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Lovells Island

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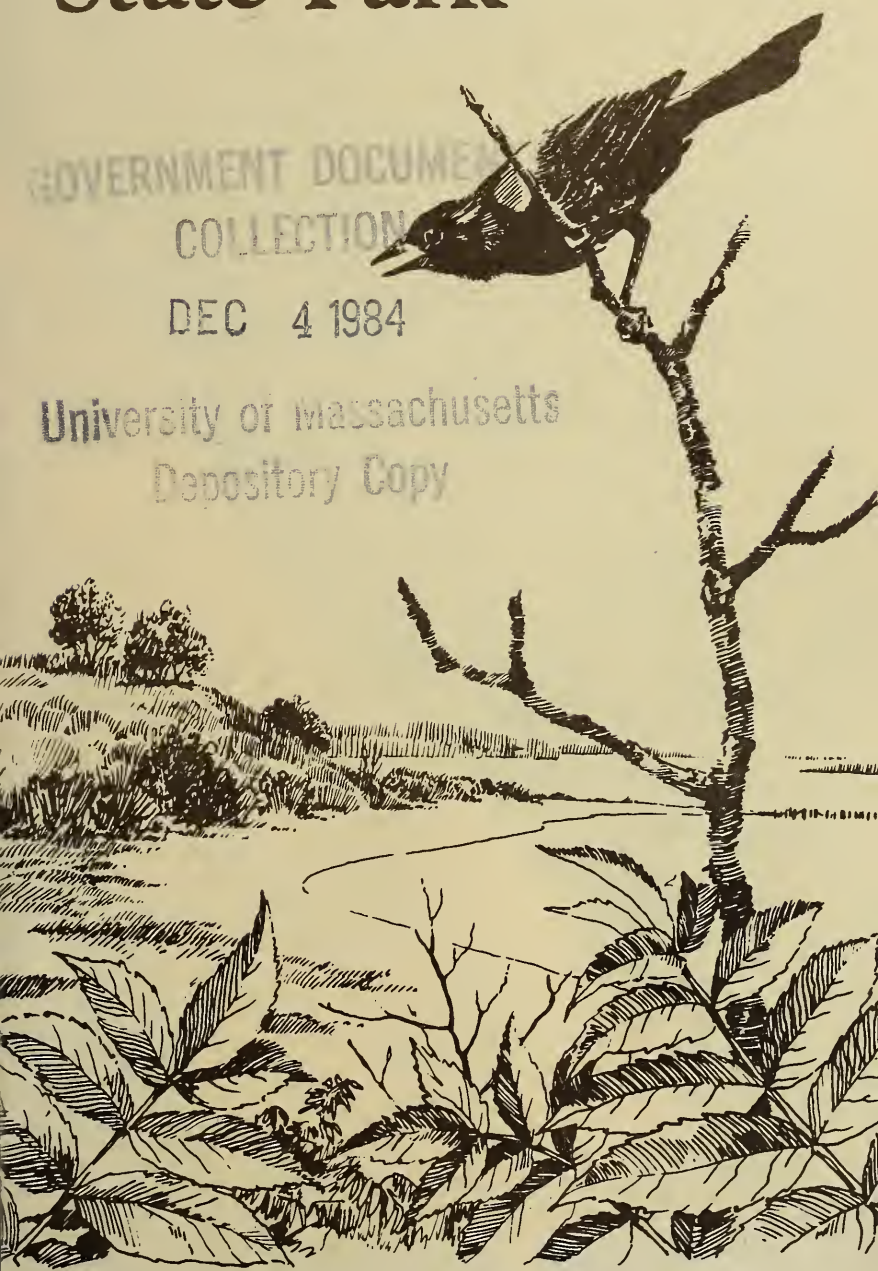
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Boston Harbor Islands State Park

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

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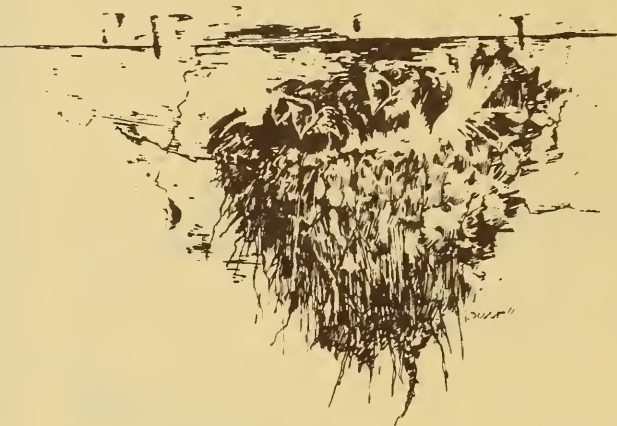
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Located on Lovells Island's central drumlin is a short loop trail (a leisurely 40 minute walk) which blends the natural and historic aspects of the island. Points of interest are marked by numbered posts which correspond with the numbered trail included in the brochure.

