

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 14 1975

DATE ENTERED APR 14 1975

PB 74000375

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Sewall (preferred) *use this***2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER Promontory called Fort Sewall

CITY, TOWN

Marblehead

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

sixth

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Essex

CODE

009

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Town of Marblehead

STREET & NUMBER  
Abbot Hall

CITY, TOWN

Marblehead

VICINITY OF

STATE  
Massachusetts 01945**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Town Offices

STREET & NUMBER  
Abbot Hall

CITY, TOWN

Marblehead

STATE  
Massachusetts**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

DATE

1970

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

There is no detailed description of the original Fort Sewall. A 1744 description states that "the town battery ... is built upon a rock, naturally well fortified, and mounts twelve large guns." The fort's location was indeed a natural one. Its guns stood on an elevated position, providing an effective field of fire over the entrance to Marblehead Harbor. In 1811 Fort Sewall was described as "an enclosed work of masonry and sods, mounting eight heavy cannons, covered by a block house, a brick magazine and barracks for forty men and officers."

At present, the Fort Sewall site is a public park. Located on the western side of the harbor, the site is roughly rectangular, with private dwellings fenced off from the park at its eastern end. Access to the park is provided by Fort Sewall Road which reaches a dead end at the park's entrance. A path with numerous benches overlooking the harbor has been constructed around the perimeter of the site. Two significant features associated with the fort's military function remain. A mound 15 feet high rises sharply at the northwest end of the fort. Probably a magazine, it is covered with earth and sod and has an entrance on its eastern side. Immediately to the south of this magazine is a long rectangular structure of brick, 60 feet by 20 feet, roofed with earth and sods. This structure was probably a prison and storage area and may have been the site of gun emplacements.

*Marblehead  
Sewall*

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1644 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Sewall (originally named Fort Head) is significant as an early coastal fort which served as an important military defense for over 300 hundred years. From the time of the establishment of its first fishing station (1629), Marblehead worried about attacks from the sea, especially from the French and the Dutch. The town's fishing and trade was so successful that in 1660 the King's Agent reported in London that "Marblehead was the greatest town for fishing in New England." Its obvious prosperity brought pirates offshore and the upkeep of the 1644 breastwork became a constant necessity.

In the three Canadian wars, Marblehead, an outstanding seaport, was expected to provide large numbers of ships and men. The Fort had to be on constant alert against French attack. It also served to house French prisoners.

As the tumult for independence grew, Marblehead patriots were among the most active and outspoken. Rumors spread that the British might burn the rebellious seaport; to combat this possibility, the townspeople in 1775 and 1776 rebuilt the Fort and had their cannon in clear view (though often they had no powder).

Marblehead ceded their old Fort to the new nation in 1794 and watched the entire headland become an important base. During the War of 1812, the Fort became prominent in coastal defense. It was during this war in 1814 that the Marblehead fort was renamed Fort Sewall in honor of Samuel Sewall, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court who died in 1814 and who had been a resident of Marblehead. On April 3, 1814 the Fort's guns protected the U.S.S. Constitution and permitted her to escape capture by the British frigates; thus the ship was saved to continue the fight and later to become a National Historic Landmark.

Fort Sewall was rebuilt during the Civil War and used for coastal defense and military training. Plans were to activate it for the Spanish-American War, but the war concluded before this was necessary. The Fort remained in government ownership until 1922 when it was ceded back to the town for use as a park. Fort Sewall is in its fourth century and has played an integral part in the history of the town, the state and the nation.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Marblehead town records of Town meetings and Selectmen's meetings  
Massachusetts State Archives  
Essex Institute records  
Lord & Gamage, Marblehead - The Spirit of '76 lives Here, 1972

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.5 acres

*WIMCK CD*

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 348700 47107750  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C         

*710*

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Patricia L. Weslowski, Survey Director, and Virginia C. Gamage

ORGANIZATION

Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE

February 1975

STREET & NUMBER

40 Beacon Street

TELEPHONE

617-727-8470

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts 02108

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

*SHPO*  
FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Elizabeth R. Amador*

TITLE Mass. State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3/10/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 4/19/75

