



**Town of Greenwich**  
**Department of Parks & Recreation - Programs**  
**Town Hall - 101 Field Point Road - Greenwich, CT 06836-2540**  
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## **Great Captains Island**

**Location:** 1.5 miles from mainland. Accessible by ferry from Arch St. dock (ferry varies according to tides) and by private boat.

**Directions :** Ferry boat from Island Beach Dock, Left onto Soundview Dr. Right onto Arch St. go under Railroad Bridge, and I-95 Bridge turning right into Parking lot after traffic light.

**Size:** 17.2 Acres

**Hr. of Operation:**

**Parking:** anchoring of boats off shore

### **Facilities:**

There are 2 areas that include a conservation area for the island habitat, and an active recreation area that includes a beach area, boat mooring, shelter and rest rooms. Public bathing is permitted; camping is permitted through the Town of Greenwich Parks & Recreation Dept. (requires permit)

- A. Changing Rooms: Restrooms, 2 water fountains
- B. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Mondays from 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. in June thru Monday (Labor Day) according to tides

## **Great Captain's Island**

Great Captain's Island is open year round. During the summer months, there is a ferry service from the Arch Street dock with the Schedule varying according to the Tides. Parking is available at the Island Beach lot across Arch Street.

For over a century this picturesque island with its crescent shape beaches located about 1 mile off the Greenwich Shore was vigorously claimed by both New York and Connecticut. In 1879, the dispute was finally resolved with the island acknowledged to be under Connecticut's jurisdiction.

The "Captain" of the title reportedly memorializes Captain Daniel Patrick, a partner in the first recorded real estate transaction in Greenwich in the 1640's and the Town's first military commander.

The middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed different schemes for private development of the island. They ranged from an exclusive club compound to a casino subsequently destroyed by fire to finally a vacation colony for employees of a Port Chester Company.

In 1966, the Town of Greenwich purchased 13 acres of the Island for \$ 90,000 from the Aerotech Corporation. The remaining three and a half acres surrounding the Lighthouse were acquired from the U.S. government in 1973. The handsome stone lighthouse was erected in 1868, today it is occupied by the caretaker and his family, replaced a wooden structure built in 1829.

Great Captain's Island has been largely preserved in its natural state as a productive habitat for different species of birds, many of which use it as a stopover point in their annual migrations. Visible across the lagoon in June and July are large colonies of nesting Egrets and Herons. Not far from the lighthouse you can spot a tall Osprey nesting platform erected in 1974 by Town officials and the Greenwich Garden Club. Do not miss the sight of the giant boulders below the lighthouse cliff - a highly visible reminder of the glacier's power to move and shape our Connecticut shoreline. A trail system has been laid out to afford sanctuary for wildlife as well as to permit the visitor to enjoy different scenic vistas of the Sound and distant shores.

The western portion of the island is reserved for active recreation with swimming permitted in posted areas. Picnic tables, grills, and restrooms are available.

Few communities rival Greenwich in its island holdings. Great Captain's Island is deservedly a cherished spot for quiet walks, bird watching and peaceful beach side relaxation.

*Mary Young*

## **Great Captain's Island**

Location: 1.5 miles from mainland. Accessible by ferry boat from the Arch Street Dock and private boat.

Size: 17.2 Acres

### **Natural Features:**

Great Captain's Island includes an active recreation area, a natural area, and a managed conservation area. The recreation area has a beach, boat mooring, shelter and rest rooms. The upland section was once a lawn and is now grown over with Oak, Hickory, Ash, Cherry, Tree of Heaven, and Sassafras. A rockweed cove and saltmarsh lagoon are found on the southern side in the natural area. Some cut over shrubs may be found here also. A path through the natural areas leads to the lighthouse. Openings maintained in the dense growth around the lighthouse increase the variety of habitat. Green Heron, Black and Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Mallards, Flickers, Grackles and Sparrows have been sighted. Fiddler Crabs, prawns, Finfish, Shell Fish, and Sea Cucumbers inhabit the shallows.

