

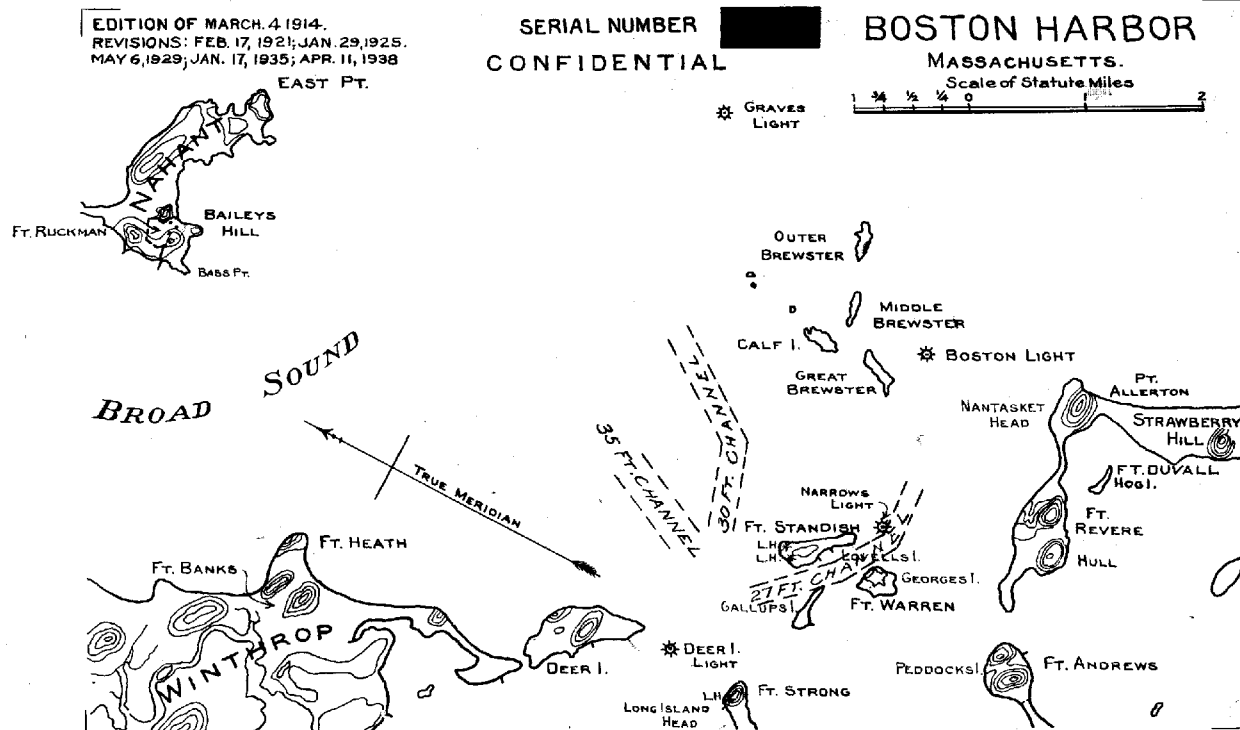
## Mark Berhow

A couple of months before this conference was to begin, all the arrangements had been made and things looked great. Conference chair Gordon Bliss and his team of volunteers - Tom Vaughan, Alex Holder, Norm Scarpulla, and Alex Hall - had everything organized and were looking forward to the meeting when the wheels started coming off the wagon. First was the loss of the anticipated boats from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR - the successor to the Metropolitan District Commission, which formerly managed the fortified islands). Maintenance issues prevented using those boats to reach the fortified islands. This was followed by unanticipated problems getting access to Long Island and Fourth Cliff. Finally, the untimely arrival of a violent nor'easter storm the weekend before the conference made arrangements for any boat trips very tenuous. The conference crew had their hands full with this one!

A few sites have been destroyed by development. Fort Health at Grover's Cliff is now the site of high-rise apartments; part of the Fort Revere reservation has been developed at Hull; Fort Winthrop's Second/Third-System and 1870s works were destroyed for the expansion of Logan Airport; and World War II-era Fort Dawes on Deer Island was destroyed for a new city sewage treatment plant in the 1990s.

