



Guide's Guide

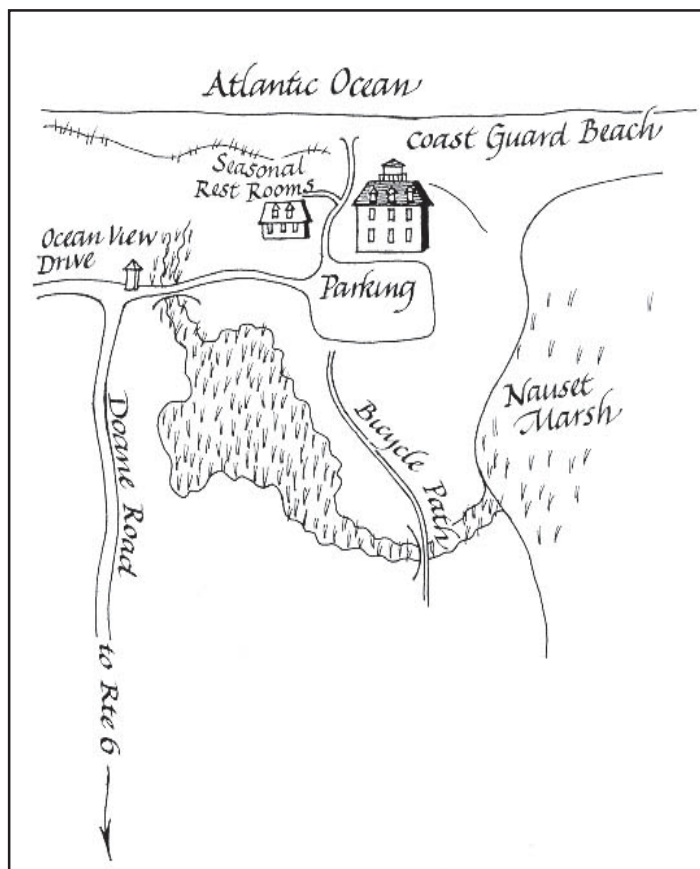
Coast Guard Beach

Location Summary

Directions: One and one-half miles east on Nauset and Doane Roads (on road to beach from Salt Pond Visitor Center). Look for brown and white signs.

Safety: Observe posted speed limits; watch out for bicyclists and walkers. Beware of tidal rip currents and stay a proper distance away from nesting shorebirds and resting seals.

Other: Coast Guard Beach is a prime swimming beach during the summer season. From mid-June to Labor Day, the parking lot at this location is closed, and access is provided by shuttle bus from the Little Creek parking area (across from the Doane Area). Although the parking lot at Coast Guard Beach is open the remainder of the year, parking is limited. There are seasonal restrooms and a wheelchair accessible rampway to the beach.



Tips: Prepare passengers for upcoming scenic view of Atlantic Ocean after departing Doane Rock. Buses are encouraged to turn around in the circle just below the parking lot behind the former Coast Guard Station.

Time Frame: Five-minute narration on bus. Twenty minutes to one hour if stop is made at this site.

Notes for Educators: Coast Guard Beach and Nauset Spit offer an excellent setting to get the group out onto the sandy beach. This area is the site of the discovery of an 8,000 year old Native American habitation exposed by shoreline retreat. It is also a good area to hike along the outer beach, and observe along-shore transport of sand (through wind and wave action), coastal erosion, and dune building/barrier beach processes. Wayside exhibits help to tell these stories.

Highlights: First vista of Atlantic Ocean
Former Coast Guard Station
The Great Beach
Nauset Spit

Coast Guard Beach

Prominent Natural Features

The **Great Beach**, so named by Henry David Thoreau, starts here. This sandy strand offers opportunities to study coastal beach processes, including along-shore transport of sand and coastal erosion.

Nauset Spit offers the opportunity to walk directly onto a barrier beach system and observe shorebirds and, during the winter months, seals. The inlet into Nauset Marsh is at the southern end of Nauset Spit. World-renowned nature writer, Henry Beston, wrote *The Outermost House* from his beach cottage located here.

Nauset Marsh is located behind the former Coast Guard Station. It is accessible by a pathway that leads to the bicycle trail bridge. Here, one can see shorebirds working the tidal flats in the warmer months and observe salt marsh grass systems close up.