TRAIL

1. This foundation, dating from the turn of the century, was an ordnance storehouse for equipment to aim, fire and clean the island's weapons. It was part of the complex of buildings that grew to forty or more by World War II and housed enough men to support a movie theater and newspaper, *The Sandspit Sentinel*.



Barnswallow's nest at Battery Tirrell.

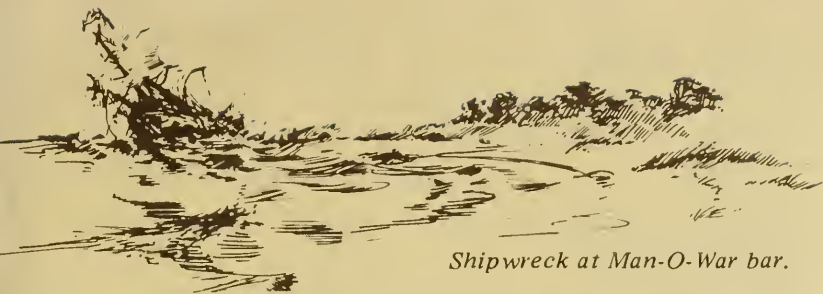
2. The most imposing of man's works on Lovells are these four concrete gun emplacements, Battery Burbeck-Morris. This 1902 fortification takes advantage of the natural configuration of the island. The central drumlin of the island was excavated forming a valley for the gun emplacements and natural earthworks protecting the 10" guns. You will notice white crusty deposits on the concrete walls. These formations are similar to stalactites in limestone caves. Water passing through the porous concrete dissolves lime particles which harden on the surface.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

3. The origins of this apple tree are unclear; was it a soldier's discarded apple core or the descendant of the fruit trees of earlier inhabitants? This and many other trees are encircled with parallel rows of holes. These are the work of migrating Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, a woodpecker that bores the holes and feeds on the sap and insects attracted to the sap.

4. Though originally heavily forested, the island was nearly defoliated in the 18th and 19th centuries. Subsequently many new species have been added. This small stand of white spruce was planted during the 1930's depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps.



Shipwreck at Man-O-War bar.

5. To the north, a prominent feature of Lovells is Ram's Head. Before the seawall was constructed in the 1840's this end was separated from the main island by a tidal zone. The tide was kept out by the seawall, and the area behind has been filled. Located on Ram's Head are the remains of Battery Tirrell, a smaller version of Battery Burbeck-Morris. The battery contained three six-inch guns and was also constructed in 1902. The guns were mounted on disappearing carriages and had a commanding view of the President Roads shipping channel.

6. This large granite boulder is a remnant of the last glacier's passage through the area. The boulder's source is not known; the glacier may have plucked it off a hillside or carried it from a streambed. Since it is not original to its present location, we call it a glacial erratic.

A legend surrounds this boulder. In 1786 a young couple about to be married were travelling to Boston on a packet boat from Maine to buy furniture. The packet was wrecked on Lovells on a stormy and bitter night. Although the passengers landed on the island safely, all died of exposure. When help arrived in the morning, the young couple were found dead in each others arms at the base of "Lover's Rock."

7. This view offers a point of orientation to the Harbor and its uses; from right to left:

Deer Island. This promontory, once a true island, has only been connected to the town of Winthrop since 1936. It is now the site of a House of Correction and a sewage treatment plant.

Logan Airport. The land for the airport was formed by leveling Noodle, Bird, Governor, Apple, and Hog Islands reducing the harbor area by 2,000 acres.

Boston Skyline. Boston's ever heightening skyline can be seen in relation to the lower profile of the airport and surrounding cities and towns.

Gallops Island. This altered drumlin was lowered to allow the guns of Fort Warren a clear field of fire to the shipping lanes.

The Narrows. This waterway separates Lovells and Georges Islands and is the original shipping channel for Boston. Forts Standish and Warren commanded this strategic location.

8. The fifteen pound guns of Battery Vincent were located at Lovells' highest point to protect the Island's east and west sides including Boston's original shipping channel. After a change in the shipping lanes in 1925 the battery was converted to aircraft defense.

9. These red and black pines are but another example of man's influencing the vegetation. The pines are likely CCC plantings, and the fire scars probably result from an unattended (and illegal) camp-fire.



Milkweed & Monarch butterfly.

10. From this point Battery-Morris frames a view of Massachusetts Bay and the islands collectively called the Brewsters. The light-house on Graves Ledge marks the main entrance to Boston Harbor.