The DCR island properties are being developed into public parks, with improved facilities and access. In 1996, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area was created as a collaborative partnership between the National Park Service and the state and municipal agencies that control the many islands in the harbor. Despite the fancy title, the national park service provides very little in the way of facilities funding; the DCR must continue to provide for facilities maintenance - a problem for often over-committed state and local funds. Despite critical shortage of funds for capital assets projects, what the DCR has done at several of these islands is remarkable.

As the conference participants began arriving at the beachside conference hotel in Nantasket Beach on Wednesday, April 18, it was apparent that the waves had been very high the days before, as work crews were cleaning rocks and debris from the roads



and parking lots. There was still some rain in the Boston area and the ocean breakers looked dark and ominous from the hotel windows. Despite the storm, the turnout was great; only a few of the registered members dropped out and nearly 80 members checked in. Despite the high seas, arrangements had been made for a boat to take us to the first two islands on the itinerary on Thursday and there was hope arrangements could be made to get the group to Lovell's Island on Friday, despite a recalcitrant boarding ramp at the island dock. The only stops dropped were the trips to the Brewster Islands. After an overview of the places we were not going to see over the next four days, the group hoped the weather would improve over the coming days. Alex Holder gave a presentation Wednesday night on "Fire-Control Sites That We Won't See," and Dale Manuel spoke on Galveston Defenses and on Fort Winthrop.

#### *Thursday, April 19*

The group gathered at the dock at the end of the Nantasket peninsula to board our boat for the short trip across Hull Gut to Peddocks Island and Fort Andrews. The day started a bit gloomy, but the sun soon came out and we had a nice, although slightly blustery, day. Fort Andrews was developed as part of the Endicott program to defend what was then the main channel to Boston, Hingham, and Quincy. It was one of the main garrison posts for the defenses in the early part of the 20th century, boasting three large two-company barracks, along with supporting buildings and quarters. Once the military left, the buildings were allowed to deteriorate; they are currently little more than standing ruins. The brick façade remains, but most of the wood and plaster interiors have rotted and are falling apart due to natural deterioration and vandalism. The DCR has just recently completed an underwater project to bring electrical and communication utilities to Peddocks Island. The plan is to encourage private interests to come to Peddocks Island and rehabilitate some of these historic structures, as part of a general development of the park.

After walking the old parade grounds, the group headed up the hill to the large fire control tower, Batteries Bumpus (2 x 3in Ped), McCook (2 x 6in Ped), and Rice (2 x 5in Ped), as well as another fire control station, a hillside searchlight shelter, and a disappearing searchlight shelter. DCR and CDSG volunteers have worked several weekends to clear the brush and vegetation from around these structures, which had been heavily overgrown. It



Barracks at Fort Andrews



Battery Bumpus, Fort Andrews



Disappearing Searchlight Shelter, Fort Andrews

was great to be able to see them and get some nice pictures. Next stop was down the hill to Batteries Whitman and Cushing (each 8 x 12in BLM). Battery Whitman was built as one half of an Abbott quad, while Battery Cushing's two linear pits were built later. Battery Whitman was later extensively rebuilt in a different configuration. Both batteries are overgrown, and Pit B of Battery Cushing is partially filled in. A quick tour of the decrepit officers row brought the group back to the guardhouse to wait for our departure for Georges Island and Fort Warren.



Battery Whitman, Fort Andrews

Loading up, we headed seaward to see how close we could get to the Brewster Islands. We originally planned to land on both Great Brewster Island, with its mine casemate and associated structures, and Outer Brewster Island, with Battery Jewell (2 x 6in SBC) and associated troop facilities, but the lack of docks,



the change of boats, and the rough seas cancelled those plans. As it was, our trimaran was only able to get just west of the islands before the skipper decided to stop. We headed back to the calmer waters of the outer harbor and circled Georges Island before landing at the dock.



Views from the parapet of Fort Warren

Fort Warren is a large Third-System work, modified during the 1870s and the Endicott period. The island is DCR's premier historic Boston fort. The large granite fort is largely intact, with only a few modifications from Endicott-period construction. The parade ground is large, with a restored auxiliary magazine. The DCR has concentrated on small areas with their limited budget. The seafront casemates are occupied by Batteries Plunkett (2 x 4in Ped) Jack Adams (1 x 10in DC) and Stevenson (2 x 12in DC). The north counterscarp battery and demilune remain in good shape, but the large Third-System/1870s ravelin outer work on the south side was largely destroyed for Battery Bartlett (4 x 10in DC). Bartlett's No. 4 emplacement next to the scarp of



Casemates of Fort Warren

the Third-System fort was later removed to access the seawall for repairs. Battery Lowell (3 x 3in BP) is in excellent shape. Battery Bartlett, in relatively poor condition, is used as a maintenance shed and is normally closed to the public. Other modern-era remains include an excellent mine casemate, a powerhouse, and a torpedo storehouse. Fort Warren is an excellent example of a large Third-System fort, well worth the visit. Regular ferries runs to Georges Island during the summer season, as well as shuttle ferries from Georges to several other harbor islands.

