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Form 504

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT

Type of Survey Topographic

Field No. 2114 Office No. 2115

LOCALITY

State Massachusetts

General locality Boston

Locality Harbor

1892

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CHIEF OF PARTY

R. M.

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DATE

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U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

T. C. Mendenhall, Superintendent.

State: Massachusetts.

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Topographic Sheets Nos. 2114 & 2115.

LOCALITY:

Boston Harbor.

1892

CHIEF OF PARTY:

R. M. Bache.

MAY 9.1893 003201

Descriptive REPORT.
(accompanying finished maps).

Assistant in Charge

Philadelphia, Pa., May 8th, 1893.
Sub-office C.& G.Survey.

U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey
MAY 19 1893
ARCHIVES

Dr.T.C.Mendenhall
Supt.C.& G.Survey.
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I send to-day, per the United States' Express Company, the two maps representing the topography of the south shore of Boston Harbor, executed by me last season. The first of these reaches from Squantum to Weymouth Fore River, and the second from Weymouth Fore River to Nantasket Beach, including the Harbor of Hingham.

The ordinary provisions with reference to original topographical sheets are not applicable to these,--that, as to a tracing of each sheet, with designation of areas worked upon on specified days; and that as to a geological description of the whole area covered during a season's work. As to the first, it should be noted that only the shoreline of the sheets was, according to instructions, intended to be delineated, that then, it was only, as experience on the ground proved the necessity, that the area to a moderate distance inland was included, and finally, that, after conference with Assistant Whiting, this practice was in turn followed by a further amplification of the design on

the ground that had been passed over;the developed scheme being especially illustrated by the inclusion of the whole of Town River Bay.and the taking of the work generally back to where the first connecting road from the general trend of the shoreline crosses small streams or rivers. It is obvious that work thus executed cannot be designated by areas of specified day's work.

In regard to the geological matter usually applicable not being pertinent to this work,it suffices to say that the region being one of a University centre and population remarkable for its general intelligence and education,geological knowledge of the most minute character regarding the region is extant and often familiarly possessed. In view,therefore,of this fact,a geological description of the area under consideration would seem to be superfluous. Nevertheless,there are two broad features in connection with the area,which would prove of interest in a general statement like the present. The first of these,to which I allude,will be best expressed by the three quotations, as follows,from pages 82,84,and 86,of Prof.Shaler's recent volume on "Nature and Man in America."

....."the old mountains,such as once occupied eastern Massachusetts,Rhode Island,and eastern Virginia,have been worn down to their very roots at times when the sea worked at levels a few hundred feet higher than it does at present.".....
.....Thus,in the case of eastern Massachusetts,we are now able to affirm that at various stages in the past the shore-

line has been near its present position.".....
....."Thus we establish the fact that at two stages in the Cambrian period the shoreline of New England in the neighborhood of what is now Massachusetts Bay was not far from its present position."

Prof.J.P.Lesley,of the University of Pennsylvania,with whom I have conversed on the subject,regards the other feature in Boston Harober,to which I alluded as interesting,as a fine exemplification of the effects of aërial erosion. The remarkable hills,semi-egg-shaped in longitudinal cross-section,as they lie topographically with the same trend,are like similar ones scattered elsewhere,and notably fine specimens of the moulding executed by the gradual graving which no other agency but aërial erosion could have effected,working in this instance on the clayey material which is most susceptible to delicate modelling.

In connection with the survey which the two maps represent,there is only one other topic of interest. The three larger of the four small islands in Hingham Harbor are known on the Coast and Geodetic Survey's present printed chart of Hingham Harbor,as "Ragged Island,""Sailor's Island", and"Chandler's Island." But these same islands are now known among both literate and illiterate people,as"Ragged Island,"Sarah's Island,"and "Langley's Island." The story current in the vicinity is that they were so named from an eccentric character called"Sarah Langley",

noted for her peculiar costume.

I believe, from the evidence to be now adduced, that this story is nothing but a modern myth, similar to one about which I once had a correspondence with Prof. Max Müller, of Oxford. I am not, however, now discussing the question solely from the point of view of the story's interest, as a probable modern myth, but chiefly from that of the necessity of considering it with relation to the naming of the islands correctly on the prospective chart of Boston Harbor.

Examination of the archives of Hingham, and of the testimony of educated persons now living there, goes to show that maps of Hingham and its Harbor, published in 1830, 1873, and 1892, all give the names of the islands as "Ragged Island," "Sarah's Island," and "Langley's Island." The present antiquarian of Hingham says that a late map of Boston and vicinity has the so-called "Sarah's Island" put down as as "Sailor's Island." Lincoln, in his " History of Hingham", printed in 1827, mentions the same island as "Sailor's (sometimes called Sarah's)." A legal paper, as far back as 1752, however, mentions the island as "Salye's Island.

Lincoln, in speaking of the at present so-called "Langley's Island", mentions it as "Chandler's (sometimes called Langley's)". There is, however, believed to be no other authority

calling the island,"Chandler's." There is even on record as far back as 1686, a conveyance of this island to one "John Langlee,"from which,doubtless the present spelling,"Langley"is derived. But,through whatever phases the names may in the course of time have passed, the present accepted names for the islands are undoubtedly,"Ragged Island,"" Sarah's Island,"and "Langley's Island."

The intimate research here indicated as to the history of the names I owe to the courtesy of my friend,Mr.Wm.O.Lincoln, of Hingham,Mass.,a lineal descendant of Paul Revere. His family still represents on the ground one of the oldest properties in the vicinity of Hingham,his own lines of division of woodland for fuel still existing as established in the early history of this country.

Yours respectfully,

R. M. Bache

Supt. C. & G. S.