



Gardner's Beacon

CAPE ANN AND SALEM PLANTER



Thomas Gardner Society

Founded 2010

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We can take a look at the family's imprint in New England by considering a few houses, namely some of those structures that have been well documented to have a Gardner association. The first four of the houses were part of the lives of the 1st and 2nd generations; a couple of these are still standing. Then, there are examples from later times (3rd generation, late colonial and early post-colonial). The last example is covered by an article that was graciously contributed by **John Goff**, a Thomas descendant, architect, and leader in preservation. Houses will continue as a topic; for instance, George (2nd gen) had a house in Peabody. It was still standing a century ago.

Background

As history might tell us, there were many motivations for people leaving their homeland and as many reactions of the new arrivals as they faced their new reality. For those leaving England, their experience and memory would have faded quickly as the harshness of the new situation settled on their minds. Just consider the shock. Everything would have been comparatively primitive if not downright dismal. Housing, if any, would have been thrown together with available material and would be far removed from anything familiar. The living situation was dire in so many ways that some, we learn, returned to the old country.



The story of Thomas and Margaret would stress that they bore the course, even if contemporary tales excluded them and their efforts. The one reference to Thomas, mentioned by Dr. Frank, was in a London meeting (pre-1630). Thankfully, we have Rev. Hubbard who had interviewed all of the principals in his effort to document the early period.

A lot has been written, since then, about the lives and times of those who were first on the scene in New England. Some of the material was from first-hand experience.

Thomas and Margaret, in their journey, did not have a chronicler. Fischer (in *Albion's Seed*) tells us that each family that came with Winthrop's fleet was supposed to keep a journal. Prior to that, we have Higginson's whose notes were published. Eventually, we got Rev. Hubbard and others who were writing within 100 years of the start.

The newsletter is sponsored by the Thomas Gardner Society (ThomasGardnerSociety.org).

The tales

Later, we have many types of retrospectives. Two in the last century are a good example. Stone & Fickett (*Every day life ...*) take topics of the day, use someone from the period for characterization, and fill in a sketch that could very well be converted to a script for a short video. Dow (*Every day life ...*) had more in-depth looks. For instance, he describes the sea journey for the typical migrant, as have several other authors. He has a chapter dealing with dwellings that goes into a lot of detail.

Early attempts mimicked the wigwams of the natives using heavier framing (Higginson wrote of this). Dow also goes into building methods which got better with tools and continued effort.



English Wigwam, First Two Covered with Bark
1712 Colonial Village, Salem, Massachusetts

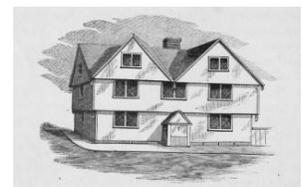
We would be remiss if we didn't mention re-creations, such as the Salem Pioneer Village 1630 (pictured above), and their historic re-enactments.

Cape Ann

We know that the 1623/24 arrival of Thomas and Margaret was in the Cape Ann area. At the time, the main activity that had occurred there was fishing and salting (with the required structures). Not only did the group have to put down roots, they were responsible for developing farming and fishing industries that could ship product back to England. One can easily imagine the travails suffered and issues that needed to be resolved.

In retrospect, we know that they succeeded, in the long run. After a couple of years, the group have to move west due to circumstances not allowing successful ventures.

The group did arrive with supplies. Part of this, evidently, was a house. Based upon the rendition done later, the house was other than could have been built locally, with the available tools. Conant (*History ...*) described the house. There aren't any dimensions given.



It was a 'great frame house' and, originally, would have



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been occupied by Thomas and Margaret. Endicott had the house moved to Salem. Higginson noted how it stood out from its more humble peers (Governor's Faire House, indeed, amongst the English wigwams).

There are several things to pursue about the house. For one, a scholarly paper on the house was written in 1860. Too, the group must have developed gardens, and other resources, in the Cape Ann area. That is, the documented 'failure' was exporting; the group, itself, was thriving. Conant didn't report finding anyone starving. On the move to Salem, and until Endicott moved the house, someone must have stayed to maintain property. Too, was the house shared?

Several such questions are of interest.

Sarah (Gardner) Balch

Sarah, the oldest daughter of Thomas and Margaret, married Benjamin Balch, the oldest son of John Balch. Both John and Benjamin were on the ship that brought Thomas and the group to Cape Ann.

John Balch built a house, in Beverly, on property that he got in 1635 as part of the 'old planter' grant. Parts of this house may have been built earlier than the 1680 estimate given by modern analysis. John was known to live on the property that he received.



Sarah and John, who married in 1650, are the ancestors of all of the Balchs in the U.S.

Joseph and Ann (Downing) Gardner

Ann's father, Emanuel built the house in Salem. When her parents returned to England, they gave the property to the couple as a gift. Joseph and Ann had married in 1656.



Felt (*Annals* ...) who provides an engraving of the house which stood where we now find the Peabody-Essex Museum wrote that the house would have renewed the "emigrant's associations of domestic art in the land of the fathers." At the time it was built, the house was most likely the largest house in Massachusetts, if not New

England. Without the Puritan constraints, Connecticut was the site of several large houses, the size being suggested by the number of chimneys.

Joseph died in the King Philip war in 1675. Ann married Simon Bradstreet for whom the 'mansion' was named. On Ann's death, the house went to Joseph's nephews. After its useful life was over, in part as an inn and tavern, the house was demolished. Fortunately, an etching was done so that we can marvel at the accomplishment.

Ruth (Gardner) Coffin

Mary was the daughter of John who with his sister, Sarah, can claim to have been born in pre-Endicott Massachusetts. John, and his brother Richard, had moved to Nantucket in order to have a more peaceful situation.