At the end of our time at Warren, we boarded our boat back to Nantasket Head. We had time for a leisurely dinner before gathering in the meeting room for the welcome news that we had a boat to visit to Lovell's Island and Fort Standish the next day. Thursday night's presentations were by Eric Hertfelder and Jim Moore on Fort Adams; Glen Williford on the Defenses of the Marianas Islands; Ted Gatchell on the ABC's of Coast Defense; and Charlie Bogart's training film about mine planting.

### *Friday, April 20*

We were up early to catch our 8 AM boat from Nantasket Head. The boat, designed for inner-harbor cruises, was made up to look like a Mississippi River sternwheeler, but we were lucky to have them! After a short trip to Lovell's Island, a smaller boat shuttled us from the dock to the shore. We headed out in small groups to explore the remains of Fort Standish, an Endicott-period fort occupied by the army through World War II.

The island's southwest side is slowly being eroded by the sea. The original wharf and Battery William Weir (2 x 3in Ped) are now gone. The recent nor'easter apparently finally did in the protected switchboard room, which now lies in ruins on the beach. Walking to the northwest end of the island, I was surprised to find Battery Terrill (3 x 6 in DC) still intact. The seawall protecting that battery is in excellent shape, and the battery and the nearby emplacements for the 90 mm AMTB position will likely survive for the foreseeable future. Heading back up the island, we visited Batteries Burbeck (2 x 10in DC) and Morris (2 x 10in DC). These were very early single-level disappearing gun batteries. Very high traverses protect the top of the magazines, with a large amount of concrete. On the spine of the island is unique Battery Strong Vincent (4 x 3in MP). The battery was designed to fire



Battery Burbeck, Fort Standish





Battery Strong Vincent, Fort Standish

360 degrees, with magazines between the emplacements, instead of behind. Unfortunately, when the battery was modified into an AA battery (3 x 3in AA) after WWI, the magazine entrances were covered with cement. Walking back to the northern end of the island, we visited Battery Whipple (2 x 6in Ped) and Battery Williams (3 x 3in Ped), both of which remained armed through WWII. Many temporary barracks were built on the island during WWII, but all were razed before the island became a park. This excellent site is well worth the visit; the batteries are unique and largely protected from vandalism.



Battery Williams, Fort Standish

Returning to the dock, the group was shuttled back to Nantasket Head. The afternoon was spent at the two forts in Hull - Revere and Duvall. First up was a visit to the remaining structures of Fort Revere, Battery Sanders (4 x 6in DC) and contiguous Battery Pope (2 x 6in DC). These batteries are now in a public park, and the structure is relatively clear of graffiti, unlike the last time I visited in the early 90s. We were also able to go up in



Battery Sanders, Fort Revere

the old water tower for some unparalleled views of the Boston harbor. The next stop was at one of the few remaining Fort Revere buildings, an NCO quarters, now the park museum. The rest of Fort Revere has been developed and little remains.

The final stop of the day was at Fort Duval and Battery Long (2 x 16in BC, casemated). Fort Duvall was built on Hog Island, a small island in the bay behind Nantasket Head. The original open battery was designed for two 12in long-range barbette guns, but two new M1919 army 16in guns were installed instead. The guns were casemated in the 1940s, and removed by the end of that decade. The island was used as a Nike radar site in the 1950s



Battery Long, Fort Duvall

and 60s, and connected to Nantasket Head by a bridge. After the termination of the Nike program, the island was sold to private ownership and renamed Spinnaker Island. Large condominiums were built over much of the island, leaving only one gun casemate exposed. The island is not open to the general public (residents only!), so arrangements were made with owner's association to visit the battery. The inside of Battery Long is largely intact, the laterals being used for storage. While the electrical equipment has been removed, the overhead rails, loading tables, and powder-room doors remain. Gordon Bliss also arranged a tour of the City of Hull waste treatment facility for those interested. This was followed by individual drive-bys of the Point Allerton fire control towers.