Nesting piping plovers and terns frequent this area in the early spring to early summer. Plovers are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Seals can often be sighted at the end of Nauset Spit during the winter months. Generally these are harbor seals. At low tide, they can sometimes be seen “hauling out” onto the marsh.



Coast Guard Beach

Touring Script

Coast Guard Beach offers the first sweeping vista of the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Cod National Seashore. And a spectacular vista it is! This is the beach the Pilgrims first saw from the Mayflower in November 1620, which indicated they had arrived in the New World. This is also a beach that Henry David Thoreau and Henry Beston walked on and wrote about.

Coast Guard Beach got its name from the former U.S. Coast Guard Station here. The outer beach is notorious for shipwrecks, and in 1872, the U.S. Life Saving Service was established by the federal government to provide some means of relief. Nine stations were built at this time on Cape Cod-the one located near here being named the Nauset Station.

The Life Saver's station here served well, making numerous rescues. The current building replaced the original one in 1936. It is a "surf station" where all rescue activities were carried out from shore either by oar-powered boat or line-throwing cannon.

With advancing technology, and with less off-shore shipping traffic (due to the completion of the Cape Cod Canal in 1914), fewer and fewer stations were needed on Cape Cod. The Nauset Station was decommissioned in 1959, and served as the first headquarters for the newly-formed Cape Cod National Seashore after 1961. Today it functions as a residential environmental education facility.

House on Nauset Spit

Henry Beston visited the former Nauset Station in the 1920s and 1930s during his stays at the Outermost House, his dune cottage on Nauset Spit. Beston's book, *The Outermost House* has become a literary classic on natural themes.

The house remained under the ownership of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and stood on Nauset Spit until the Great Storm of 1978. The Outermost House was washed out to sea along with nearby facilities built by the National Park Service at Coast Guard beach.

Today, a shuttle bus transports summer visitors to Coast Guard Beach from an inland parking lot, eliminating the blemish that a replacement parking facility, and bulwarks to protect it, would have made on this spectacular stretch of beach.

The bird life observed by Beston is still diversified, but is impoverished and in need of protection. Such is the case with piping plovers and several species of terns which receive special protective management actions, such as marking off and restricting access to shorebird nesting sites in the spring. Population levels have increased through such initiatives. Similar protection activities have led to the return of seals to this area during the winter months. In Beston's days, seal sightings along Cape Cod's outer beaches were on the decline, but today large numbers of seals can be seen on occasion at the end of Nauset Spit on sunny, mid-winter days at low tide. Indeed, this is an area of inspiration as well as change.

Coast Guard Beach

Mayflower Landfall

On November 9, 1620, a ship named the Mayflower, 65 days out from Plymouth, England, made her landfall in the New World at what is now Coast Guard Beach. Captain Jones, knowing that his Pilgrim passengers were supposed to settle in northern Virginia, headed southeastward. Although he stood well offshore to avoid shoal waters, his ship soon became enmeshed in the worst shoals in the area, Pollock Rip. A miraculous change of wind enabled Jones to sail his ship free of the shoals, and he then turned northward to anchor in Provincetown Harbor, November 11, 1620.

The Outer Beach

The outer beach, or “backside,” of Cape Cod has been the notorious graveyard for more than 3,000 ships since the wreck of the Sparrowhawk in 1626. The high cost in lives and property demanded by the sands of Cape Cod led to the establishment of the Massachusetts Humane Society in 1786, the first organization in the nation devoted to the rescue and assistance of shipwrecked mariners. The Humane Society established shelter huts along the coast; later, it built lifeboat stations where surfboats, line-throwing guns, and other lifesaving gear were stored for the use of volunteer crews in times of emergency.

In 1848, the Congress appropriated funds for the first time to construct, equip and maintain similar stations in New Jersey. From 1848 until 1872, Congress provided the money to build more stations along the eastern seaboard and the Great Lakes. The stations in Massachusetts continued to be administered by the Massachusetts Humane Society, but the federal government subsidized its operation. The continued frequent loss of life along the nation’s shores led Congress, in 1871-1872, to reorganize the Life Saving Service and place it on a full-time professional basis. The construction and manning of nine stations on the “backside” of Cape Cod was provided for in the Federal budget of 1871.

