

Norton Point Openings Revised Timeline

Open	Duration	Closed	Duration
1660(?) – 1800 [1776 – 1800]	140 years 24 years	1698 Simon Athearn - Chappy, Cape Poge as islands ⁱ Based on Des Barres, Whiting and Freeman] ⁱⁱ	
		1800 – 1800	Few months
1800-1869	69 years		
		1869 – 1886	17 years
1870 – VG refers to attempt to open at west end			
1873 – 1 st Serious unsuccessful attempt at opening. US engineers. \$20,000			
1886 ⁱⁱⁱ – 1903 ^{iv}	17 years		
1919 – Attempted opening by “Katama Bay Trench Association”			
		1903 – 1921	18 years
1921–1937 Artificial	16 years		
1932 – Effort to start a new opening at 1921 cut as old cut closing and little circulation. By 1938 opening was still present at E end. So still open when 1937 cut made to west.			
1937–1950(?) Artificial	13 years ^v	2 nd opening appeared E of one cut in 1937	
		1950 – 1953	3 years
1953 – 1969(?)	16 years	2 nd opening in 1954	
		1969 – 1976	7 years
1970 – ACE – proposed 10-ft high berm S of S Beach			
1976 – 1977	1 year		
1976 – George Silva attempted to close breach			
		1977 – 2007	30 years
1991 – Hurrigan Bob overwash with no outflow and so brief opening			
2007 – 2013	6 years		
TOTALS	278 years	79:21	75 years
Total-Whiting	138 years	65:35	75 years

ⁱ According to Gookin (1612 – 1697) Chappaquiddick means “place of the separate island”

ⁱⁱ Des Barres 1775 map shows an inlet.

Whiting 1869 (72) says “There is the tradition of a continuous beach, and the closing of all inlets, as at present, in the early part of this century; and that people passed with teams from the main island to Chappaquiddick; but that the link was only temporary, a new opening breaking through the beach again in a few months after it was closed. With this exception, there is no record or tradition of the non-existence of an inlet through Cotamy Beach since this section of the coast has been known.”

Freeman 1802 says: The head of Old Town Harbor is Matakeeset Bay, which communicates by a strait, fifty rods wide and four feet deep at high water. The strait is nominated Washqua Outlet and it lies between Washqua Point on the east and Waqua Point on the west. This outlet is continually altering in its breadth; and there is always in it a rapid tide. About the year 1792 it was entirely blocked up with sand, and remained shut during six months; at the end of which it was again opened by a north-east storm: it was never shut before or since. The beach, which extends west from Waqua Point, and which is the barrier between Matakeeset Bay and the ocean, is from fifty to sixty rods wide, and about three miles long.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Whiting - “. . . After a gale from the ENE, the wind shifted to WSW, still blowing a gale. The ‘west beach’ as the portion west of the new inlet is now called, was quite low before this gale occurred, and after the shift of wind, the whole beach . . . was a ‘breaker’ [overwashed by surf]. A very high tide, one of the highest in this locality since the Minot gale, accompanied this storm. The general opinion is that at the time of the high tide of the bay the opening was first made by the out-going or southerly current. As soon as the beach could be visited for observation the opening was already, by estimate, about one hundred yards in width. . . .”

^{iv} TD – VG March 19, 1903 “Mattakesett creek was dug by the town to take advantage of the opening and to allow the herring to run up into the herring pond. . . .” Herring only run when breach open? Or do they also run through Edgartown?

^v TD hasn’t confirmed date for end of breach – assumes 1950