ATTEST:

*W. R. ...*

DATE APR 8 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Fort Sewall

Property Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

Essex

State Massachusetts Working Number 3.14.75.381

TECHNICAL

Photos 3

Maps 1 sketch

*Nothing appears incorrect called*

CONTROL

*pl*  
*OK* 3/14/75

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ACCEPT  
LEBOVICH  
3-14-75

*Per call to David Hart SPNEA - said the Grant would involve historical documentation and stabilization.*

ARCHEOLOGIST

Accept  
M. Barnes  
14 MAR 75

OTHER

HAER

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

ACCEPT  
Cole  
4-1-75

Fort Sewall

BRANCH CHIEF

*Hunt*  
4.4.75

KEEPER

*Wm*  
APR 8 1975

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_

Entered APR 14 1975

Federal Register Entry 6-3-75

Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_

INT:2106-74



PARK PATHS OVER BATHWORK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 14 1975

DATE ENTERED APR 14 1975

*Gregory Smith - photo*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Sewall (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Marblehead

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Essex

STATE MA

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Gregory Smith

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Marblehead Historical Commission

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 1

looking north at park paths over earthwork

*#1083*

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*#1083*



**LEFT-EARTHWORK MAGAZINE**

**RIGHT-REAR STAIRCASE TO ROOMS**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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AND/OR COMMON Fort Sewall (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Marblehead

— VICINITY OF

COUNTY Essex

STATE Mass.

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Gregory Smith

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Marblehead Historical Commission

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 2

looking south at staircase to rooms (right); earthwork magazine  
(left)

#203

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

#203

*P*  
*with photo*



**EARTHWORK, PARADE GROUND, ENTRANCES TO INTERIOR**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
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*with photo*

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**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Sewall (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Marblehead

— VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Essex

STATE

MA

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT

Gregory Smith

DATE OF PHOTO

1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Marblehead Historical Commission

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 3

looking north east at the parade ground, entrances to interior

*#303*

*#303*

**PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 14 1975

DATE ENTERED APR 14 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

AND/OR COMMON Fort Sewall (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Marblehead VICINITY OF COUNTY Essex STATE MA

