



Grants Fund Historical Research in 2020 for 375th Anniversary of Fort Sewall in 2019

Established in 1644, 375 years ago, Marblehead's Fort Sewall is beloved for its spectacular views over Marblehead Harbor and beyond. But, it is also rare and important as one of only a very few early coastal defensive earthwork forts from the 1600s still existing on the North American continent.

This summer, preservation and site renovations to improve visitor accessibility are well underway. Approved by town-wide vote last year, the work is managed by **McGinley Kalsow & Associates Inc.**, and is overseen by the Town's Fort Sewall Oversight Committee.

In addition to the voter-approved funding for the improvements, the preservation work is supported by **\$210,000 in grant awards** from state agencies (the **Massachusetts Cultural Council** through its **Cultural Facilities Fund** and **MassDevelopment**, as well as the **Massachusetts Historical Commission** through its **Preservation Projects Fund**) as well as by generous individual donations. The donations will also support a summer Fort Ranger docent program and an endowment for ongoing fort maintenance.

The Fort Sewall Oversight Committee is also pleased to announce that three grants totaling nearly \$10,000 for historical research and education about the fort were awarded this year by two philanthropic historical organizations: the **Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati** and the **Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars** (with a match from the parent organization, the **General Society of C. Wars**).

The research will result in a comprehensive report about the fort's evolution over nearly three centuries, from its establishment in 1644 until 1922, when national U.S. House and Senate legislation transferred its land and maintenance to the Town of Marblehead by for use as "a public park forever." An event at the fort is planned for 2022 to celebrate both the 100th anniversary of that transfer and the preservation and accessibility project — and hopefully also a resumption of social gatherings there generally.

The report will include plans of the fort drawn by military engineers for four major renovations for the colonial English and then the U.S. governments (c.1705, 1742, 1794-1801 & 1864).

Like the site work, the grants will help to make the fort's history more accessible for Marblehead and beyond through the report, which will be posted along with the historical plans on the Town websites.

It will therefore not only be available for **the Town's 100th anniversary of fort ownership in 2022**, but also for the **United States' 250th anniversary of independence from Great Britain in 2026**.

Two grants totaling \$6,165 were received from the **Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars** and the General Society, whose mission is to honor places, events, and people who contributed to Colonial America before American independence. Over the past two decades, the two Colonial Wars groups have also been extremely generous to the Marblehead Museum toward preservation projects for Marblehead's superlative and nationally significant mansion of Colonel Jeremiah Lee (1741-1775).

A \$3,000 grant was also awarded by the **Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati**, an association of descendants of Revolutionary War officers established in 1783 at the end of the American Revolution, whose name honored their commander-in-chief George Washington. A decade ago, the organization also provided **\$4,000** to fully fund the town's first and only monument honoring General John Glover and the Marbleheaders who served in his regiment and in other capacities during the American Revolution, also up at Fort Sewall. In 2008, they contributed **\$2,000** toward an audio walking tour of Marblehead's historic district. And in 2018, for the Marblehead Museum's 250th Lee Mansion anniversary celebration (with a matching contribution from a resident who values Marblehead history), the organization sponsored a talk by Marblehead historian Robert Booth about Colonel Jeremiah Lee, who had not only been Glover's superior officer but the first commander of Marblehead's rebel militia in 1775, but was also both a regional leader and covert supplier for the cause of independence as the Revolution mounted, which caused his death.

The expanded research is being conducted by historical architect Frederic C. Detwiller of Georgetown, Massachusetts. His new report will update a historical overview of Fort Sewall that he wrote in 1975 for Marblehead's celebration of the United States' Bicentennial of independence in 1976. During his half century of work with historic houses and sites in New England, Detwiller also gained extensive experience with military and naval history as well, including Colonial and U.S. forts throughout the region.

The Fort Sewall Oversight Committee is grateful to the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati and the Massachusetts and General Societies of Colonial Wars for these generous grants. The proposals were written by Judy Anderson, a member of the Oversight Committee, for the fort's 375th anniversary.

