage piles, and started spreading it on their crops (and left the fossil record to prove it).

Mesopotamian clay tablets from 2350 BC give detailed instructions on the best composting techniques.

And so it went: Composting continued pretty much uninterrupted until the rise of industry and chemical fertilizer, when it was relegated to the alternative culture of backyard gardeners and organic farms.

But now, compost is hitting the big time again. San Francisco, Seattle, Boulder and most recently New York (as well as dozens of European cities) have all started programs that separate food waste and collect it for composting.

The reason? As it turns out, food is a hot mess to manage in the current waste stream.

Most of Peaks Island's trash, like that of the rest of the City of Portland, is hauled to EcoMaine's trash-to-energy plant on Riverside Avenue, where it's burned in an industrial incinerator as fuel for electricity-generating turbines. This is widely accepted as the gold standard for handling trash.

But food waste has a high percentage of water, so it doesn't burn well. That reduces the efficiency of the incinerator and increases the amount of pollutants the process releases.

Plus, most of what's burned gets buried in landfills, where any food that's not completely incinerated rots and creates methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

### Easy intervention

Unlike most of the other problems humanity faces, this one has a refreshingly simple solution. By separating food from the rest of your trash, you reduce pollution, cut down on greenhouse-gas production, and provide the raw ingredients for an abundant supply of organic compost for gardeners and farmers throughout Portland to grow more food.

And this is no small amount of garbage we're

talking about: In Maine, food waste makes up 27 percent of everything that's thrown away.

That's where the Island Compost Project comes in. Last summer we launched our first collection site, and since then, Peaks Islanders have separated and dropped off 10 tons of compostable waste that will never create pollution, clog a landfill, or warm the atmosphere.

Currently, we bring Peaks' food waste to Garbage to Garden in Portland, a private company that does all the city's composting on a farm in Windham. Because of the scale of its operation, the process naturally generates more heat and can break down things like meat, bones, seafood shells and dairy, in addition to the usual plant matter.

Our long-term plan is to compost food waste right here on Peaks. There are some challenges ahead: finding the right spot, jumping through regulatory hoops, and getting infrastructure in place. It will all take some time, but we're underway.

Of course, composting your own food waste in your own yard is still a great solution, and kudos to the many people on Peaks who have been doing that all along.

But for the rest of us who can't or don't want to compost, now there's another option. If you want to join us or be kept informed about our progress, sign up at our website: [islandcompostproject.org](http://islandcompostproject.org). And keep on composting!

*Will Crosby is co-founder of the island Compost Project, along with Owen Davis, Madeleine Pryor and Natasha Markov-Riss. They express their thanks to Peaks Island Council, Peaks Island Fund, Peaks Island Elementary School, Peaks Island Public Works, the City of Portland, and their many supporters on Peaks Island.*



### More from the Brick School

## Kindergarten meteorologists have much to say about weather

The kindergarten students in Tammy Drew's class have been learning about weather. Here are a few snippets they'd like to share:

Clouds are made of tiny drops of water. When it snows, I like to plow with Dada. I am the best shoveler, even on stairs. – **Annabelle**

I check the thermometer at school every day. Today it is 25 degrees. I like to eat snow. I do not like to eat snow when it is dirty or yellow. – **Olivia**

Cumulonimbus clouds are stormy clouds. When the big snow mountain comes to my driveway, I like to build a fort and Abel likes snowball fights. – **Peri**

When it is below 32 degrees, the rain will turn to snow. I like to sled and ski with Daddy. I know how to go on the chairlift. We eat snacks. – **Quinn**

A big snowstorm is called a blizzard. I like to build a snowman with Joe. Daddy pulls us in a sled. I have a purple sled, a red sled and a blue sled. – **Lizzie**

Temperature is measured in degrees just like angles. Air temperature may be in negative numbers when it is below zero. I made a snow angel and named her Snowy Donut. – **Sebastian**

I like dust devils. They are dusty and spin all around in the dry desert. The desert is 50,000 miles from Peaks Island. I am the fastest skier on the mountain. – **Alex**





**WASHED AWAY**, continued from page 1

“fat glass of wine” and turned on a movie. Watching “Pineapple Express” with her back to the tempest kept her from seeing any destruction wrought on the little cottage that had stood on the rocky promontory next to Spar Cove for nearly 124 years, half of that time in her family.

