

this maritime environment. Billie Hargreaves, who grew up on the island during the early 1900s, remembers gardening as a practical hobby. She described a vegetable cellar where islanders stored their canned goods. "Everyone that lived on the island had a large garden, and what we needed for vegetables for supper we took from there... I don't ever remember us purchasing any vegetables."

5 CHANNEL NAVIGATION

Two sets of range lights existed briefly along Spectacle's northeastern bluff in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A ship captain knew he was centered in a channel when a range's two lights appeared vertically stacked. Ship captains would use the aligned lights to help steer in and out of the channel.

6 VIEW FROM THE NORTH DRUMLIN

Cross the bridge onto the broad open field. Beginning at your left and moving in a clockwise direction, the three interpretive panels spaced around the field describe historic views to the south and west, northwest, and northeast.

Once at the second panel, you are now at the highest point in the harbor – 155 feet above sea level. Look west toward South Boston's Dorchester Heights, Marine Park and Fort Independence on Castle Island, then up the channel to the skyline of downtown Boston. Moving clockwise, here are some other points of interest:

Logan International Airport – Among the busiest major airports in the country, Logan sits on what used to be four harbor islands: Apple, Bird, Governors, and Wood.

Deer Island – The egg-shaped containers are the Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. In operation since 1995, the plant has helped transform Boston Harbor from one of America's most polluted harbors to one of the cleanest.

Little Brewster Island – Look due east long enough and you'll see the flashing of Boston Light on Little Brewster, the first light station in the country, dating from 1716.

Long Island and Moon Island – The southerly islands connected to each other by a bridge are Long and Moon Island. Both are owned by the City of Boston and house facilities that support critical public safety services, continuing the long tradition of social service institutions on the Harbor Islands.

Blue Hills – Southwest in the distance are the Blue Hills. The name Massachusetts derives from an Algonquin Indian word meaning "great hill," a reference to Great Blue Hill, the tallest hill in the 22-hill chain.

Thompson Island – The island closest and due west of Spectacle is Thompson. One of New England's first trading posts between settlers and native peoples was built on this island in 1626. Today it is owned and operated as an Outward Bound program.

7 ISLAND LIFE

During the late 1800s and 1900s, a thriving, close-knit community resided here. Families associated with Ward's rendering factory lived in this area. Families from the other industries lived across the isthmus on the south drumlin. Buildings included houses, boarding houses, and a small red schoolhouse for all Spectacle Island children. Prior to 1900, once students reached the ninth, and later from 1900 on upon reaching sixth grade, students commuted daily by boat to school in South Boston.

Not surprisingly, children on the island spent much of their free time swimming, boating and fishing. In winter, the kids skated on a small reservoir. Kate Rivera, whose grandparents lived on the island, notes: "It was a beautiful place. There were wonderful gardens, blackberry vines, birds, boats, and the ocean. We would go clamming and swimming at our own private beach while looking across at the city."



Girls on skates: early 1900s.

8 DIKE CONSTRUCTION

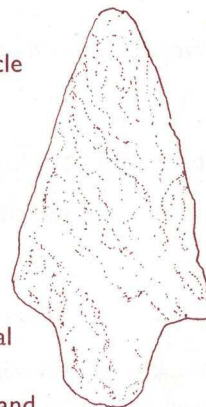
Under this stretch of shoreline path lies a 1,650-foot earthen dike built to contain the landfill. One of the renovation project's most challenging aspects, the dike was constructed in dry conditions behind a sheet-pile cofferdam. Workers excavated 65 feet below sea level to solid clay, forming the dike with compacted glacial till. A stone slope, 12-14 feet thick, was added to protect the east cove dike from the pounding northeast wind and waves. The dike connects to a 3,100 foot long stone revetment contouring and armoring the island's north bluffs.

9 DISCOVERIES

Much is known about how Spectacle was used by examining things that were dumped here. Look around the beaches at the sea glass littering the shore. You're bound to see pieces in a variety of shapes and colors, each one a historic part of a Boston household. In 1988 and 1992 archaeologists for the Central Artery/Tunnel Project excavated a shell midden on this part of the island.

A midden is a refuse dump, in this case primarily clam shells that were tossed onto a pile by native peoples. Among the thousands of shells in the midden, which built up over centuries, archaeologists also found pottery sherds, stone arrowheads, tools and beads made of bone, and the bones of fish and small mammals. By studying these artifacts, scientists have a better understanding of how native peoples used the island. The dump site dates from approximately A.D. 535 to 1590. Other artifacts suggest humans used the drumlin hillsides possibly as early as 8,000 years ago.

Please leave the sea glass, shells and other objects that you discover on the beach for everyone to see and enjoy.



10 21ST CENTURY PARK

One of the goals of the island's renovation is to take a positive step toward creating a "zero emission park." As you walk toward the Visitors Center, notice the south-facing panels mounted on the roof. The panels, photovoltaic solar panels convert light energy of the sun into electric power. The electricity is stored in battery banks used to recharge the island's electric-powered utility truck and tram.

