



The Story of Eel Pond Beach and its Breachway

In 1846 (#1), the beach was broad and expansive. Wagons travelled across the beach to the farms and houses on the peninsula. However, over the years erosion carried away sand and the beach narrowed considerably (#2). By the 1930s, the beach was so low and narrow that the road was on a causeway built on wooden pilings. A hurricane in 1938 washed away the causeway and opened the first breach (#3) but authorities quickly filled it.

When the Army opened a training base on the peninsula in 1942, they added sand to the beach, along with rock groins (G1 - G6) and a new road (#4). (Note that the 1938 opening was between G2 and G3.) A hurricane in 1944 completely washed out the beach, destroyed the road and moved the back of the beach well northward. The peninsula, cut off from Menauhant since then, was renamed Washburn Island. By 1947 (#5), one opening through the beach remained (between G3 and G4) and was dredged for navigation to the bay.

Erosion by currents and waves has continuously reworked the beach. As it moved northward (#6, #7 #8), some of the groins (G4 - G6) became stranded offshore as small rocky islands to be avoided by sailors. In 1991, Hurricane Bob created a new breachway (#9), cutting off the beach altogether and creating "Gull Island". Erosion continued to change the shape of the land. The new breachway slowly moved westward (#10, #11), shrinking Gull Island in the process. By 2000 (#12), all that remained of it was a small patch of sand. A little more than a year later, Gull Island had reattached and once again there was only one breachway. During it all, periodic dredging has kept the main channel, open since 1944, deep enough for boats to enter Eel Pond, Childs River, and Waquoit Bay.