Eventually the tide began to recede, and she decided it was time to find out what happened.

“I turned and looked out the window and I saw the roof,” she recalled, gazing out that same window a few weeks later. “It’s still there.”

And yet, in a sense, it wasn’t. She joined her family back in the front room only to discover that, while most of the roof was still there, much of the rest of the cottage was gutted, washed out, destroyed.

The porch had washed away on Jan. 10. Three days later, waves and rocks punched out the living room windows, shattered the window in the kitchen and let the waves in to scour the interior. Eventually a family member opened the door to the kitchen to allow the ocean to flow through. The building itself was askew on its piers.

It’s hard to see now, but this was a charming cottage from the turn of the 20th century, once a part of a small Christian Science camp. Childs’ mother had spent her childhood in one of the neighboring cottages. Her paternal grandparents bought what became known as Surcrest in 1960.

Her father met her mother on this seashore, and their family’s story is intertwined with the history of the place.

“This has always been our one constant,” Childs said.

Childs’ own home and the neighboring cottage have always been subjected to storms. They sit only a few feet from the rocks.

“We’ve gotten wind and rain a million times,” she said. The blizzard of 1978, by which most New Englanders judge a storm’s severity, caused damage but never got in the cottage.

This storm was clearly different. The ocean swept right through Surcrest this time.

Even after three weeks of shoring up and cleaning, the utter devastation inside the cottage was everywhere. The refrigerator upended and was lodged well across the kitchen, into the spot where the window once was. Mud, glass, rocks and personal belongings were strewn about.

Childs and her family took out as much furniture, artwork and other keepsakes as they could in the days before the second storm. But much remained to be swirled around in the stormwaters.

As she walked through a few weeks later, pointing out the aspects of the cottage’s history, Childs was still finding cherished objects. As she paused in front of the massive brick fireplace, she leaned down and retrieved a piece of a tree branch.

She held it up and just gazed. It had been her grandmother’s. The shape of the branch has an uncanny resemblance to the Christ the Redeemer statue overlooking Rio de Janeiro.

A treasured find among the rubble, a memory to soften the hard reality of whether to rebuild, and, if so, how.



*Top: The back yard of Surcrest cottage, littered with rocks and debris brought in by ferocious tides. Above: Melissa Childs surveys the damage. Left: Childs, delighted to find a treasured simple item of her grandmother’s among the rubble. Bottom: The kitchen of Surcrest in disarray after the storms. Water filled the home during high tide on Jan. 13, knocking the refrigerator (bottom-right corner) over and lodging it across the room. – Cara Dolan photos*



**OVERBOARD**, continued from page 1

man treading water, bearded, plaid shirt bulking up around him, with high-top sneakers floating away nearby. He appeared calm and spoke to the deckhands calling to him.

Nixon was back at the helm of the Machigonne the following night on the same Portland to Peaks route and recalled what happened:

“We were down by the State Pier,” he said. “The guy was standing at the end of the pier. Then we saw him step on the piling. Then I took it out of gear and sat there for a second.”

Another ferry, the Maquoit II, had been inbound to Portland from Down Bay at about the same time and its crew also saw the man on the pier, Nixon said. The Maquoit had slowed, too, and the captains of the two boats talked to each other by radio about what they were seeing.

“I think he made sure that we saw him,” Nixon said of the man on the pier, recalling that the man stood perched there until both ferries had slowed and were within view.

Thinking that the man might jump, Nixon reached for his phone to call the Portland police. “But by the time I figured out how to use my phone, he was in the water,” Nixon said.

Other deckhands came running. They suited up in emergency gear and lowered a rescue ladder over the side. Deckhand Nick Johnson threw an orange life ring to the man in the water. The crew of the Maquoit had also thrown a life ring, but the Maquoit was too far away.

After Johnson threw the ring, he went over the side of the Machigonne down a ladder and into the water to reach the man. Then he and deckhand Rob Hannigan pulled the man aboard. They rushed him inside past seated passengers to the starboard aft bathroom, the most heated space on the boat.