One of the original nine stations was constructed at Nauset. It was located about 350 yards southeast of the present building. Shoreline erosion compelled the construction of a new station which remained in service until 1937, when it was replaced by the present structure. The present building was in service as a Coast Guard Station until 1958.

The first headquarters of the Cape Cod National Seashore opened in this building in 1961. Currently, the building is being used for the NEED (National Environmental Educational Development) program.

The Outermost House

About two miles south, on the outer beach, stood the cottage where author Henry Beston lived while gathering the material for his book, *The Outermost House*, published in 1928. The book describes life on the outer beach during all four seasons.

The house was designed by Henry Beston in 1925. He took meticulous care with every detail because he intended his house to sit on the dune solid as a good ship. The little house, called the Fo’c’sle by Henry Beston, was 21 ft. long by 16 ft. wide and consisted of two rooms, a main room and a bedroom. There were windows on all four sides, giving wonderful views of the entire area, and a little porch along the front.

Henry Beston gave the property to the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1959. It was occupied in summer by Audubon members.

The Great Storm of 1978

It was more than people expected, and yet Cape Cod was lucky. For despite all the damage, the worst of the storm lay to the west. On the Cape, it was still no picnic. The winds peaked at 92 miles per hour.

Coastline damage was inevitable. Wind was the destructive element Monday, but, beginning at midnight, a high tide on a new moon combined with the storm-generated waves to produce a tide some 14.5 feet above mean low water. The storm waves pounded the Great Beach with as much impact and overwash as any storm in this century.

Curiously, the eye of the storm passed over the Outer Cape on Tuesday, and the day brought beautiful blue skies even as snow was still burying inland areas. It was perfect weather for storm watchers and more than one hundred gathered in front of the former Coast Guard station at Coast Guard Beach. In a mixture of awe, excitement, and helplessness, they watched as the storm waves virtually obliterated the parking lot and changing room complex at Coast Guard beach.

Waves repeatedly swept over most of Nauset Spit as well. In the process, four houses were destroyed, including The Outermost House, made famous by Henry Beston's book of the same name. Most of the wind-built dunes of Nauset Spit were reduced to low mounds. Now, they barely rise high enough above high tide to separate Nauset Marsh from the sea.

This process of overwash is normal in the geologic sense. It is the way a spit retreats when it is attached to a retreating coastline. In effect, the sand that comprises the spit is turned over upon itself. The spit retains its shape, and in this case, the marsh behind it remains protected and continues to be an incredibly rich, productive marine nursery for such animals as flounder, striped bass, scallops and quahogs.

The concern now is to see the beach recover sufficiently to protect Nauset Marsh. For, without the spit, the marsh would no longer exist. This recovery process involves the build-up of dunes behind the beach by the wind, and the stabilization of these dunes by the growth of beach grass.

In the 1980s, the National Park Service built a new parking lot well away from the beach, to allow the natural give-and-take processes of erosion to continue in this area.

Coast Guard Beach

Archeology at Coast Guard Beach

On the day after Thanksgiving 1990, National Park Service archeologists began salvaging an archeological site believed to be a prehistoric dwelling located at the high tideline on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham. Although only preliminary laboratory work has been done, artifacts found at the site suggest that it dates from the Middle Archaic period of 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. Records show that no undisturbed site of this age has previously been found on Cape Cod.

Initial salvage work was concluded after thirty days of continuous excavation. During this period, all of the Middle Archaic deposits exposed on the beach were removed. Artifacts which include stone tools and pottery fragments, will undergo further study in the laboratory, as will soil samples from which the recovery of charcoal for radiocarbon dating will be attempted. Several earthen features were demolished as successive strata of the deposit were excavated. All were measured and their exact locations recorded.

The First Discoveries

The first feature discovered and excavated was a hearth that consisted of a pit into which rocks heated in a nearby fire had been placed in order to cook food. The apparent floor of a dwelling unit was marked by the presence atop the original glacial soil of a rich organic layer several inches deep. This layer contained few artifacts. Had this deposit resulted from the disposal of trash and garbage, it likely would have contained a number of broken and discarded tools or other artifacts. Such objects were instead found outside the perimeter of this dark deposit. Seven post molds-topsoil-filled cavities left after the buried ends of wooden posts have rotted away-also fringed this surface, suggesting where walls or other supports for a roof may have stood.