Brief Historical Summary:

First established in 1644 as an earthen fortification and gun battery to provide deterrence and protection against attack from the sea, the Marblehead fort on Gale's Head is important as one of the few surviving early coastal earthwork forts in N. America (with four major renovations 1704 to 1864).

Its location high up on a rocky headland between the Great Harbor (today's main harbor) and the more sheltered Little Harbor to its west (the principal functional harbor until the town's dramatic growth began in the 17-teens) was of strategic value to the region. It now creates the spectacular views that have brought so many people to the fort's former ramparts for more than a hundred years.

The defensive fortification was simply called "the Marblehead Fort" until 1800, toward the end of its third major renovation (1794-1801). That building campaign brought the fort close to its current appearance — including the familiar brick officers' quarters with the rounded doors and windows, now painted white (and perhaps then as well). There were three doors instead of just two until 1864.

In 1800, the fort was named after Marblehead attorney and justice of the peace Samuel Sewall, who had been appointed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court that year after serving as an early state legislator (1783 & 1788-96) and U.S. Congressman (1796-1800). In 1814, during the War of 1812, Sewall was appointed Chief Justice, but died in June, exactly two years after war was declared, while holding a court session in Maine, which was still part of Massachusetts until 1820. His death was just two months after the fort's most famous moment, on April 3rd in 1814, when the U.S.S. *Constitution* successfully sought refuge under the fort's cannon, though they are said to have lacked gunpowder.

When the fort was established in 1644, just fifteen years after Marblehead's settlement began, the sparsely settled community was still part of Salem, until the fledgling town incorporated in 1649. Massachusetts would remain an English colony for more than a century, until the American Revolution.

Also in 1644, Marblehead's first constable (like a policeman) and ferry man (to Salem, from the West Shore) were appointed. Around the same time, the first town meeting house had been built up on an adjacent promontory to the west. A burying ground (now called Old Burial Hill) grew around it as the community grew.

Hardships then, and often later as well, included hunger, cold, minimal housing, a precarious economy (especially in the 1600s, and for a half-century after 1775), meager supplies, negligible health care, and disease epidemics (as now, and more than a dozen times in the past, though a much higher percentage of people died in the earlier ones). In addition, especially during the 1700s and beyond, so many women lost husbands and fathers, brothers and sons, who were lost at sea while fishing, trading, or serving in wars.

Conflicts: Because England was embroiled in a decade-long civil war through the 1640s, her coastal colonies were at risk from attack from the sea by Atlantic power-house countries that were England's long-standing enemies — mainly France (1700s), but occasionally Holland and others as well (later 1600s).

The fort saw service during six different multi-year conflicts with France through the 1790s, plus two wars against England twenty years before and after that: the six-(eight)-year American Revolution from 1775 until its treaty in 1783, and the three-year War of 1812 which ended in 1815.

After a renovation in the 1740s, during a now-forgotten English war called "King George's War" against France, the fort was in disrepair by the time of the American colonies' rebellion against England in 1775, when the fort was "manned by civilians." In 1776, shots were fired at His Majesty's Ship *Milford*, a large British frigate, to defend an American ship "*Isaac*" racing into Marblehead Harbor for refuge.

Virtually unknown today, King George's War was nearly a decade before the more familiar so-called "**French & Indian War**." The latter was part of a global European conflict called the "Seven Years War" which lasted nine years in North America, and its economic ramifications through taxes would incite the American Colonies' rebellion soon after the war ended. (Marblehead's 1755 circular brick **Powder House** was built toward the beginning of that later war, and the square brick **Gun House** was built around 1810.)

The fort's familiar brick officers' quarters with the arched windows and doors were built in the 1790s, during the fort's most significant renovation. That enhancement was prompted by tensions between the new U.S. and France, as seamen traders in the Atlantic were often victims of both the French and the English navy — just a decade after the French navy had struck a blow at France's constant enemy England by helping Britain's North American colonies prevail in their revolution for independence.

The U.S.S. *Constitution* took refuge in Marblehead Harbor under the safety of the fort's cannon on April 3rd 1814, during the 3-year **War of 1812**, when the fort was garrisoned by official U.S. government forces.

