

A Story of Boylston Clay and Its Ties to a Line of Veterans

Part III

By Inga Milbauer

*This story began with a cup made of Boylston clay by Alice Maud Hazard,
the granddaughter of one of Boylston's Civil War Veterans, Theodore Hazard*

As described in Part II of this story, Theodore Hazard (1834-1891) and his wife, Cynthia Ann Messer (1836-1891) were living in Nashua, New Hampshire where their son George was born in December 1858. They moved to Boylston soon thereafter.¹ Both Theodore and Cynthia were born and grew up in Shirley, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. When Theodore was five years old, his first cousin Nahum Gardner Hazard from Lunenburg went missing on 2 September 1839. It turned out that Gardner, who was eight at the time, had been kidnapped! William Little, James Shearer and a Virginian man called Francis Wilkins, had plotted to kidnap several boys and sell them into slavery.

“They deceived the mothers by telling them that the boys were to get good pay, good schooling, and good situations in a hotel in Little Washington. When Squire Little came to the house to get the boys, the older Hazard, and the Mitchel boy hid in the woods, and could not be found, so Gardner was taken alone.”²

Gardner was taken to James Shearer (William Little's nephew) in Palmer, Massachusetts who delivered him to Francis Wilkins.

“Finally, Hazard arrived in Richmond [Virginia], and was put in the pen with others to be sold. He played marbles with the other boys for a time, but finally tiring of that asked for a book to read...His request for a book caused great astonishment and led, of course, to questions as to his name, and place of residence. He proved that he could read, and persisted in telling the truth as to his home and name, despite the threats of Wilkins, who had rechristened him.”³

The authorities wrote to “the proprietor of the store at Shirley Centre, and the matter was brought to a happy close with the Massachusetts Governor ultimately dispatching an agent to bring Gardner home.”⁴

“A neighbor, Major Deacon William Brown, was sent south to collect the boy and the kidnapers — Francis Wilkinson, James Shearer, and William Little — were extradited to Massachusetts to await trial. The men had also been involved in the kidnapping of another Black child, eight-year-old Sidney Francis of Worcester.”⁵

As reporter Thomas Caywood describes in the Telegram's article *Worcester, Lunenburg boys abducted, then rescued from slave traders in 1839*, the news of the kidnapping reached Worcester on 19 September and caused widespread indignation. Gardner's mother finally found out what had happened to her son when George Bradburn of Boston arrived in Lunenburg to investigate the circumstances of Nahum's abduction on Thursday, 26 September (which was Nahum's 9th birthday).

“The mother had no further knowledge of him till I informed her that he was in Richmond, Va., having been rescued from the hands of kidnapers,” Mr. Bradburn reported in his account.⁶

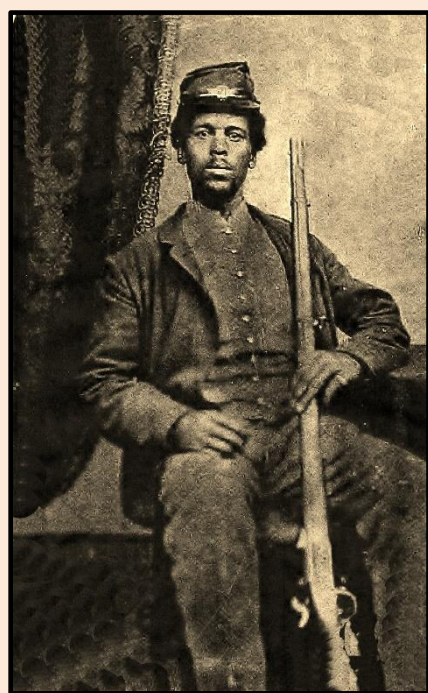
Francis Wilkinson escaped from jail in Richmond before he could be brought to Massachusetts to stand trial. The two other men were tried in the Worcester Court of Common Pleas in Lincoln Square on 23 January 1840.

