

A TRIP TO PEAKS ISLAND AND THE 5TH MAINE VOLUNTEER REGIMENT'S MUSEUM

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As a birthday gift from my son Tim we went on a short ferry ride from Portland to Peaks Island to visit the 5th Maine Volunteer Regiment Museum. It was a great day and I would encourage all of you to make this trip. The very nice ferry boat ride was a little cool, Maine comfortable mid-50's on the water, that took a little less than thirty minutes. We made the pleasant walk past a number of restaurants and cottages following the signs to the museum.



Cottage as seen from the street. (All photos by the author)

The cottage was built by veterans of the 5th Maine in 1888 as a memorial and reunion hall. It was one of several similar cottages/halls built on Peaks Island by Maine Civil War regiments. The former 8th Maine Regiment's hall is nearby, now a privately owned summer cottage. Unfortunately, the other regimental halls have disappeared with time. In 1956, The Fifth Maine building was given to the Peaks Island community by the descendants of the veterans who built it. Restoration of the building began and it continues to operate and maintain the building.



Information placard in front of the cottage.

This placard has a number of well-placed photos. Note the bottom picture showing how isolated the cottage/hall was when it was built. That is not the case today.

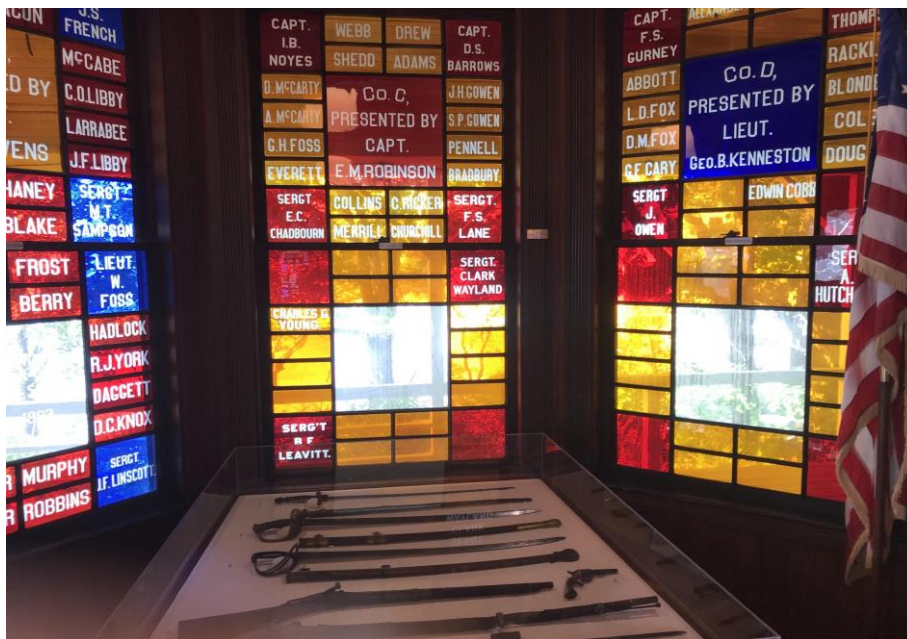


Photo of the unique windows

One of the unique attributes of the cottage is the stained-glass windows with the names of the 5th Maine veterans. This was an effort by the veterans to raise money to support the building of the cottage. The veteran or their heirs paid to have their name on a pane.



A display of Rev. Bicknell's items

The tribute to George Bicknell is interesting for a number of reasons. His kepi cap shows that he was shot in the head, it has a hole in the back where the minié ball exited. It might be noted that he became a minister after the war, and one could suppose his near-death experience might have turned him to a more positive view of the Almighty. In 1871 George Bicknell wrote the *History of the 5th Maine Regiment* and later became a popular lecturer. He developed a "Magic Lantern" and glass slide lecture series of his experiences. The glass slides were developed from the glass negatives, many were hand painted for color. His lectures explained the events depicted on the slides. A number of the slides were discovered a few years ago in the basement of the museum.



View from the front of the cottage

This view from the front porch of the cottage was shared by the visiting veterans and their families. In June 1885 the G.A.R. held its nineteenth annual encampment in Portland. Many of the veterans visited Peaks Island. Maybe this helped encourage the 5th Maine Veterans to build their cottage reunion hall in 1888!

I would highly recommend a visit to this Civil War museum. As a bonus you get a boat ride and can visit one of the seafood restaurants for a great day. In addition, upstairs there are displays of general Peaks Island history and a room about the islands during WWII which is interesting for history buffs. The museum is now closed for the season, but open by appointment and for special events. There is a website and Facebook account.

www.fifthmainemuseum.org

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45 Seashore Avenue, Peaks Island, Maine