The fort was briefly expanded to the west when it was called into service during the 4-year U.S. Civil War (1861-65). Military troops camped there for the last time during the four-month Spanish-American War in 1898.

For each renovation, professional government military engineers drafted plans and oversaw the work.

Cannon: From the beginning, the fort was outfitted with sizeable cannon. More guns were added during each renovation. A wooden gun deck was first built around 1705, when a dozen cannon supplemented the original two. Six more were added in the 1740s, bringing the total to eighteen. There were also that many during the Revolution thirty years later, and a generation afterward for the War of 1812. Much larger guns were brought to the temporarily expanded fort during the U.S. Civil War.

A gun deck will be suggested as part of the current renovations, based on the 1705 & 1820 plans.

The fort saw very little action in any of those conflicts — perhaps due in part to the cannons' presence, even if there was often apparently comparatively little ammunition. But each of those international wars through the 18-teens impacted Marblehead significantly, economically and socially,

Research: Half of this year's grant-funded research focuses on the fort's role in the Revolution (1775–1781/83). The other half is investigating the 1740s, during King George's War (1740–1748).

In Marblehead, that 1740s period was the setting for a mid-20th-century romanticized love story involving a Marblehead fisherman's daughter named Agnes Surriage, who worked at the Fountain Inn tavern, above the Little Harbor cove across from the Fort. She soon became the "ward" of a British gentleman and customs official, Harry Frankland, who oversaw the 1740s fort renovations, and apparently frequented the tavern when he was in town. Not called Sir Harry until a decade later, he lived in two fine mansions in Boston and in Hopkinton. While he did bring Agnes to live in grand style in those two homes, and then to England as well, he only married her a decade later, after she saved his life in the 1755 earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal. (A large earthquake occurred in New England that year as well).

Most people assume that the Marblehead romance took place during the "French & Indian War" (1754–63), but Harry and Agnes had already left Massachusetts to live in England by that time.

Their story can be read in several versions, but the most recent and most scholarly book about it was *Marblehead's Cinderella* written a decade ago by **Fred Marshall Bauer** of Marblehead.

As Bauer noted in his book, Frankland may have been the overseer of the fort, but a professional military engineer, John Henry Bastide, was present as well. The current research is attempting to find a plan of the fort drawn by Bastide, since payment was requisitioned for him by Massachusetts' royal governor in 1743. So far, no plan has ever been found. But if it did survive, it is hoped the research funded by the two historical organizations might uncover it.

Dates of the Fort's most major renovations and related plans by professional military engineers:

As an English colony (until 1775):

- **1704–05 – Queen Anne's War (1702-1713)** against France, whose concluding 1713 treaty opened the North Atlantic Grand Bank area east of Newfoundland to New England fishing, enabling Marblehead's rapid growth and prosperity, which continued until the American Revolution began.
Plan by **Colonel Wolfgang Wilhelm Roemer** (English but Dutch origins)
- **1741–43 – King George's War (1744-1748)** against France, a decade before the "French & Indian War" (1754-63) against France that would prompt Marblehead's round brick Powder House for gunpowder storage to be built in 1755, beyond the edge of the town on the Ferry Road (Green St.).
Plan by **John Henry Bastide** (English but French origins) (*plan drawn but missing*)

As the United States (after 1776):

