



# Gardner's Beacon

CAPE ANN AND SALEM PLANTER



Thomas Gardner Society

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Prior to the arrival of Thomas Gardner and Margaret at Cape Ann, there had been a lot of activity along the New England coast for some time. For instance, John Cabot was there as a very early explorer funded by England. Then, Newfoundland had been colonized since the late 1500s and had attained a population of thousands by the time of the Cape Ann venture.

Even closer to the Cape Ann area, Maine had an early settlement attempt, under Sir John Popham, that was concurrent with Jamestown in Virginia in 1607. The Maine effort but did not lose any member; too, they built a vessel that endured ocean voyages.

By 1608, there had been annual fishing trips from England to the area around Cape Ann. One bit of wisdom that came from these fishing experiences was the need for settlements on this side of the waters. The annual fishing effort lost time due to the need to travel to New England prior to fishing. At that time, round trips could take two months or more.

Around 1614, Captain John Smith explored the coast from Maine south. About that time, there were attempts to establish colonies in the area of the Massachusetts coast, but the main deterrent for those earlier attempts was the threat of hostilities by the natives. No settler was willing to attempt such a dangerous undertaking.

### Dorchester Company

Given the recognition of the need for local presence that would cut the roundtrip requirement, the Dorchester Company was formed by Rev. John White. By the 1623/24 timeframe, the Company was able to prepare for and to send a group whose intent was to found a permanent settlement. Thomas Gardner was the lead for the plantation; his co-leader, John Tylly, was in charge of the fishing.

Not only was there to be a permanent settlement which would cut the travel to one trip a year, it was expected that the settlers would send product back to England. That is, the settlers were expected to produce beyond a sustenance level in very short order.

### Cape Ann

Cape Ann is a rocky cape that is northeast of Boston. It got its name from Charles I of England who had been debriefed by Captain John Smith after his explorations. Charles I named the area for his mother.

As is customary with a business, the Company expected to turn a profit. In this case, the expectations were for a fairly quick establishment of excess production. But, it turned out that the area was not suitable for producing excess either for foods or for fish.

For foods, the land proved to be too rocky. But, the settlers were able to feed themselves and others. The area was heavy with vegetation including edibles, such as berries of various sorts.

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Winthrop feasted on Cape Ann strawberries at the celebration of his arrival in 1630.

In terms of fishing, the Plymouth Company which was based to the south had used the area for smoking of the fish that they had caught in the area. By the time of the Dorchester venture, the area must have been fished for a long while; getting a good day's catch required longer voyages and time on the part of the crews.

### Thomas/Margaret and the Great House

Thomas and Margaret brought their kids; then, they had further children at Cape Ann (and, later, Salem). From several reports, the natives were friendly and related well to Thomas as a leader.

The settlers did get plantings in. As well, they erected what became known as a "Great House" using materials that they had brought on the voyage. The house would have been completed that first year. No doubt, Thomas and his family enjoyed it for a brief period of time; it was not too long after they were settled that the folks at Cape Ann faced Roger Conant who came in with his entourage. Some say that it was England's reaction to no product being sent back, however Roger was already in New England. Too, expecting results within the first year is more than unrealistic.

At the time of Roger's arrival in 1625, Thomas would have learned that he had been replaced. Roger was the new boss. Hence, Roger and his family took over the house. Thomas and Margaret and their kids exhibited the first case of the true American spirit when they vacated and moved, most likely, into the New England wigwam that was the standard dwelling at the time.

Now, we know that Roger found out, in short order, the true nature of the colony's experience in trying to produce excess crop. Too, he knew the obligation that had been imposed by England. In other words, Roger learned that there would be no shipments back to his brother and to Rev. John. So, he suggested that they move the colony to an area that would be more supportive of production.

Once that decision was approved, Roger took a crew to Naumkeag. Many historical accounts suggest that move was a once-and-done deal like the modern family loading into a moving van (say, United) and high-tailing it across the country. How did this notion come to be?

### After Roger left

We know that in 1626, the group and its future went over to Naumkeag settled in the new area which became Salem. New dwellings were built. Plantings were put in.

But, they also had mature plantings at Cape Ann. These were left to produce. Too, there was the house. No doubt, Thomas and



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Margaret stayed behind to take care of the house. And, by doing so, they kept it from getting into a state of disrepair.

In fact, when John Endicott showed up in 1628, he saw Thomas in the house and liked it so much that he had it moved to Salem. It was at its new site when the house impressed Higginson in 1629 such that it is now known to history. Also, the house allowed Endicott to play host to the arriving John Winthrop, in 1630. It was at that feast, as recorded by Winthrop, that the crew went over to Cape Ann for some fresh strawberries.

### Finally, the movement to Salem

After the Great House had been moved, there would have been no reason for the couple to stay at Cape Ann. They had their children's future to consider. But, their lives at Salem were a lot different. The large influx of people swamped resources. The winter of 1629/30 saw a huge number of people die due to the lack of food and inadequate housing. The count of deaths was in the 80s; those deaths occurred with a planned venture.

Thomas must have provided well for his family as they survived. And, they must have enjoyed their lives. The couple educated their kids: Thomas, Jr. and Joseph worked as lawyers in their adulthood; both Richard and John were known to be very educated; George and Samuel exhibited the qualities of being effective adults; and the couple's daughters married husbands who contributed to establishing the new land.

### Thomas' and Margaret's Times (Annals)

**Before 1623/4** – Thomas, Margaret and the early kids are in England.

**1623/4** – Thomas and Margaret arrive with two boys. John is born at Cape Ann.

**1626/1629** – Thomas and Margaret spend their time in Cape Ann taking care of the house, the plantings in the area and their children. John Endicott had the house moved to Salem.

**1629/30** – The first winter in Salem was terrible for the colonists. Endicott had brought a lot with him who swamped resources, and the deaths were due largely to lack of food and inadequate housing.

**1636** – Sons, Thomas and George, got land grants from Salem signifying their adulthood.

**1660** – Daughter #2, Miriam Hill, died in Salem.

**1675** – Son #6, Joseph, died in Narragansett Swamp.

**1679** – Son #2, George, died in Salem.

**1682** – Son #1, Thomas, died in Salem.

**1686** – Daughter #1, Sarah Balch, died in Beverly.

**1688** – Son #3, Richard, died in Nantucket.

**1689** – Son #5, Samuel, died in Salem.

**1706** – Son #4, John, died in Nantucket.

**1707** – Daughter #3, Seeth Grafton, died in Salem.

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**Charles Goodyear:** (1800-1860) Born in New Haven, CT, Charles was a descendant of Demaris Shattuck Gardner through her son, Samuel. Charles learned the hardware business early and, with his father, manufactured agricultural implements. After that business failed due to the economy at the times, Charles began to experiment with India rubber that was inexpensive but had a tendency of rotting when used in a product, such as a life preserver. Through a long period of experimentation, product design, and observation of quality, Charles eventually was able to vulcanize rubber such that it was stable enough for lasting products. Unfortunately, Charles was not able to get a British patent and to enjoy the rewards of his knowledge. However, four decades after his death, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company was named, in his honor, by Frank Sieberling.

### Step-descendants:

- Nathaniel Gorham (1738-1796)
- Charles Goodyear (1800-1860)
- John Marshall Harlan (1833-1911)
- Henry Sloane Coffin (1877-1954)
- Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)
- Sandra Day O'Connor (1930- )
- ...

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