The artifacts found are of little or no monetary value. They primarily are small stone chips from tool making or repair. The significance of this site lies in its undisturbed strata and the information that can be gained as artifacts are unearthed. This information may also help archeologists decipher less complete sites in other localities.

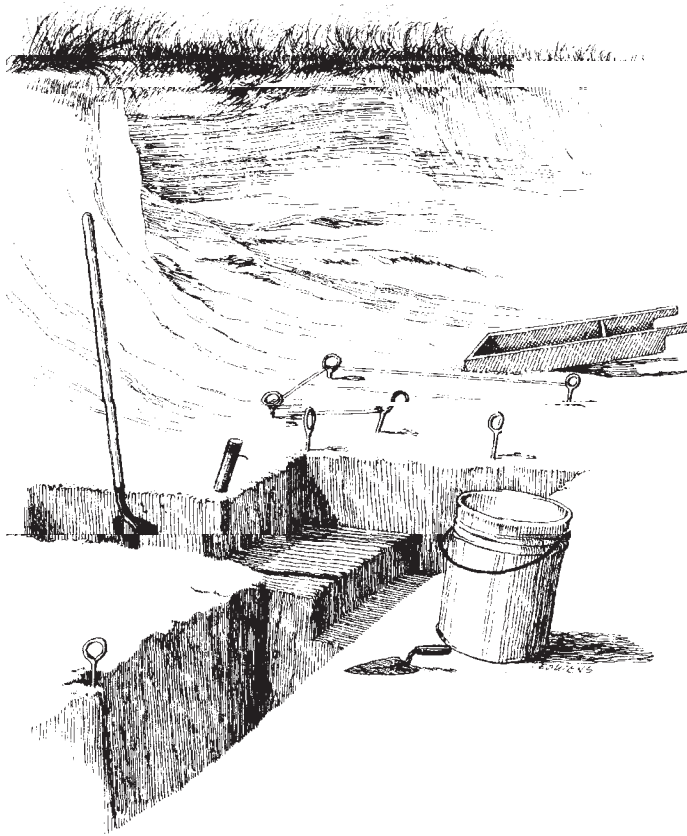
In addition to the Middle Archaic features, artifacts dating from more recent prehistoric periods were also found. These were at higher elevations in the sand cliff above and behind the Middle Archaic site. These artifacts suggest that this location probably remained an attractive place to live for thousands of years.

Exceptionally high tides during the full moon on December 2 and 3, 1990 undercut much of this material, which was removed in blocks and jacketed in plaster of paris. It will undergo laboratory excavation in the future. It had been expected that the tides would wash away most of the Middle Archaic deposit, but instead, more was exposed by the erosion of the overlying sand cliff. Park Service archeologists concluded their initial investigation of the site in May 1991, and by June of that year, the area was again covered by a deep layer of beach sand, and the site was virtually undetectable to the casual observer.

Almost a year from the initial discovery, on October 31, 1991, a severe gale hit the New England shoreline, re-exposing the site. A crew of National Park Service archeologists was again assembled, and by mid November, were conducting a full-scale investigation of areas exposed by the storm. Some loss of resources occurred during the gale; however, new portions of the site were also exposed. During December, shelters were set up on-site to enable the archeologists to work throughout the winter. The archeologists concluded this portion of their investigation in March 1992. Throughout the summer, the site was again covered by a thick layer of sand. Additional exposures due to periodic storms have called for continued short-term visits to the site by professional archeologists. Since the original discovery, ongoing laboratory work and study of the site has focused on soil materials, as well as phosphate, Carbon 14, and pollen analysis.

Archeology at Coast Guard Beach continued

Although the site was at the beachfront when discovered, this dwelling area would have been at an inland location. Sea level rise and resulting erosion have brought today's shoreline several miles west of its position 8,000 years ago. A thick layer of wind-blown sand which accumulated on top of the site over the years protected it from inadvertent disturbance (especially by farming activities) and kept it from previously being detected.



Coast Guard Beach

Beaches and Breaches

Two hundred years ago, Ben Franklin noted that the only thing constant is change. The recent breaks in the barrier beaches at Chatham and Orleans demonstrate the truth of this statement. Prior to 1987, the narrow strip of sandy land that comprised Nauset Beach stretched unbroken from Orleans to Chatham.