Friday's presentations were John Ratti on Halibut Point State Park, Glen Williford on a New Zealand Tour Proposal and Aerials of San Francisco Defenses, Alex Holder on the Outer Brewster Island defenses (that we could not get to), and Mark Berhow on Coast Artillery Organization.

### *Saturday April 21*

This was an all-driving day to visit the sites along the central and northern sides of the harbor. The day was clear and bright, beautiful sunny weather. We headed out in the morning for Long Island, connected to the mainland at Squantum by a causeway and a bridge via Moon Island. The north end of Long Island was Fort Strong, while the southern half of the island has been used for a variety of medical facilities. The City of Boston currently uses the old hospital facilities for a number of projects relating to treatment of medical and substance abuse problems, and homeless persons. The island is not open to the general public. Almost





Battery Hitchcock, Fort Strong

all the buildings of Fort Strong have been destroyed; only the concrete defense works remain. The city is currently building a camp/center for inner-city gang members on the old Fort Strong parade ground - the low area connecting the hospital grounds and the headlands where the main fortifications were located. Due to this construction, it was difficult to make arrangements for this visit, but we were fortunate to get the help of Ellen Berkland, the city archaeologist who is overseeing the archeological evaluation of the ground disturbed by the construction. Arriving at the gate in Squantum (and the location of a Nike radar control site), we had the usual gate attendant response. "Never heard of your group's visit!" Ellen got things straight and we headed across to Long Island, past a closed-off Nike launch area, to a parking lot on the old hospital grounds. As we were here only under Ellen's authority, we had to stay together to visit the site.

From the parking lot, we walked the beach out to the head, past the construction site, and then up to the main fortification area. We fanned out to visit Batteries Drum (2 x 4.7in Ped), Hitchcock (3 x 10in DC) and Ward (2 x 10in DC), all built as one large structure. These early Endicott batteries are in excellent condition due to their protected location. To the west of the main gun line is a concrete fire control tower and the Long Island Head



Battery Smyth, Fort Strong

Lighthouse; north of the batteries are the remains of the 1870s battery, and along the front of the head is Battery Basinger (2 x 3in BP) with its ammunition lift, rare for 3-inch batteries. Behind the head are the central power plant and mine casemate, as well as Battery Smyth (2 x 3in Ped). On our way back, we stopped at Battery Taylor (2 x 3in Ped). The front of Battery Taylor is in the surf and it may be in danger of being broken up. Fenced off behind the construction area and not visited was Battery Stevens (2 x 3in Ped). These early Endicott-period fortifications are currently among the best-preserved examples in the county, but this may change once the new camp is in operation, especially if the city decides to bury or secure the area to prevent access. The CDSG should keep a close watch on this!



Battery Murphy, East Point M.R.

Nahant is about a 30-mile drive through central Boston, past Logan Airport. Parking is very limited on Nahant, so we had to car pool as much as possible. First stop was the East Point Military Reservation, with Battery Murphy (BCN 104) (2 x 16in BC, casemated) and BCN 206 (2 x 6in SBC). It is now a campus of Northeastern University. After a little confusion over who had the keys, we were able to tour the interiors of the two batteries. Battery Murphy is being used as a classroom and oceanographic laboratory; Battery 206 is used for storage. We took a leisurely tour of the remains of the Nike launch facility (the assembly building) and the Panama mounts on the point on our own.



Gun platform for Battery 206, East Point M.R.

Next, we drove to the south end of Nahant, to Baileys Hill and the site of Fort Ruckman and Battery Gardner (2 x 12in BCLR), an open barbette battery casemated in the 1940s. We were able to park in the park thanks to local historian and author Jerry Butler. Gardner's entrances have been filled with earth and are now overgrown. The area had a number of fire control sites (now gone) and one searchlight position (remaining), and a 1930s AA





Battery Gardner, Fort Ruckman

battery (gone for school grounds) as well as the radar control site for the Nike facility at East Point (also now destroyed).