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

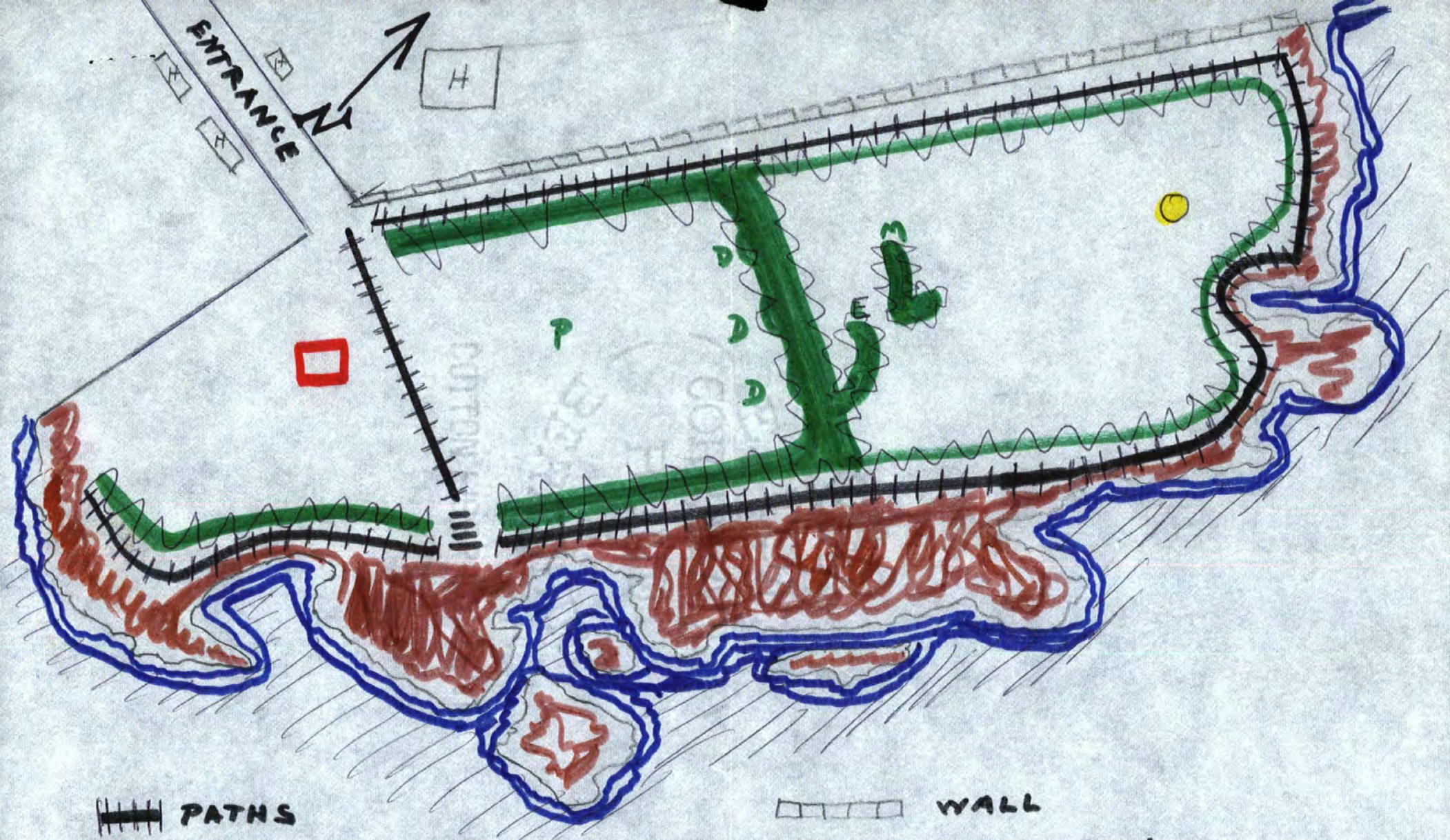
SOURCE sketch map

SCALE not to scale DATE 1974

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



||||| PATHS

— LAVATORY

— EARTHWORK FORT

P PARADE GROUND

D DOORS TO INTERIOR CASEMATES

E ENTRANCE TO UNDERGROUND

M MAGAZINE

□ WALL

● WEATHER STATION

— ROCKS

— SEA

H HOUSE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

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Marblehead Fort or Fort on Gale's Head

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Sewall (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Marblehead

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Essex

STATE

MA

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE

United States Geological Survey, Marblehead North, Mass., quadrangle

SCALE

1:24,000

DATE

1970

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

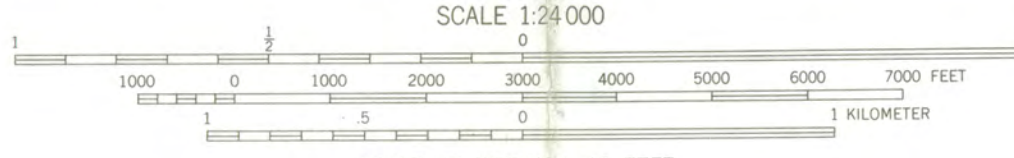
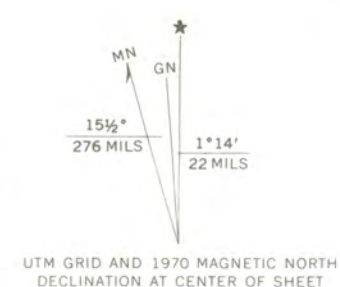
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



Marblehead, Fort Sewall  
UTM reference  
19/348700/4707750  
710

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1938. Topography by planimetric surveys 1942. Revised  
from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 240 and  
241 (1970). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 19, shown in blue  
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

MARBLEHEAD NORTH, MASS.  
N4230—W7045/7.5  
1970  
AMS 6869 III SE—SERIES V814



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered SEP 14 1975

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Old Ship Street Historic District	Medford Middlesex County
Fort Sewall	Marblehead Essex County
First Baptist Church, Cambridge	Cambridge Middlesex County
St. Stephen's Church	Boston Suffolk County
Fowle-Reed Wyman House	Arlington Middlesex County
Salem Cross Inn	West Brookfield vicinity Worcester County