“The jurors deliberated less than an hour before returning guilty verdicts. They recommended Mr. Turner receive mercy. Mr. Shearer was sentenced to seven years of hard labor.”⁷

We may not dismiss this subject, without calling attention to the testimony of Mrs. Hannah D. Turner, who, among other things, stated, partly under a cross-examination by the District Attorney, that her brother Dickinson Shearer, on his return with her son, Elias M. Turner, from Shirley and Worcester, brought a colored boy (Sidney) to her house, where they spent the night—that the next morning, her brother left the house with the boy in the stage for Hartford—that she knew nothing further about the boy or what her brother was intending to do with him. On the cross-examination, she stated that a few days, perhaps ten, before that, the same brother was at her house, in company with a stranger, (Wilkinson) and another colored boy (the Hazard boy from Shirley)—that all three spent the night there, and that in the morning, the stranger, whose name she did not inquire or learn at the time, went away in the Hartford stage, taking the boy with him. She furthermore testified, that, before her brother M. T. went with Dickinson Shearer (her brother) to Shirley for a white girl to live with her; and, if he could not obtain such a girl, to obtain, if possible, a colored boy. And yet, on the return of her brother and son, bringing the boy Sidney, she made no pretence that she took any interest in the fact that they had procured a colored boy, or that she expressed any wish that he might be left with her. In the morning, she rose early and went about preparing breakfast for her brother, Dickinson Shearer—called him and the boy up—saw the boy go away in the stage at the time her brother Dickinson Shearer went away, and that was all.

On this testimony, we make no remark, but as it was given before the Court, it is the property of the public.

KIDNAPPING TRIAL (EXCERPT)
7 February 1840
THE LIBERATOR



PVT. NAHUM GARDNER HAZARD
MASSACHUSETTS 55TH REGIMENT
1863

Gardner Hazard married Harriet Phillis from Concord in 1858. In 1864 he enlisted with the Union troops at Gallops Island in Boston Harbor. His brothers and several cousins had volunteered with the Massachusetts 54th Regiment.⁸ Details about his cousins Theodore and Henry Hazard who were Boylston residents at the time of enlistment can be found in *Boylston Civil War Veterans* by Leah Withers et al.

“By May 1863, so many people had volunteered for the 54th Massachusetts that Governor Andrew designated the creation of a companion regiment, the 55th Massachusetts Regiment.”⁹ Gardner joined the Massachusetts 55th Regiment, and fought in the Battle of Honey Hill, South Carolina where he was wounded. He returned to Leominster after his discharge and continued to work as a teamster. He died in Leominster on 2 September 1913. “Nahum Gardner

¹ Boylston Civil War Veterans by Leah Withers et al., Boylston Historical Collaborative, 2023, p.430

² Ibid, p. 428

³ Shirley Uplands and Intervals: Annals of a Border Town of Old Middlesex, with some Genealogical Sketches by Ethel Stanwood Bolton, 1914, p.77

⁴ Boston Courier, 3 October 1839, p. 2

⁵ <https://freedomsway.org/story/nahum-gardner-hazard/>

⁶ <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/2014/02/10/worcester-lunenburg-boys-abducted-then/39285421007/>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <https://freedomsway.org/story/nahum-gardner-hazard/>

⁹ <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/55th-massachusetts-regiment.htm>

Hazard is buried on a shady edge of Townsend's Hillside Cemetery, next to his wife, Harriet, and three of their children who died young.”¹⁰

In the finale episode of this story, we trace the family history of Theodore and Henry Hazard of Boylston, back to their paternal grandfather Thomas Hazard. Peter Boston and Jacob Mitchel had settled in the Great Road area of Shirley, Massachusetts. Soon after, Charles Treadwell, Joseph Moffet, Thomas Ransellar, Daniel Giger and Thomas Hazard joined them. These seven men of color established a community “on the south slope of Flat Hill” which existed from 1774 to the 1850s.¹¹

Elizabeth Tennessee, a Hazard descendent, wrote in the *Freedom's Way News* about her family's history.