Nixon guided the ferry back to the dock, where an ambulance awaited and took the man away to the hospital, perhaps five minutes after he was out of the water.



Casco Bay Lines deckhand Nick Johnson tosses a life ring from aboard the Machigonne II to a man in the frigid water on Jan. 24. – Cecilia Bohan photo.

“I think once he hit the water, he knew he wanted to get out real quick,” Nixon said.

After the man was transferred to the ambulance, Nixon returned to the pilothouse. Over the intercom, he apologized for the delay. By about 5:55 p.m., the Machigonne was back underway to Peaks.

City officials did not provide information on the man’s identity or condition after he was taken to the hospital.

The Portland Fire Department reported the water temperature that day as 40 degrees. Water temperatures near Portland averaged about 34 degrees in January, according to the National Weather Service.

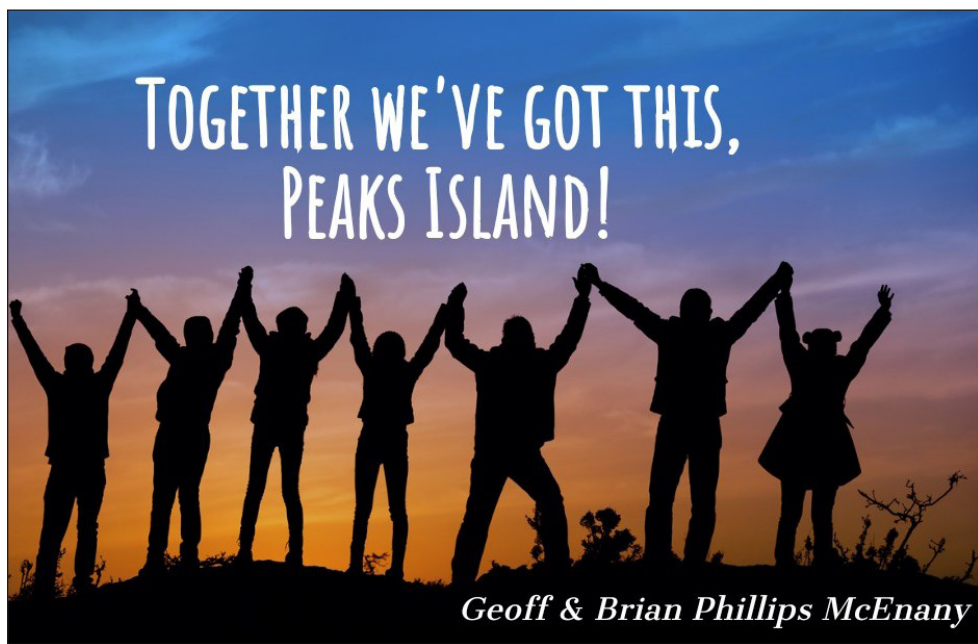
At those life-threatening temperatures, minutes

matter.

Nick Mavodones, interim general manager of Casco Bay Lines, commended the Machigonne’s crew on the morning after the rescue. “Our crews train for this all the time. They got the person out, called 911 and the Coast Guard,” he said. “The crew did a great job.”

Nixon, who has been a ferry captain for Casco Bay Lines for 20 years, said “man overboard” rescues are quite rare, though crews routinely train to be ready. He has been part of only a few rescues in his years working for Casco Bay Lines.

“As soon as I said ‘man overboard,’ I knew they knew what to do,” Nixon said of the deckhands working the Machigonne.



**PORTLAND FOOD CO-OP**  
 PORTLANDFOOD.COOP

**OPEN DAILY: 8AM-9PM**  
 290 CONGRESS STREET  
 PORTLAND, MAINE 04101  
 207-805-1599

**FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORE**  
**FEAT. 300+ PRODUCTS**  
 FROM MAINE FARMERS & PRODUCERS

**ESSENTIALS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE**  
**Crashes and Collapses**  
 THOMAS L. BOHAN

**FACTS ON FILE SCIENCE LIBRARY**

**A forensic science primer for the “intelligent laypersons” Isaac Asimov envisioned.**

See Chapter 7 for Casco Bay’s own major oil spill, the 1972 event that led C&C’s author to a 45-year career in forensics work.

This book is available to peruse at the Unruly Girls’ Café