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy  
Hon. Edward W. Brooke  
Hon. Torbert H. MacDonald  
Hon. Michael J. Harrington  
Hon. Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.  
Hon. John J. Moakley  
Hon. Edward P. Boland

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mrs. Elizabeth R. Amador  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
40 Beacon Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

# NR Data Sheet

DATE: 11-5-77  
Reviewer: INITIALS: [Signature]  
NR DOE April 14, 1975

NAME AS IT APPEARS IN FEDERAL REGISTER: Fort Sewall

OTHER NAMES: Fort on Gale's Head; Marblehead Fort; Fort Head

## LOCATION:

STREET & NUMBER Promontory called Fort Sewall

CITY, TOWN Marblehead

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6th

STATE Massachusetts

VICINITY OF

COUNTY Essex code 009

OWNER OF PROPERTY: (Circle) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHER

ADMINISTRATOR (underline)

FEDERAL (AGENCY NAME):

NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N. ATLANTIC MID ATLANTIC SOUTHEAST MIDWEST

SOUTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST PACIFIC NORTHWEST

## FEATURES:

<u>INTERIOR</u>	<u>EXTERIOR</u>	<u>ENVIRONS</u>
- Substantially intact-1	- Substantially intact-2	- Substantially intact-3
- unknown - 4	- unknown - 5	- unknown - 6
- not applicable - 7	- not applicable - 8	- Not applicable-9

- Interior, exterior, environs not intact-0

CONDITION -	- EXCELLENT	- DETERIORATED	- UNALTERED	- ORIGINAL SITE
	- GOOD	- RUINS	- ALTERED	- MOVED
	- FAIR	- UNEXPOSED	- Reconstructed	- Unknown
		- Unexcavated	- Excavated	

ACCESS - Yes-restricted Yes-unrestricted No access Unknown

historic district? YES NO

WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES NO

IF YES, NAME:

WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES NO

IF YES, NAME:

ADAPTIVE USE: YES NO Saved? YES NO

FUNCTION(S): (use vocabulary words)

then- fort  
now- park

## SIGNIFICANCE:

- ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	- CONSERVATION	- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	- RELIGION	- entertainment
- ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	- ECONOMICS	- LAW/Gov't/politics	- SCIENCE	- health
- AGRICULTURE	- EDUCATION	- LITERATURE	- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	- recreation
- ARCHITECTURE	- ENGINEERING	- MILITARY - 18	- TRANSPORTATION	- settlement
- ART	- EXPLORATION	- MUSIC	- OTHER (SPECIFY)	- socio/cultural
- COMMERCE	- INDUSTRY	- PHILOSOPHY		- urban & commun
- COMMUNICATIONS	- INVENTION	- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT		planning

## Claims

"first" YES NO "oldest" YES NO "only" YES NO

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:

N.A

architect/m.builder:

engineer:

landscape/garden designer:

artist/artisan:

interior decorator:

builder/contractor:

ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES:

personal

(label role & appropriate date)

events

institutional

DATES:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century):

first half of 17th cent. C. 1644

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS:

1644, 1775-76

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S):

~~1644~~, 1812-1814, 1861-65 (rebuilt during various wars)

SOURCE:

(OF NOMINATION)

PRIVATE

STATE

LOCAL GOV'T

MUNICIPAL

COUNTY

OTHER

FEDERAL AGENCY:

ACREAGE:

(to nearest tenth of an acre)

2.5

COMMENTS:

(include architectural information here)

Site of earthenware fortification including 15' mound with masonry entrance and interior stair (probably Magazine) and 60' x 20' earth-covered stone structure with sand-locks & granges (probably for gun storehouse with gun emplacements).  
of larger fort built in 1644 for defense of Marblehead to protect the important British seaport of attacks from Dutch and French attacks;

SIGNIFICANCE:

(maximum two sentences)

rebuilt for service during Revolutionary War and War of 1812; rebuilt again for Civil War.