The Visitors Center's water recycling system is another important method of conservation. Wash water, called gray water, drains through the kitchen and restroom sinks, is collected in a settling tank, filtered, and pumped to a holding tank. This water can then be reused to irrigate gardens. The use of gray water puts vital nutrients back into the soil and demonstrates how fresh water can be conserved. To further conserve energy, the Visitors Center has modern composting toilets that use no water.

www.BostonIslands.com

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A National Park Area



Thomas M. Merino, Mayor
Antonia M. Pollak, Commissioner

dcr
Massachusetts



Department of Conservation
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Boston, MA 02114

Bumpkin Island
Butter Island
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Gallops Island
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Grave Island
The Graves
Great Brewster Island
Green Island
Hangman Island
Langlee Island
Little Brewster Island
Little Salt Island
Long Island
Lovells Island
Middle Brewster Island
Moon Island
Nut Island
Outer Brewster Island
Pedocks Island
Raccoon Island
Ragged Island
Rainsford Island
Sarah Island
Sheep Island
Slate Island
Spectacle Island
Thompson Island
World's End

EXPLORING

Spectacle Island

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR



WELCOME TO SPECTACLE ISLAND . . . Spectacle is one of 34 islands and peninsulas known as the Boston Harbor Islands national park area.

For thousands of years, native peoples frequented the islands to hunt, fish, and dig shellfish. Colonists first used Spectacle for wood lots, haying, and grazing livestock. From 1717 to 1737, the island was home to a maritime quarantine station that hospitalized mariners, passengers, and Boston citizens during health epidemics. After 1738, when Boston's new quarantine hospital was built on Rainsford Island, Spectacle began attracting mainlanders as a destination for recreation. In addition, two summer-time inns welcomed guests until the late 1850s.

Recreational use was cut short in the 1850s, when Roxbury businessman Nahum Ward bought the island in 1857 and built a horse-rendering factory, thus beginning the island's association with recycling. Ward later rented land to various concerns including LaPage Glue. By 1903, a City of Boston contractor set up a garbage processing facility. Over the next 56 years, Spectacle was one of Boston's dumping grounds. During that hundred-year period, many island workers and their families lived on the island's undisturbed uplands and enjoyed a country-style life surrounded by the richness of the sea.

Spectacle Island's rebirth began in 1992 as part of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, also known as the "Big Dig." Over the next decade, clay and sediment excavated from the project was barged to Spectacle, sealing the landfill and creating the park you see today.

This 2.5-mile-long self-guided walking tour can take more than two hours to complete. The numbered stops in the brochure correspond with interpretive waysides along the trail. Remember to take water to drink and be mindful of the ferry schedule as you plan your walk. Picnic tables and benches are located along the trails; public restrooms and trash recycling containers are at the Visitors Center.

1 WARD RENDERING FACTORY

In the waters north of the beach are the remains of four granite piers from Nahum Ward's dock. Barges carrying cattle remains and dead horses unloaded their cargo, and filled up with the fertilizers, hides, glue, horse hair, and "Neat's Foot Oil" leather softener. Ward's rendering business helped avoid a public health problem



The Ward Rendering Factory operated from the mid 1800s to the early 1900s. Notice how this part of the island was once a narrow strip of land.

within the city by providing a means of disposing of dead horses used for local transport.

Further down the beach, toward the visitor dock, were various piers used to handle the increasing deliveries of barges of garbage. By 1903, the City of Boston constructed a garbage processing plant and compressed garbage to extract grease and make fertilizer. The remaining mass was put into the landfill. The grease extraction plant was abandoned after 1947, but trash continued to be dumped here for the next twelve years.

2 ISLAND SHAPE

If you walked this area a hundred years ago, you would have had to walk carefully at high tide to avoid getting wet for it was just a narrow strip of beach. After the great ice sheets of the world melted thousands of years ago, rising sea levels created Boston's harbor while surrounding the drumlin hill tops within. Spectacle Island's landform was originally described as two drumlin hills connected by a tombolo. To the early colonists, the island resembled a pair of eyeglasses, hence the name Spectacle.