- **1794–97 – Undeclared war with France (1797)**, whose navy had helped the new U.S. in its Revolution against England just 13 years before — as U.S. shipping, trade, and mariners at sea were victims of both the English and French navies in the 1790s, in an Atlantic war between those powers. So tensions were high, U.S. frigates were built, and a second war with England followed 1812-15.
Plan by **Stephen Rochefontaine** (Étienne Nicolas Béchet, Sieur de R.) (U.S. but French origins)
★ *This is when the fort assumed its current appearance, including the familiar brick structure with three doors facing the large flat parade ground built as a "bomb-proof" officers' quarters*
- **1798-1801 – Continuation of tensions (to 1812)** betw. U.S. and both France & England, who were again at war
no Plan under **Major Louis Tousard** (U.S. but French origins) (*no plan known*)
Plan (1820) by **Guillaume Tell Poussin** (U.S. but French origins) (*plan documenting the earlier renovations*)
- **1813-14 – War of 1812 (1812-1815)** between U.S. and England as almost a second war for independence
no Plan under **Henry Burbeck** (U.S., an American who had been an artillery commander in the Revolution)
- **1864 – U.S. Civil War (1861-1865)**, when the fort was temporarily expanded to the west, to twice its size, to include the entire headland, as the U.S. government briefly rented the adjacent private property.
Plan by **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** (plus 1861 rendering by U.S. Engineers Office of 1820 plan)

Photos:



- 1) **Historical architect Frederic C. Detwiller**, who is researching and writing the updated report for the Fort, expanding upon his 1975 historical overview for the U.S. Bicentennial of Independence in 1976, stands inside the fort's stone officers' quarters prior to the 2020 preservation work.

The on-site Fort project is managed by **McGinley-Kalsow & Associates, Inc.** The interior masonry preservation and some masonry work at the upper fort was supported by **\$210,000** in grants from two state agencies: the **Preservation Projects Fund** of the **Massachusetts Historical Commission** and the **Cultural Facilities Fund** of the **Massachusetts Cultural Council** through **MassDevelopment**.



- 2) Representatives of the **Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati**, which has awarded **\$3,000** through Glover's Regiment for the 2020 research for the 1644 fort's 375th anniversary in 2019.

In 2010, they had also provided **\$4,000** for the town's first and only monument honoring General John Glover, also up at Fort Sewall (*photo at left, with representatives of the MA Society of the Cincinnati and Glover's Regiment*), after contributing **\$2,000** in 2007 toward an online audio walking tour of Marblehead, all from proposals by **Judy Anderson** on behalf of the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce (in 2007) and then the Fort Sewall Oversight Committee (2010 & 2019).

The Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati was established in 1783, just weeks after the national organization of the same name was created to honor Revolutionary War officers and their sacrifice, following the 1783 signing of the treaty that ended the American Revolution.

Warren Little, Charles Newhall, Larry Sands, Robert Erbetta, Archer O'Reilly, Gorham Brigham, Woodward, Herb



- 3) **William Mann of Hamilton**, grants manager for the **Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars**, which, together with the **General Society of Colonial Wars**, awarded **\$6,165** toward this year's fort research and report, with **Judy Anderson**, the **Fort Sewall Oversight Committee** member who wrote the proposals to the two organizations for the fort's 375th anniversary. • **Between them in Abbot Hall is an early cannon ball from the fort.**

The Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars was founded in 1893, a century after the Society of the Cincinnati, and just a year after a national organization, the **General Society of Colonial Wars**, was established to recognize the service of officers in six North American wars before the Revolution, and to support educational and honorary initiatives related to the century and a half prior to 1775, when the Revolution began.

MORE about the granting organizations next page:

The Granting Organizations:

The Society of Colonial Wars was established in 1892 to promote knowledge of colonial American history, particularly its military dimension, from the first permanent settlement of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 up to the start of the American Revolution in 1775.

The Massachusetts Society chapter was formed the following year, **in 1893, when Fort Sewall was a popular place to view sailboats in the harbor** (before it was briefly called into service again in 1898).

With chapters in 31 states and the United Kingdom, the SCW's members, all descendants of Colonial-period officers, have continued its founding mission by sponsoring events, exhibits, memorials and projects in local communities, and supporting academic research that informs and inspires respect for those whose public service during various wartimes led to the formation of our nation.

The Society of the Cincinnati was established in June 1783 by officers of the Continental Army as America's War for Independence officially ended that year with the Treaty of Versailles. Their purpose was to preserve the memory of the patriotic service and sacrifices that earned American liberty.

