

# Boston Harbor Islands

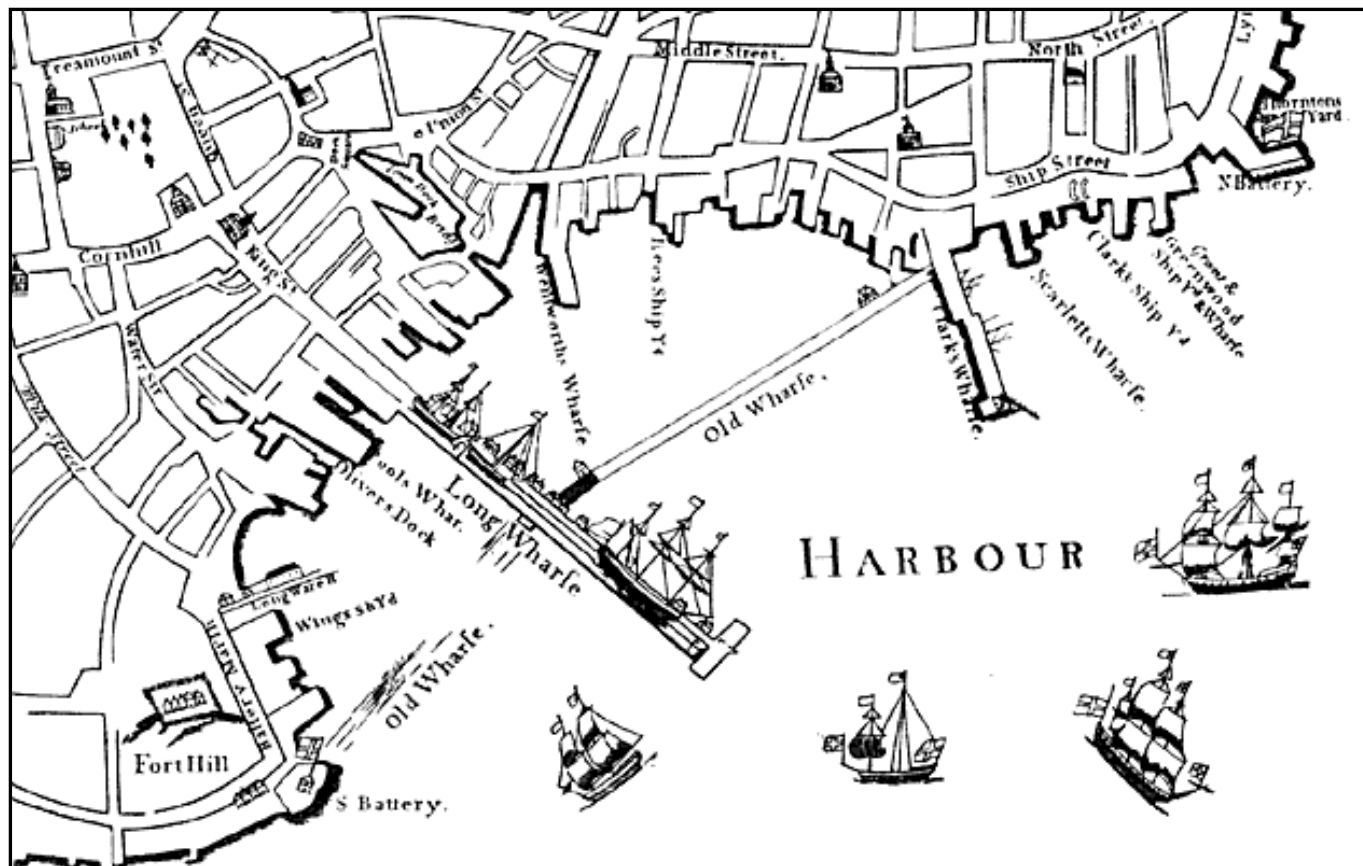
## IslandCache Program

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



### Site 2: The Nucleus of Maritime Trade

N 42° 21.649' W 071° 03.004'



“The student of the port of Boston is treated to unexpected glimpses of much larger historical processes, for by its very nature a port is like a magic lens and bends one’s vision in a multitude of directions.”—W.H.Bunting

#### Maritime Trade in Boston Harbor

Boston has long been considered the first and most important trading post in coastal New England. Beginning with the Northwest fur trade in the 1630s, to the China and East India trades, through the whaling period and Don McKay’s famous clipper ships of the 1800s, Boston has been used continuously for trade and commerce in New England. In 1794, a maritime trader noted that Boston housed over 450 tall ships throughout its eighty wharves and quays—

or small stationary piers. In fact, in 1806, the income derived from maritime freight trade in Boston alone equaled the federal revenue of the entire United States the same year. While Long Wharf continues to receive freight and cargo ships from all over the world, it also serves as the primary departure point for passenger ferries to points within Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay.

#### Reaching Out to the Harbor

Often called the “nucleus of maritime trade,” Boston is home to the oldest continuously-used wharf in the country. Originally constructed in 1710, Long Wharf was aptly named because it stretched 1,586 feet into the harbor from the Old State House. Long Wharf was over 50 feet wide with large warehouses off to either side of the wharf that allowed for the quick and efficient transfer of goods from large clipper ships. A

Custom House was located at the head of Long Wharf, and was used by the government to collect tariffs and register cargo. The popular tourist destination of today, Quincy Market, was considered a market place long before the present day structures were built. During the American Revolution, the entire area that Quincy Market stands on today was covered in water and considered to be a part of Long Wharf.

#### Gateway to Boston Harbor Islands

Long Wharf has also been dubbed “the gateway to the islands,” as it is one of the departure points for the park. From the terminus of Long Wharf and facing east, visitors can see the first island—Deer Island. (The large egg-shaped structures are sewage digesters at the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority water treatment facility on the island.) Recreational

boaters, commercial vessels, private yachts and water taxis also use Long Wharf as the launch point for their visits to the islands. Long Wharf provides access for more than 1,000 park visitors on a busy weekend in the summer. Purchase your ferry ticket on the north side of the Long Wharf Marriott Hotel, and set sail for the next site.

Next Clue: Standing 157 feet above sea level, the next site is the highest point in Boston Harbor. It is located on an island with perhaps the most intriguing history; the next site will be found on this “green” island.

N 42° 19.612'  
W 070° 59.256'