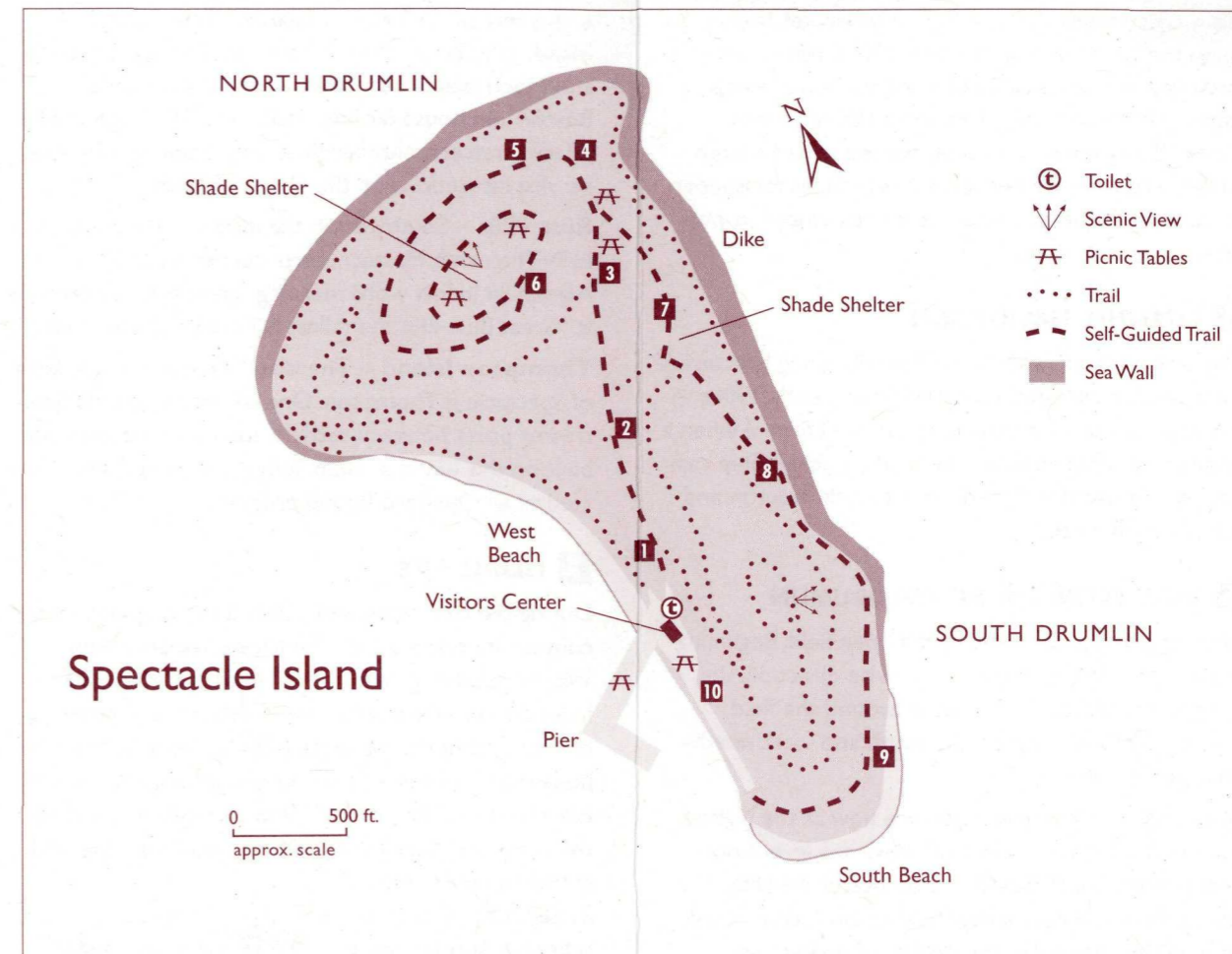
This strip of land was so narrow that a big tidal surge could cover it completely. As garbage was brought to the island, the easterly cove between the two drumlins became a landfill, adding 37 acres to the island. Contouring the landfill cap further changed Spectacle's shape.

3 LANDFILL OPERATION

Feeling high up? Probably not, but years ago you may have. About 200 feet to the west used to be the highest point on the island, 77 feet above sea level. Everything above you has been added as part of the island's transformation.



Progression of Spectacle Island's topography.



Face south, with the hill behind you. The area in front of you and to the left was the east cove, the primary spot for the landfill. Trash was initially left along the narrow sandbar, but later spread onto the northern head. However, recurring underground fires from pent-up methane gases smoldering beneath the trash and pollution leaking into the harbor prompted city officials to plan a different solution for trash disposal. In 1959, the South Bay Incinerator was built on the mainland and trash stopped being dumped on Spectacle.

Beginning in 1992, 3.7 million cubic yards of excavated earth from the "Big Dig" were brought out to cap the landfill. The process required more than 4,400 barge-loads of dirt over 5 years.

4 ISLAND VEGETATION

As you walk this path in early summer, notice the shrubs with white flowers around you. These are false spirea, a few of the more than 28,000 trees, shrubs and grasses planted on Spectacle. The plants, which include both native and non-native species, were chosen based on their ability to thrive in maritime conditions - sandy soil, salty air, and harsh wind and sun - while maintaining the stability of the hill slopes. Also look for evergreen trees with pale violet berries. These are savins or Eastern red cedars, which are native to the area.

Many former island residents tended gardens and took advantage of the extended growing seasons in