The Massachusetts Society became one of the first two state branches the same month, along with New York. (Both formed at the same time.) Twenty-three years later the Massachusetts chapter was incorporated in Boston — **in 1806**, after having been "the Fort at Marblehead" for more than a century and a half, and **just six years after Fort Sewall gained its current name**.

The Society of the Cincinnati is **the nation's first hereditary organization** and the oldest private patriotic organization in the U.S., with branches in each of the 13 states that had been the 13 North American coastal colonies that gained independence from Great Britain (out of 15), and also a branch in France, since the French Navy and several officers helped the English colonists win the Revolution.

The Society was named after **Lucius Cincinnatus**, a Roman general and statesman whose selfless commitment to civic virtue was demonstrated by his essential leadership at a time of crisis for his country, but who then stepped down without claiming absolute power — just as **General George Washington** also reluctantly left his beloved home and farm to lead the rebellion against British rule, then served as its first head of state, but refused to become a monarch or dictator, and declined to stay in power indefinitely.

Today, the national Society of the Cincinnati and its 13 state branches promote scholarly and popular interest in "the extraordinary generation that created our great republic" by awarding grants to sponsor events and initiatives like this one to increase community knowledge about those who served, as well as to foster appreciation for the achievement of American independence.

Additional Note:

Both Societies have generously supported initiatives for Marblehead history and the Marblehead Museum's Jeremiah Lee Mansion for nearly 20 years.

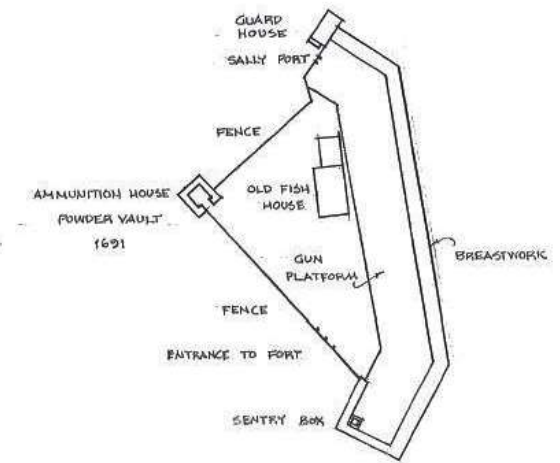
Jeremiah Lee is relevant to both granting organizations because Lee was a Colonel of Marblehead's colonial militia for a quarter of a century, into the beginning of the Revolution — from 1751 (fifteen years before his grand mansion was built) until 1775, when he led the town's large rebel militia until his sudden death in May of that year, less than a month after the war began — due to his covert involvement in organizing and supplying the Massachusetts colony's mounting rebellion for independence.

Ten days later, in May 1775, Major John Glover, was promoted to Colonel as Col. Lee's successor.

For the next year and a half, Colonel Glover would more actively and famously lead what became a vital regiment of the Continental Army. Colonel Glover was promoted to General early in 1777, after orchestrating the famous and crucial Retreat from Long Island the previous August, followed by the equally pivotal Crossing of the Delaware River in December 1776, just days before regimental enlistments expired. Afterward, nearly every able-bodied Marblehead man and boy continued their war-time service on behalf of independence at sea, on officially sanctioned privateer vessels.

Marblehead had always been proud of the Revolutionary war service of Glover (1775 to 1781/83, as one of the few officers to serve throughout the entire 8-year war) and the celebrated Marblehead Regiment (1775 through December 1776). But until 2010, no public monument had honored them.

Colonel Jeremiah Lee's covert leadership is still largely unknown, though his exceptional mansion survives here in Marblehead, nearly intact, and essentially unparalleled in all of North America.



c. 1705 Plan (original in Public Records Office, London)
Drawn & annotated in 1975 by Frederic C. Detwiler