Lovells Island

Boston
Harbor Islands
State Park



(D)

LEGEND

- A Administration Building
- B Comfort Stations
- C Camping
- D Supervised Swimming
- E Boat Anchorage
- F Battery Burbeck-Morris/Fort Standish
- G Battery Tirrell
- H Batteries Whipple & Williams

Safety

Lovells Island was used for many years as a military installation. The M.D.C. is making every effort to eliminate hazards which have resulted from that use. Please observe all warning signs, which were installed for your protection. When walking anywhere but on the interpretive trail, please proceed with caution.

Permits may be obtained from MDC, Parks & Recreation Division. For further information call: 727-5250

Private boats are limited to 10 minutes docking time for loading and unloading.

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Introduction

Lovells Island is a unique part of the Boston Harbor Islands State Park. Long curving beaches on both the harbor and ocean sides of the island provide the only supervised swimming area in the park. Visitors with a yen for exploration can follow an interpretive trail to historic military fortifications and hilltop views toward the Boston skyline, other harbor islands and the ocean. Lovells Island also offers opportunities for picnicking, fishing and overnight camping.

History

Lovells Island was shaped by the area's last glacier, which sat heavily on the region from 18,000 to 12,000 years ago. In the glacier's wake, a group of teardrop-shaped hills or drumlins, were formed of glacial debris collected during the advance of this mass of ice. The harbor drumlins were once hills in a marshy plain. As the ice age came to an end the sea level changed and flooded the area. The hilltops formed the present islands, and the former beds of the Mystic, Charles, and Neponset Rivers became the harbor's shipping channels.

The drumlins of Lovells Island form not only its most prominent features but are the source of the connecting beaches. Wind and waves continuously batter the slopes causing widespread erosion which in turn has created the sandy and rocky beaches.

Lovells Island has a long and varied history of human uses beginning at least 10,000 years ago with Native American seasonal visitation. Groups of Massachusetts and Wampanoag Indians used the island to fish, garden, trade with other Indians and to take advantage of the ocean's cooling breezes in the summer.



In 1614, Captain John Smith wrote of the islands, "The country of Massachusetts . . . is the paradise of all those parts: for here are many isles all planted with corn: groves, mulberries, savage gardens, and good fields and great troops of well-proportioned people."

The seventeenth century brought Europeans to the islands. Lovells Island is said to have been named during the 1630's for Captain William Lovell, a Boston merchant. Europeans used Lovells for timber, as a fishing station, as a residence for keepers of Boston Light, and even as a rabbit run.

The island's military use has left the most pronounced and lasting effects. Starting in 1643, the island was used for timber and firewood for the fort on Castle Island. The federal government purchased Lovells in 1825. Shortly thereafter Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, a military engineer often called the Father of West Point, designed and supervised construction of the seawall as well as major harbor defenses on other islands.

During the Civil War, Lovells was used as a training area for the 18th New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry. As a response to the Spanish-American War and possible threat to Boston Harbor, a major defense, Fort Standish, was begun in 1900. Named for Myles Standish, pilgrim-soldier of the Plymouth Colony, the fort's 3", 6", 10", and 15 pound guns defended the shipping channels as a part of the coastal defense network. Expanded and used through the Second World War, the fort has never been required to fire its massive guns at an enemy.

The protected harbor and deep shipping channels, products of glacial action, allowed Boston to become a center for



marine commerce in the 18th century. The main shipping channel, the Narrows, was located between Georges and Lovells Islands and could be treacherous. Lovells' proximity to the Narrows caused it to be the site of several shipwrecks.

The most famous of the wrecks occurred in 1783 when a Boston pilot, David Darling, misguided the French Man-of-War *Magnifique* onto a bar at Lovells' southeast corner. An embarrassed United States Government replaced the vessel with one of its few newly-constructed warships, while Darling retired to the custodianship of the Old North Church. By the 1840's, treasure seekers were unable to find the wreck because of drastic changes in the island's shape which buried the hulk inland.

Vegetation

Man's activity on Lovells has substantially changed the island's appearance. The original drumlin shape has been altered and incorporated into the fortifications. In the process of building the fort, most of the island's vegetation was removed. As late as 1958, the island appeared almost devoid of vegetation. The recovery of plant life since then has been quite vigorous. White oak, poplar, aspen and sumac have been brought to this isolated environment. Water, birds, and man have all been carriers of seeds that have increased the variety of plant life on Lovells.

Birdlife

Three general groups of birds are attracted to the island. Migrating birds use the island as a stepping stone to and from their breeding grounds. Lovells also offers a protected location and nesting area for gulls, ducks, sparrows, Red-Wing Blackbirds, and warblers. Waterfowl such as ducks and geese spend the winter in the waters around Lovells.

