



# Gardner's Beacon

CAPE ANN AND SALEM PLANTER



Thomas Gardner Society

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Each year, scores of countries celebrate their Independence Day which commemorates the start of independent statehood. The movement toward freedom for all of these countries followed the example of the United States, set in 1776 with adoption of the Declaration of Independence. The citizenry of the United States celebrates thusly each year on the Fourth of July.

The freedom declared in the United States resulted in war with the Kingdom of Great Britain. This war, whose conflicts had started prior to the Declaration, continued until the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The north, principally Massachusetts, was the first ground to run red with American blood.



As we celebrate the day, a look at how all this came about seems to be in order, as the war with Britain was a family fight that took place not too long after the arrival of settlers, such as Thomas Gardner. Let's review some history and mention the various roles played by some of Thomas' descendants.

The proper view would consider the contribution of a document that was signed, in 1215, by King John with strong recommendations by his lords. To quote Winston Churchill, about the document: "here is a law which is above the King and which even he must not break. This reaffirmation of a supreme law and its expression in a general charter is the great work of the **Magna Carta**; and this alone justifies the respect in which men have held it." The **Magna Carta** gave rights to all freeman and was to apply to their heirs forever.

It was a mere 400 years after this signing that we saw the mass influx, to the New World, of people who knew that their freedoms had not been fully realized in the many ways, economical, political, and religious. By this time, progress in transportation and communication had brought to general awareness that lands were available across the ocean, albeit that these had already been populated.

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The movement started with a trickle that accelerated to a high rate, for a little over a decade. Changes at home stemmed the flow, for awhile.

Naturally, removing from the mother country to the new frontier would awaken in many the latent thoughts of their inalienable, as expressed by Thomas Jefferson, rights. After the original entries in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was another 150 years before independence became clear enough as a concept to invoke action. During that time, much turmoil in the mother country prevented strict oversight of the colonials. In other words, a lot of self-governance took place as people learned how to live free on these shores.

It was after its conflicts were resolved, that the mother country turned its attention to those over here. The new attention grated against the independent streak that had developed over the course of the years. Too, both King George III and Parliament seemed to not understand that the colonials wanted representation, at least. Though, one wonders how well that would have set since such would be far from the ideal of complete freedom.

Rather than compromise, the overlords made increasing demands that were not popular, many of these dealing with taxes. Of course, there was push-back from the colonies that frustrated those in the mother country. Some envoys who were sent over found themselves subject to mob abuse.

There were many efforts made to keep a peaceful relationship in place as not a few of the colonials were 'loyal' to the crown. But, the mother country sent over more and more troops, which house sat on private property, ate food that ought to have fed colonials, and committed other atrocities. 'Civilized behavior?' one might ask.

But, the efforts at peace came to no avail. Aristocracy is born deaf, evidently. Hence, the inevitable conflict ensued with costly damages on both sides. The colonials had no standing army. People were willing, for the most part, to serve. Some had obtained experience by participating in the various conflicts that had occurred under the auspices of the King and were able to make use of their knowledge. One example was Washington who was made the military leader. But, as things wore on, there was little in the way of provisions, beyond what could be provided by the local populace.



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As the population was decimated by people going to war, crops and other necessary functions were not handled properly. Added to that was the destructive effect of war on an environment. Essentially, people suffered greatly in order to obtain their free state.

In the colonies, there had been many flare ups and conflicts beginning with the earliest times. All of these, to that of the Revolution, were under the auspices of the king, or the mother country. With events leading up to 1776, and after, colonials were on their own, starting from scratch in an effort to build a country, establish a set of laws, and much more. All sorts of roles went into the eventual success that was a long-time coming.



### Thomas Gardner patriots, brief listing:

Thomas Gardner (ca 1731 – 1788)  
Simon Stacey Gardner (ca 1743 – 1787)  
Samuel Gardner (ca 1736 – 1818)  
Capt Benjamin Gardner (ca 1757 – 1813)  
Capt Jonathan Gardner (ca 1755 – 1821)  
James Gardner (ca 1762 – 1809)

Nathaniel Gorham (ca 1738 – 1796)

**Capt John Gardner** (ca 1706 -- 1784, Salem, MA) John led a horse troop, in 1744 as a younger man during the period of the French & Indian wars. Later, in support of America, John was on a committee that carried "into execution the resolves of the American Congress." The First Continental Congress had met in September of 1774 and adopted responses to the Acts of the British Parliament that were considered intolerable. One duty was to enforce the boycott of British goods which were being heavily taxed.

**Capt Jonathan Gardner** (ca 1728 – 1791, Salem, MA) Jonathan fought in the French & Indian War and commanded a privateer. In the War of Revolution, he had both civil and military duties. In his civilian role, he was on numerous committees, such as the Committee of Correspondence that acted as a 'shadow government.' As a military officer, he served in the Battle of Rhode Island in 1778 in which the Americans attempted to take back Narragansett Bay from the British. Jonathan was described by diarist William Bentley thusly: A most useful Citizen, of amiable temper, inflexible integrity, and a sober friend to all useful, social & religious institutions.

**Ebenezer Gardner** (ca 1737, 1832, Salem, MA) Ebenezer in his youth moved to Nova Scotia. He was a member of the committee of safety which had started to appear in the 1760s as a means to organize colonials in response to the actions of the "distrusted royal government." As things heated up, Ebenezer went to Boston to seek protection for patriots in the Provinces. In 1776, the colonials attempted to defeat Fort Cumberland with local volunteers, including Ebenezer, and some volunteers from Massachusetts. Ebenezer and his family had to flee south when the British burned their farm. After his family found shelter in Maine, Ebenezer served in Col. Benjamin Foster's Regiment. He was involved in the Battle of Machias in 1777 in which the British attempted to land in Maine. But, they were repelled. Post the war, Ebenezer was offered 1000 acres near Bangor, but he, and his family, chose to stay at Machias where his home still stands as an active bed & breakfast.

**Benjamin Balch** (ca 1743 – 1815, Dedham, MA) Benjamin graduated from Harvard in 1763. After serving in several cities, he became a chaplain (Lt) in the Company raised in Danvers in 1775. This company participated in the Battle of Lexington. After serving as chaplain with ground troops, Benjamin served on navel vessels. In Nov, 1776, Congress established the chaplaincy to perform, twice a day, "divine service" unless there was bad weather or other preventing circumstances. Benjamin served on the Frigate Alliance under Capt John Barry. On the way to France in 1781, the ship came under attack by the British, and Benjamin earned the nickname of "The Fighting Parson" as he grabbed a musket, due to the intensity of the fighting, and fought fiercely. Benjamin was the first chaplain of the Continental Navy. His father, Benjamin, had served a similar role with the Royal Navy. Benjamin's son, William, was the first chaplain of the U.S. Navy, obtaining a commission in 1798.

**Henry Gardner** (ca 1747 – 1817, Salem) Henry left his property in Salem, in 1775, including a couple of schooners and land, and took his family to Newfoundland for the duration of the war. He returned in 1781. Prior to his leaving, he left instructions for the crop of that year to be used for the poor. He continued to pay taxes during his absence. He saw to it that American prisoners were being treated well. He gave monies to prisoners who were returning from captivity.

This issue is the second of a long series, we hope. We are inviting contributions of articles in regard to the Thomas Gardner families.  
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