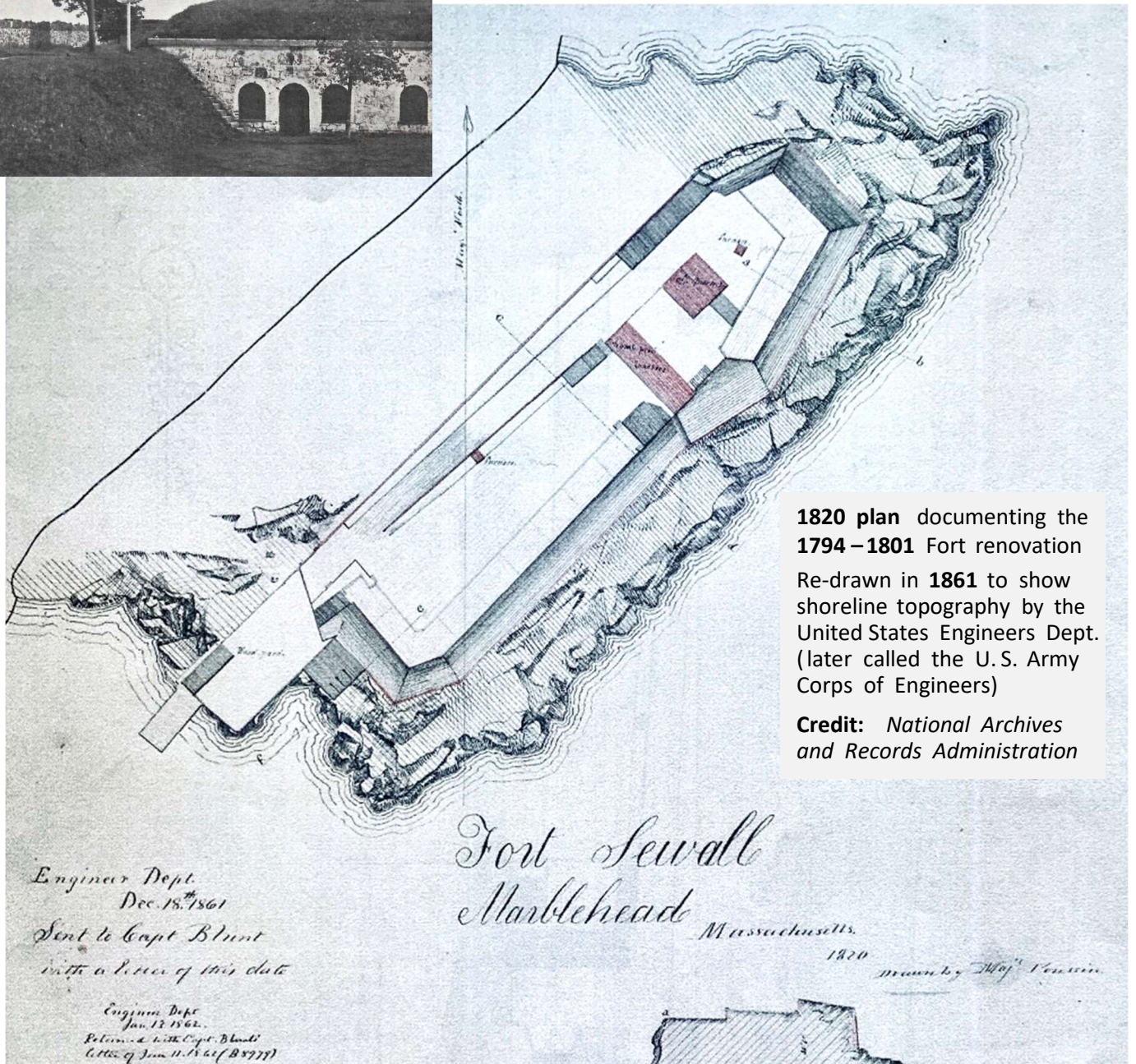


3. MARBLEHEAD FORT C.1705, DUDLEY.

0 20 40 60 80 100 FT. APPROX. SCALE

NOV. 1974 F.C. DETWILER - S.P.N.E.A.

Credit: Town of Marblehead (from 1975 summary report by F.C.D.)



1820 plan documenting the
1794–1801 Fort renovation
Re-drawn in **1861** to show
shoreline topography by the
United States Engineers Dept.
(later called the U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers)

Credit: National Archives
and Records Administration