



# Gardner's Beacon

CAPE ANN AND SALEM PLANTER



Thomas Gardner Society

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The newsletter is sponsored by the Thomas Gardner Society ([ThomasGardnerSociety.org](http://ThomasGardnerSociety.org)).

Genealogy coupled with an historical view can help us learn about the past. This year, as the Nation celebrates its Independence, we can consider events, in that time, that followed a few years later.

The American Revolution had been an ordeal of "eight anxious, bitter years." After its culmination, the young country had to recover, to pay its debt, and to exert efforts to establish its identity. Massachusetts, itself, was on the hook for 1.75M pounds. It took some time, but commerce was helped along its recovery by the New England ability to build ships of all sizes resulting in a boom of seafaring trade.

From the end of the Revolutionary war onward, there was continual harassment, by its old rival and others, along several fronts: the borders, the sea, and the west. The long border with Canada separated the U.S. from the loyalists who had to move north with many losing their U.S. property. Later, American patriots moved north, too. But, their interest was more peaceful and personal; they did not attempt to grab the desirable land for the U.S.

Too, the seas for a long while were not safe for American ships due to factors such as pirates and continuing conflicts between England and France. The Royal Navy had a continual need for muscle and saw no problem with impressing American citizens into service. During the time, hundreds of ships were taken. The number lost may have been partly offset with later U.S. privateering efforts but not fully.



Finally, there was trouble on the western boundaries when expansionists ran against the Native American's attempt to set a foothold in the mid-west (Northwest Territory) after being pushed out of the eastern regions. The English helped support the tribal efforts at maintaining their way of life in that new region.

### Rumors of war

By the 1800s (as early as 1794), there had been sufficient incidents against American interests to

cause outrage in some of the populace. For instance, a case in 1807 involved an English sailor who wanted to defect. The Americans gave him shelter as they had before with others. The Royal Navy got their deserter back but also took some U.S. seamen.

Though many Americans called for revenge, not all wanted to pursue such actions.



New England, despite the losses, had a number of the families that had become very wealthy from trade. Many of these families would be seriously impacted by embargoes and the war. At one point, the Newburyport district itself, during an embargo, had 170 seagoing vessels, while Salem had over 110, sitting in the harbor.

The southern states suffered, too, and much more. Not only did their exports suffer from the embargoes and ship captures, the Royal Navy welcomed their escaped slaves.

Hence, events moved the countries toward conflict. Yet, not only was the U.S. not prepared for war, the English did not want a conflict as they were heavily involved with fighting France (and Napoleon). America was supposedly neutral in this affair, but commerce with France was attractive. In short, there was war talk for many years. To prevent the occurrence, in early 1812, an appeasement offer was sent from London, but communications were slow in those days.

### Vagaries of War

Before the peace offer, from London, could be considered, James Madison had already sent a message to Congress in early June detailing the harms that the U.S. citizens had been experiencing. Congress acted, and war was declared. The President signed the war declaration on June 18, 1812.

Then, nothing happened except for exchanging words. Neither side was prepared (or capable, in certain terms) to endure war on the American continent. There had been regional efforts as early as 1807, such as the Light Infantry units (**Samuel Gardner Derby/Salem, Simon Gardner/Boston**). And, it took time for England to move resources across the seas. The U.S. had to get funding issues resolved and to arm a military presence.



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Another early example, in 1798, of public support was the offer by builders in Newburyport to provide a vessel for the (still unborn) U.S. Navy. They launched the 355-ton Merrimack after only 74 days of construction plus 14 days to outfit. She carried 20 cannons.

However, even during the time of the War (1812-1815), some Americans continued to discuss the pros and cons. We know that this can occur with any conflict. Many New Englanders were against the war and were rumored to favor a separation from the U.S. in order to have peaceful relations with the 'mother' country. One sentiment was expressed, thusly: *This nefarious declaration of war is nothing more nor less than a license given by a Virginian vassal of the French Emperor to the English nation authorizing them in legal form to destroy the prosperity of New England.*

These arguments demonstrated a definite regional flavor which was to play a large part in the events about fifty years later.

In the early 1800s, though, there were three of these regions: New England, the Southern sphere, and the near west. It was the last region that saw the first incidents of conflict which did not turn out well for the Americans. Many times over the next few years, outcomes would be uncertain.

The tide seemed to turn in England's favor in 1814 when they finally could withdraw from their conflict with the French. In brief, it was a back and forth affair, fortunately culminating in New Orleans and the victory by Jackson's troops.

## War's aftermath

Some of the War's effects are well known. The U.S. Capitol was burned. But, American troops burned York (Toronto). On the seas, the Royal Navy ruled, however the U.S. launched, and rewarded, many privateers. Too, Francis Scott Keys' poem was written when Fort McHenry



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

was attacked and later became the National Anthem.

One might say that it was a war of attrition. Trade was hampered resulting in much cost. Everyone knew that we would be better off with peaceful commerce.

Some of the aftermath will be of further interest. The U. S. Navy became funded sufficiently to become a power at sea. Internal expansion became greater as the population spread across the country out to the Pacific. Native Americans continued to lose ground to this widening influence.

The War of 1812 had an impact on many New England families who had been successful at commerce, including Gardner families. Some of these will be looked at further.

**John Gardner** (ca 1770) -- with his brother, Richard, he had a successful seafaring business. He and his wife built a house on their property in Salem. Due to losses related in this period, they had to sell their house which is today known as the Gardner-Pingree House (part of the Peabody Essex Museum).

**Samuel Knapp Gardner** (ca 1780) -- was part-owner of the brig Sally that was captured by the French. He was later captured and spent time at Dartmoor.

**Ann Peal Gardner** (ca 1800) -- married Samuel A. Tucker who had served on vessels beginning as a powder boy. Samuel was imprisoned at Halifax and at Dartmoor (for 26 months).

Note: **Dartmoor** was built to handle French prisoners. But, it was used for Americans, as well. Between 1812 and 1816, fifteen hundred prisoners died and were buried there. Some of this was from mistreatment. An American cemetery has been maintained by an U.S. Society.

## War of 1812, of the period

- Gideon Gardner (ca 1750)
- Nathaniel Bowditch (ca 1770)
- Mayhew Folger (ca 1770)
- Joseph Gardner Swift (ca 1780)
- Lucretia Coffin Mott (ca 1790)
- ...