“Our oral family history is that Thomas Hazard was a slave in Hazardville (Enfield), Connecticut after having been bought of a ship in Boston. To earn his freedom, he took a wagon load of gunpowder from Connecticut to the Battle of Lexington and Concord. During the fighting, he had two fingers shot off. According to Leon Hazard, a nonagenarian family member, Thomas became an orderly to Col. John Stark and campaigned throughout New Hampshire.”¹²

On 25 May 1786 Thomas Hazard married Elizabeth “Betsey” Boston in Littleton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Little is known about Betsey and her brother Lovell until they were taken in and raised by Peter Boston's family (who settled in Shirley). It is plausible that they had been kidnapped from their Penobscot ancestral home in Maine. “In November 1755, Lt. Governor Spencer Phips of Massachusetts Bay Colony issued a proclamation offering handsome rewards for hunting, killing and scalping Penobscot people.”¹³ Raids of the Maine-based Penobscot people did happen in the area, and while no other records were located, Betsey was listed in the household in Shirley.¹⁴

In 1830, Thomas Hazard applied for his Revolutionary War pension. According to his application, he was living with his wife and one son, 21-years-old, on a 4-acre plot of land, which he owned, with a “small poor house” in Shirley, Massachusetts. The son was Abraham, the father of Theodore of Boylston. Thomas stated on the application that “he had been living in Norwich, Connecticut at the time he voluntarily enlisted in the Continental Army at Taunton, Bristol County, Massachusetts.”¹⁵ This occurred, to the best of his recollection, in the fall of 1779 or 1780. “He served as a waiter to Colonel Ebenezer Sproat, including some time spent with Colonel Sproat at West Point, which was confirmed by several of the men who provided depositions in the support of his pension application. While he did not recall ever having been given discharge papers, he said he was discharged from service at Newburgh, New York, he thought in 1783.”¹⁶ Abraham Bigelow, Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts confirmed on 16 December 1830 that Thomas Hazard did serve in the Revolutionary War in one engagement, for nine months. He also confirmed that the property Hazard owned in Shirley had a value of \$56.65. Finally, on 4 May 1833 Thomas Hazard was confirmed “to have been a private for two years in the company commanded by Colonel Sproat and was approved to receive a pension of \$80/year to commence on 4 March 1831 and was given a payment of \$200 for arrears.”¹⁷

So ends the third part of *A Story of Boylston Clay and Its Ties to a Line of Veterans*; a story that began with a clay cup found in the collection of the Boylston's Historical Society and Museum! For readers who are interested in one of Boylston's Revolutionary War veterans, please read our recent Friday's Fascinating Finds article *Captain Robert Andrews: American Patriot* by Patricia Kelleher Bartram.

A group of volunteers and members of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum are currently working on researching the Revolutionary War veterans of Boylston. Their findings will be published in a book. If anyone is interested in participating in this project, or other projects, please email info@boylstonhistory.org or call us at 508-869-2720.

Acknowledgements:

Boylston Civil War Veterans by Leah Withers, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nancy O'Loughlin Filgate, Elise Poretsky, Victoria Triolo, Julian Baldwin, Paige Money, Jordan Money, Isabella Uva, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts, 2023

Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts
https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/109062163/nahum_gardner_hazzard

<https://freedomsway.org/story/nahum-gardner-hazard/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penobscot>

<https://upstanderproject.org/learn/guides-and-resources/first-light/phips-bounty-proclamation>

Shirley uplands and intervals; annals of a border town of Middlesex, with some genealogical sketches by Ethel Stanwood Bolton, 1914, George Emery Littlefield, Boston, Massachusetts

¹⁰ <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/2014/02/10/worcester-lunenburg-boys-abducted-then/39285421007/>

¹¹ <http://npshistory.com/publications/nha/freedoms-way/newsletter/apr-1997.pdf>

¹² Ibid

¹³ *Boylston Civil War Veterans* by Leah Withers et al., Boylston Historical Collaborative, 2023, p.427

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid, p.427

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 428