Changes to the area, known as “North Beach,” came almost overnight. On January 2, 1987, an unusually high tide occurred simultaneously with high onshore winds which produced extraordinarily high sea levels. High waves breached the barrier beach at its narrowest point, allowing the sea to flood into the bay on the other side. However, unlike most overwash events, bay water flooded through the same breach at low tide, both widening and deepening it. Eventually, after several northeasterly storms, a new inlet formed almost directly opposite the Chatham Lighthouse.

Forces of Change

This event revealed to the average citizen what geologists have known for years—that beaches can change quickly and constantly, and often do so to the dismay of human occupants. The millions of sand grains that comprise a beach are constantly being shifted, sorted and transported by the same forces that create the beach—wind and waves.

This new inlet was anticipated by many who had studied the coastal changes of Nauset Beach. This prediction was based primarily on three interacting natural factors.

One of these factors is “littoral drift,” the process that initially establishes all barrier beaches. Approximately 8,000 waves strike a beach each day, with each wave moving hundreds of sand grains at a time. Since waves tend to strike at an angle (the angle depending on the direction of their origin), sand suspended in the waves moves parallel to the beach (either to the right or left), as well as onto or off of the beach. Thus, sand removed by the ocean from the cliffs in Eastham might well end up at the southern tip of Nauset Beach, lengthening the beach in the process. Similarly, sand from Truro often feeds beaches in Provincetown. In the case of North Beach, as the beach lengthened the previous inlet moved southward. Consequently, the trip became longer and longer for waters exiting through the mouth of Pleasant Bay inlet at ebb tide to reach the open ocean.

Acting alone, littoral drift could result in an unbroken strip of sand stretching from Orleans to Monomoy Island. However, like most things in nature, barrier beaches are also influenced by other factors in this case, tidal flow and barrier beach migration.

Prior to 1987, tidal flow entered and left Pleasant Bay only through an inlet between Morris Island and Monomoy Island. This daily scouring by rushing tidewater maintained the passageway. Without this action, sand deposited by littoral drift may have gradually sealed off the inlet. However, when circumstances changed, as they often do on barrier beaches, the original inlet was not sufficient to provide for adequate tidal flow to remain the primary passageway. It is the interaction of the third factor, barrier beach migration, that made the conditions at Chatham even more suitable for the formation of a new inlet.

Migration of Beaches

While beach formation is caused mainly by wave action, barrier beach migration results from the transport of sand by wind, the overwash of beaches during severe storms, and the gradual accumulation of sand deposits around inlets. Grain by grain, beaches and their associated dunes inch landward in reaction to these phenomena. The westward migration of Nauset Beach became obvious with the discovery of the Sparrowhawk, a ship which wrecked in 1626. In 1863, the vessel emerged from the shifting sands on the east side of Nauset Beach. It had wrecked 237 years before on the opposite side of the beach. Studies revealed that the beach was moving at a rate of five to ten feet per year. This movement served to narrow and consequently weaken areas of the barrier beach.

On that stormy January night in 1987, an interaction of these factors culminated to create a new inlet on Nauset Beach. Storm waves washing across the barrier beach had already weakened a link in the chain of sand east of the Chatham lighthouse. When the tide dropped, the waters leaving Pleasant Bay found a closer, hence more efficient exit into the open ocean. Six hours later, the exit became an entrance for waters flooding into the bay. Further tidal cycles expanded this opening (in saw-like action), and the new inlet was born.

The break, now more than a mile wide, has impacted the lives of a number of local residents. Part of the previously sheltered coastline is now eroding at a much more accelerated rate, threatening some seaside homes.

While Chatham fishermen have gained a new inlet into the open ocean, submerged bars created from the constantly shifting sands make their trips more treacherous. Likewise, shellfishing has been affected in some locations, due to the disturbance of shellfish beds in the once quiet waters of Pleasant Bay.

However, while the increased water turbulence is presently disturbing some shellfish beds in the bay, the cleansing process inherent with the break may eventually benefit the greater shellfish population.

The irony of the Chatham saga is that the story is recurring. The 1987 breakthrough was preceded by several others, one occurring in the 1840's approximately one-half mile north of the present breach. Likewise, as recently as 1930, the main inlet, known as "Old Harbor," was also in the vicinity of the recent breach. Studies conclude that the beach revolves around a 150 year cycle—a cycle which, some scientists speculate, could shorten due to the effects of the rising sea level.