Mary married Jethro Coffin, who was descendant of Tristram, in 1686. The couple received the house which is now the oldest house on Nantucket as a wedding gift.

Ebenezer Gardner

The house, at Machiasport, ME, was built in 1776 after Ebenezer's family had to leave Nova Scotia under pressure from the Loyalists. The family started over in Maine.

Ebenezer was a descendant of Samuel through his son Abel. Ebenezer's father died early, and he was raised by his uncle, Jonathan, whose grandson built the Gardner-Pingree house (next). Ebenezer moved north and had established a farm, in Nova Scotia, prior to the start of the hostilities. He recovered and lived to the age of 97.

Ebenezer's house is part of the Micmac Farms.

Gardner-Pingree – by John Goff

One of Salem's finest Federal style landmarks, and one still clearly associated with Thomas Gardner's Gardner family, is the John Gardner Jr. House or Gardner-Pingree House. This finely preserved three story brick edifice now owned by the Peabody Essex Museum is sited in downtown Salem at 128 Essex Street. It stands on the north side of Essex Street near the Crowninshield-Bentley House not far from the Hawthorne Hotel.



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Over 200 years old and built in 1804-1805, the Gardner-Pingree House was designed by Salem's famed woodcarver and architect Samuel McIntire for John Gardner, Jr., described by Salem architectural historian Bryant Tolles as a "prosperous Salem merchant." In 1983, Tolles, in *Architecture in Salem*, noted "this beautifully proportioned and precisely detailed mansion is generally regarded as one of the most outstanding Adamesque Federal townhouses in the United States and **perhaps the premier example in New England.**"

At a time when most houses and urban structures in Salem were still built of wood, but vast new fortunes were being made through the maritime trades, Gardner's House was built to showcase the potential of brick as a superior building material. Although costly, brick was preferred for its fire-resistant qualities and its greater resistance to dampness. With a shallow hip roof mostly concealed by a wooden balustrade above the third floor level, the Gardner-Pingree House reads as a refined urban mansion designed with carefully proportioned openings and bays, in the Italian Renaissance tradition. The three floors are clearly marked and divided by brick beltcourses or stringcourses that run horizontally around the house, identifying the floors as a strong "base", "middle" and "top."

The five bay house with mostly 6/6 windows, splayed brownstone lintels, and end chimneys was designed around a generous central entry hall accessed by a 6-paneled wooden front door. The door and sidelights were positioned beneath a gracious elliptical fanlight. A half-round portico with hand-carved Corinthian columns and pilasters additionally marks the house as special, while displaying the woodcarving and design talents of Salem's Scottish descended Samuel McIntire.

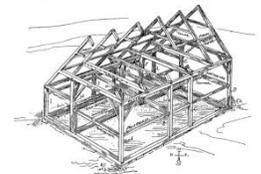


In 1811, after the crippling Jefferson Embargo, Gardner sold his mansion to the Salem merchant Nathaniel West. West later sold the house to merchant Capt. Joseph White. In 1830, the house became the setting of a White murder. Historians note "The murder shocked the town ... and ... inspired Nathaniel Hawthorne to write about it in his short story, "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe".

Architecturally, the Gardner-Pingree House influenced the design of many later Federal style brick houses built around the nearby Salem Common. It stands as an important reminder of the early prestige and standing of the Gardners. It also survives as proof that great wealth was generated through Salem's maritime trades, and that Samuel McIntire possessed architectural genius.

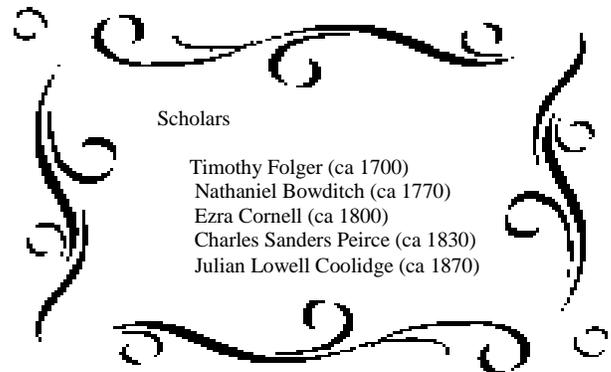
Houses and their structures

Useful house structures depend upon several factors, such as material, tools, ability, and more. The 'great frame' house obviously came with the crew. But, they had to erect the thing, and do so at some cost to their time and energies. Many frames types soar, such as the 'great frame' and Joseph's and Ann's house. But, there was a New England hybrid that made a lot of sense, given the winters. It is essentially an extended lean-to, such as we see with the Coffin house on Nantucket. For more discussion on these early dwellings, see Dow.



The Frame of an Old-time, Leaned House - the Warrant, Marston House, Haverhill, Mass. Built in 1760. From *How to Build a House*, 1904. Courtesy of the Wright Building

One goal for the Thomas Gardner Society will be to collect, and hopefully organize, material that references, even if indirectly, the lives and time of Thomas and Margaret and to construct a coherent view for future generations. However sketchy this material might be in the beginning, future research can help flesh out the story. The works of Dr. Frank A. Gardner, and prior work by others, establish the basis. The Beacon, and its corresponding blog, has tasks related to supporting this effort. Another approach would be support for scholarly papers.



Scholars

- Timothy Folger (ca 1700)
- Nathaniel Bowditch (ca 1770)
- Ezra Cornell (ca 1800)
- Charles Sanders Peirce (ca 1830)
- Julian Lowell Coolidge (ca 1870)

We are inviting contributions of articles in regard to the Thomas Gardner families.
Contact: algswtlk@thomasgardnersociety.org