The last stop for the day was at Fort Banks at Grover's Cliff. We skipped the site of Fort Heath on the point proper, as nothing remains of any of the military structures once there; they have been replaced by high-rise condominium and business towers. Fort Banks was the headquarters post for both the Harbor Defenses of Boston and the Nike-era Boston defenses. Sadly, little remains of the garrison buildings of the reservation and the only significant structure is Batteries Kellogg (8 x 12in BLM) and Lincoln (8 x 12in BLM). Originally constructed as an Abbott Quad, these were later modified into a pair of 1906-type batteries. Thanks to the diligent efforts of member Tom Vaughan and others, the battery has been recently listed on the National Register. This was the life-long dream of the late George Iorio, a WWII coast artillery veteran who worked tirelessly to prevent destruction of the battery. Two interpretive signs adorn the entrance to the battery. Battery Kellogg is being used as a recycling center by the City of Winthrop. One pit is open; the other is buried under the foundation of an apartment building. Battery Lincoln is being used by another apartment complex as parking lots and the top of one magazine is home to a tennis court. We were able to walk through the interior of the battery, which the city uses for storage. Afterward, we headed back to Nantasket Beach for the annual banquet and business meeting.



Battery Kellogg, Fort Banks

Saturday's presentations were Glen Williford's Twenty-five Years of CDSG, Craig Lentz's Fixing-up a Fire-Control Station as a Residence, and Terry McGovern's Coast Defense Preservation.



Fire Control Station, Fourth Cliff M.R.

*Sunday April 22*

The last day of the meeting started with a drive to the southern-most fortification of Boston, Fourth Cliff Military Reservation north of Humarock. Driving north out of Humarock, we traversed the rock-strewn roads that were just being cleared from the recent nor'easter. Parking in a lot toward the point, we gathered to visit Battery 208 (2 x 6in SBC), a WWII-era battery. The battery sits in a park-like setting; the southern emplacement is used as a covered picnic overlook, with a magnificent view of the Atlantic and the North River bay. The interior of the battery was magnificent! The full electrical system remains - three sets of Worthington diesel engines, their cooling systems and mufflers, generators, and electrical panels. The navy used the site before turning it over to the Air Force, which currently uses it as a recreation area. Very nice!



Power equipment in Battery 208, Fourth Cliff M.R.

Next was a stop at Fort Independence on City Point in Boston. This nice Third-System work is now a popular park. As this was a nice sunny Sunday day, the parking lots were full and the public was out in force. The fort itself is only open on scheduled weekends during the summer due to personnel constraints. The





Views from the parapet of Fort Independence

fort does have a very active friends group and a number of restoration projects have been completed or are underway. Large parts of the casemate and barbette tiers are usually closed to the public, but the DCR staff opened the whole fort to our group. Having the place to ourselves was a wonderful opportunity. Especially nice were the sea-facing casemates and the replica Rodmans on the barbette tier.

This is where the meeting officially ended, though there were a few optional add-ons. The first was a trip to the Halibut Point fire control station in Rockport, where park personnel opened the restored tower and attached barracks, and the Friends of Halibut Point State Park provided refreshments. The second was a visit to member Craig Lentz's house, converted from a WWII fire control tower and its barracks at Coolidge Point, Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA. Last on the agenda was a special CDSG tour of Fort Adams in Newport, RI, on Monday, led by John Weaver. This tour had a nice turnout and with the cooperation of Eric Hertfelder of the Fort Adams Trust, the group was able to visit almost all corners of the fort as well as the detached redoubt.

Again, another great meeting, with the conference organizers successful at getting the group into sites not normally open to the public. The complications of the boats to the harbor islands were unexpected, but we were able to make it to all but the Brewster Islands (which are difficult to get to under the best of circumstances). The CDSG membership owes a big debt of gratitude to volunteer conference chair Gordon Bliss for taking this on. I would like to add my personal thanks, as I know this is a time-consuming and problematic job. I feel this was a tough one to coordinate and the crew did a great job getting a hotel site and getting us out to the locations. Thanks also to all of Gordon's volunteer crew: Tom Vaughan, Norm Scarpulla, Alex Holder, and Alex Hall. Alex Hall had the particularly difficult task of arranging our boat transportation in the aftermath of the storm. We would also like to thank Susan Kane, Bill Stokinger, Matt Tobin, all the other DCR and Fourth Cliff personnel, and members of the Castle Island Association and Friends of Fort Banks who assisted our site visits.



2007 CDSG attendees on the wharf at Fort Warren (photo by Alex Holder)