Coast Guard Beach

Henry Beston

Although born in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1888, Henry Beston spent most of his adult life on a farm in Maine. After a New England boyhood of sea and shore, he attended Harvard graduate school, taught in France for a year and served in the army and navy during World War I. A year after living on the spit in Eastham, he married Elizabeth Coatsworth, an author of over ninety books, and three years later, the couple moved to Chimney Farm in Nobleboro, Maine, where they remained until Beston's death in 1963. During his years in Maine, he wrote *Herbs and the Earth*, *White Pines and Blue Waters* and *The Saint Lawrence*.

Beston built the house on the spit in Eastham when he was in his middle thirties. At the Fo'c'sle, as he called the house, with its ten windows opening to the ocean and marsh, he lived alone for a year between 1926 and 1927. Two miles from his nearest neighbors, Beston could, "observe carefully, brood long and write slowly."

The World Around Him

Beston was motivated by a desire to explore the "relation of nature to the human spirit" and to see what effect living closely to the ocean, isolated from people and town, would have on him. In spite of being alone, he claimed, *there was always something to do, something to observe, something to record, something to study and something to put aside in the corner of the mind*. Besides his writing, he collected driftwood, cooked and went to town for groceries. This involved a two-mile hike through the dunes to the Coast Guard Station, a taxi ride to town, and a walk back with his knapsack of groceries.

Unlike Thoreau, Beston did not write about the Cape Cod villagers and he did not seem to be interested in the rest of the Cape. However, the men at the Coast Guard Station do appear in *The Outermost House*. The only people mentioned in the entire book, the men are regarded by Beston as neighbors, friends and protectors. In the chapter, "Lanterns in the Night," he tells about their visits each night, as the Fo'c'sle was on the route of their patrols. He appreciated the company at the end of the day and often joined them on their tours.

Although Beston's writing lacks the diversity of Thoreau, it has a clearly-defined focus on natural forces. In *The Outermost House* Beston concentrates on images of sight, sound and smell. The chapters on autumn and spring describe visiting birds, and have many references to the ways the sea looks, such as, *the surf flings its spray against the sun. Summer was the season of smell, aroma of beach vegetation in the sun ... and cool breath of eastern ocean*. But the dominant images are the storms of winter, summarized in *the sea has many voices*.

The Outermost House should be read with a quote from his wife in mind. *Perhaps his greatest gift was to call attention to things that had always been there, but whose significance had gone unnoticed until he spoke or wrote about them. He was a great opener of windows.*

If you search the spit at Eastham, you won't find the house. It went to sea in the storm of 1978, a fate that Beston might well have thought an appropriate end to his experiment.

Traveling a Desert

Thoreau was another writer on Cape Cod. Thoreau's book, *Cape Cod*, is a series of essays about his three meandering walks in 1849, 1850, and 1855 on the beach from Eastham to Provincetown. Beston's book describes living in a house on the dunes of Nauset spit in Eastham during the years 1926-1927.

The beach is the central theme of both books, but what the authors saw and wrote about was distinctly different. Thoreau, a more complex writer, focused on the "savage ocean" and "naked nature." Beston perceived a gentler shore. Indeed, the landscape that Thoreau saw in the middle of the nineteenth century was far different from the scene at the beginning of the twentieth century during Beston's stay. Thoreau described the area as barren and desolate, and compared crossing it to "traveling a desert." His descriptions are accurate, as the Cape in the 1800s was one huge sand dune, as a result of the destruction of the forests. But by the time Beston visited Eastham, trees were starting to again cover the Cape. People no longer had to search the beach for driftwood and had begun to depend on private woodlots for their supplies of firewood.

Thoreau's visit in the 1850's was the end of a period of prosperity called the golden age of Cape Cod. The prosperous maritime economy of fishing and worldwide whaling, evidenced by the ship captains bringing home wealth in money and treasures, was declining. Shipwrecks remained a common sight, because the route for all ships led along the treacherous shoals of the backside of the Cape and around Provincetown.