The island is a remnant of a glacial moraine. It contains a diversity of rock types- gneiss, schist, granite-with a very large glacial erratic on the southern side. The Eastern and western sections are connected by a tombolo - sand or gravel bar.

### **History:**

George III of England granted Great Captain's Island to John Anderson in 1763. The Island takes its name from a legend that claims that Captain Kidd buried a treasure of gold and silver on the Island.

In 1868 a lighthouse was constructed on the eastern point of the Island. The lighthouse keeper, his assistant and their families kept chickens and cows and maintained a garden and lived a nearly self-sufficient existence. The remainder of the island was used for camping, fishing, swimming, and hunting until 1926 when the island was sold to a developer.

In 1930, an exclusive seaside playground with a clubhouse for members only was opened. The timing couldn't have been worse. The market crashed in October of 1929 and it was not long before the club was unable to attract members and suffered foreclosure.

The town first acquired the island in 1944 through foreclosure for non-payment of taxes. It later sold the property to the Port-Green Corporation of Greenwich. During its ownership of the island the clubhouse was destroyed by a fire in a freak accident while searching for a missing plane, the Coast Guard dropped flares on the club and it burned to the ground.

Another fire in 1955 destroyed the remaining club facilities. A new owner, Areotech Industries, bought the island as a recreation spot for its employees in 1955. It renamed the island Huckleberry Island and in 1957 built cabana cottages which were until the town purchased the island in 1966.

## **Park Development:**

From the outset, Great Captain's Island was to serve the dual purpose of recreation and conservation. The western portion is used for active recreation. It has a ferry dock, picnic tables, grills, and a beach.

The managed conservation area is located in the eastern portion. This area contains the "Coast Guard" automated foghorn and the old lighthouse which is now used as the caretaker's residence. Several quarter acre openings have been mowed in the dense shrub area to create a variety of habitats for wildlife. A shrub barrier has been planted on the top of the steep cliff east of the lighthouse.

Connecting the active recreation area and the managed conservation area is a natural area. Found here are a vegetated sand bar with a path and a lagoon. No boating is permitted in the lagoon and plant life to evolve naturally without the interference of man.

## **Recreational Uses:**

Access to the island is by private boat and public ferry. Ferry service varies with the tides. Public bathing is permitted and there is a changing room.

Camping is by permission of the Department of Parks & Recreation.

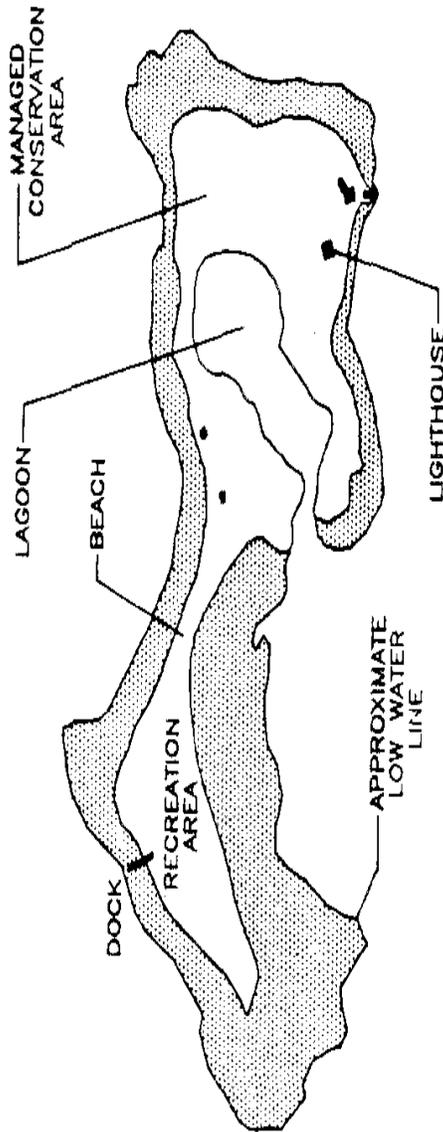
## **Facilities:**

Changing room  
Sporadic Ferry (according to tides)



BUILDING

APPROX. WATER AT HIGH TIDE



# GREAT CAPTAIN'S ISLAND