

In subsequent years companies were formed in Boston and elsewhere for the purpose of hunting wild cattle on this island for their hides.

One of the party reports having seen over 800 head of cattle and many foxes, some of which were black. Unfortunately we have no dates from which to arrive at its former size, except that furnished by loss of area since the establishment of the government life saving station, during which time (85 years) it has been reduced to one-half its extent.

This is independent of charts and surveys which some have thought may not have been reliable, but such changes as necessitated the removal of buildings, light-house, etc.

I am not at liberty to assert that the present rate of deundation has been in force ever since those early voyagers visited the island. Nevertheless, after careful consideration and allowing for periods of comparative repose it may have enjoyed, I think I am warranted in placing the dimensions of this island at the time of its occupancy by the French convicts at least equal to an area of 80 miles in length, 10 miles in breadth, and a height not less than 300 feet, with an extensive harbor, having a northern entrance and a safe approach.

I do not believe an island of smaller extent so situated and surrounded by the same influence would at the end of 280 years be above the breakers.

As late as 50 years ago it had a commodious harbor, to which fishing vessels on the banks would run for on approach of a storm.

During a gale in 1836 its entrance was closed, shutting in two American vessels, whose ribs are now buried in the sands.

Early English charts show an entrance on the north side, which, in consequence of the depth of water on this side, would render approach thereto quite safe.

At that time also the survey gave the elevation of the sand cliffs as 200 feet, which enabled vessels to make the harbor more readily. A shallow lagoon now exists in its stead, separated from the ocean by a narrow ridge of sand.

In order to show the ravages committed by storms and currents on this island I will enumerate a few instances.