Seventy-five years later, during Beston's stay, the Cape's complete dependence on the sea was over. The railroad had been built, making feasible the shipment of market game and farm produce to Boston and New York City. The opening of the Cape Cod Canal (1914) significantly reduced the number of shipwrecks-and the number of wreckers and beachcombers-because ships no longer had to travel around the tip of Provincetown. By the 1920's, tourists were starting to find the Cape by train and automobile, fulfilling Thoreau's prophecy: *The time must come when this coast will be a resort.*

The 75 years between Thoreau's long walks and Beston's stay were marked by radical changes in the economic life of the Cape and in the area's landscape. But there were also sharp differences in the perspective and interests of the two authors. Together, these differences make *Cape Cod* and *The Outermost House* very different books.

Coast Guard Beach

Seals

After the last summer vacationers have abandoned the beaches of Cape Cod, another group of travelers begin to arrive on the shores of Massachusetts. Ignoring the inclement weather, these visitors enjoy many of the same activities that their summer compatriots do: relaxing on the sandy beaches, basking in the sun, and splashing through the blue waters of the ocean. After a southern migration, seals spend the winter months on Cape Cod.

The harbor seal, by far, is the most common seal to be seen on the Cape. An aerial survey performed in 1992 recorded 4,000 to 5,000 harbor seals in and around Cape Cod and the Islands.

Fully grown, an adult harbor seal can reach five feet in length and weigh up to two hundred pounds. Their coat is light gray in color and mottled with small, dark spots. A concave muzzle and nostrils positioned in a “v” shape gives these seals the appearance of an earless cocker spaniel.

A less common sight on Cape Cod is the gray seal. Possessing a distinctive Roman nose, this seal used to be known as a “horsehead” seal. It is larger than the harbor seal. Male seals can grow as long as eight feet and weigh nine hundred pounds. Though juveniles are often mistakenly identified as harbor seals, the fur pattern of the adult gray seal is bolder than their smaller cousins.

Hooded seals and harp seals have been observed locally, though only on very rare occasions. These seals spend their lives on the pack ice of the Northern Atlantic, and will travel south only if they are lost or injured.

Seals are mammals which are well-adapted to survive in very cold water. The layers of fat, or blubber, which make up 50 percent of their weight help to keep them warm. They also have a well-developed circulation system which allows them to stay under water for long periods of time while looking for food. Blood flow, which brings oxygen, can be restricted to all but vital organs such as the lungs and heart, making it possible for them to hold their breath much longer than we can.

Seals are carnivorous. Their diet consists of fish and invertebrates, including mackerel, herring, squid, flounder and skate. Gray seals are known to supplement their diets with small ducks. Because of its abundance, a small fish called a sandlance, a fish that is not commercially valuable, is the predominant food for seals during their stay on Cape Cod. Seals are known to eat ten to twelve percent of their body weight in food every day.

Hauling Out

When they are not feeding, seals are often observed laying on the beach away from the water. This behavior is known as “hauling out,” and seals will spend up to 80 percent of their day performing this activity. While hauled out on land, the animals get a chance to sleep and rest, while conserving energy and gaining body heat and vitamin D from the sun.

Seals begin to arrive in the waters of Cape Cod, generally, between September and October. They will spend their winters in Massachusetts. Then, in April, they will begin a northern migration to Canada and Maine where they will stay for the summer. It is unusual for seals to spend the entire year in this area.

Historically, large colonies of seals were year-round residents of Cape Cod. However, they were believed to be a threat to commercial fishing; therefore, beginning in the mid 1800’s, they were hunted for a bounty, resulting in the decimation of their population on the Cape. Seals didn’t return to this area until Massachusetts stopped bounty hunting in 1962, and the animals were afforded federal protection under the Marine Mammal Act of 1972.

Even though their numbers have increased, it is doubted that seals will ever recolonize Cape Cod year-round. The large, summer crowds of boaters and sightseers disrupt the animals.

A great place to observe the visiting harbor seals is on Nauset Spit. From Coast Guard Beach, it is a 30-minute walk to the Nauset Marsh inlet. There, the seals can be observed resting on the opposite shore or swimming in the channel. If you plan to take this hike, remember to dress warmly and bring a pair of binoculars. Other areas for seal viewing include the Chatham Fish Pier, where seals have been sighted on a regular basis. Also, the Massachusetts Audubon and Cape Cod Museum of Natural History occasionally offer seal cruises to Monomoy Island.

Caution: Do not approach seals. They can bite!

