

Gardinerston to Gardiner



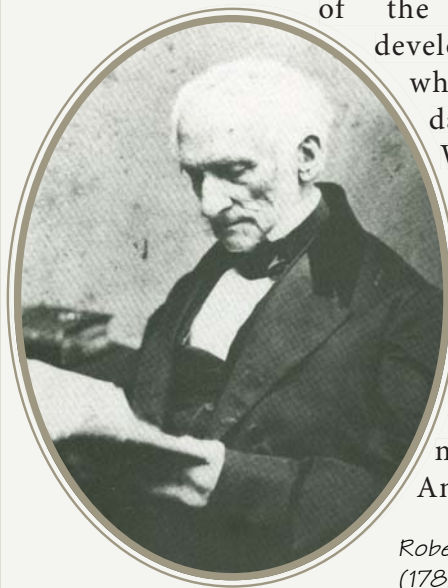
This seal of the Proprietors of the Kennebec Purchase was affixed to all legal papers of the company, from 1749 until its dissolution in 1816. The seal depicts the principal sources of wealth in the early days of settlement: an anchor and codfish. The motto “nec frustra dedit rex” means “the king never gave anything in vain,” a reference to the original territory grant by King James I to the Council of Plymouth in 1620.

In 1754, Gardinerston (see map) was established by Dr. Silvester Gardiner (1708-1786), Dr. Gardiner, who amassed one of the largest fortunes in the American colonies, was one of the Kennebec Proprietors, a group of wealthy investors in Boston. He invested in the 1.5 million acre territory grant, known as the Kennebec Purchase, and acquired a one-tenth interest in this company. When subdivisions of company land were made, Dr. Gardiner secured the best lots, including land at the confluence of the Cobbosseecontee Stream and the Kennebec River, comprising the present-day towns of Gardiner, West Gardiner, Pittston, Randolph, and part of Farmingdale.

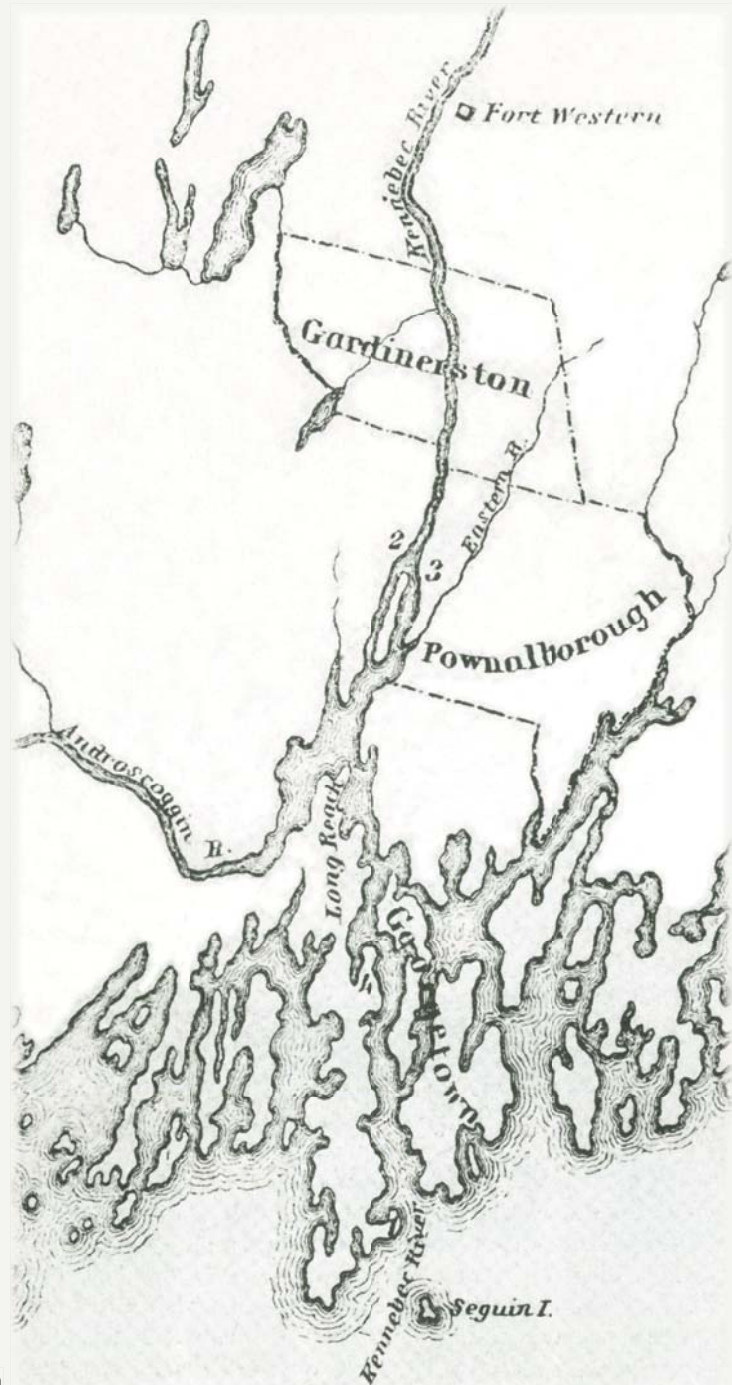
The last mile of the Cobbosseecontee Stream, dropping 130 feet, provided massive water power which Dr. Gardiner exploited for two sawmills, a fulling mill, a potash factory, and a gristmill. Gardinerston was renamed Pittston in 1779 in honor of John Pitts, because Dr. Gardiner remained loyal to the King of England during the American Revolution.

Dr. Gardiner bequeathed his entire estate to his grandson, Robert Hallowell Gardiner I, the man for whom this city is named. When he claimed his inheritance in 1803, the territory west of the river was set off and incorporated into the town of Gardiner. Between 1849 and 1853 West Gardiner and Farmingdale became independent towns, and Gardiner received a charter to become a city.

Robert Hallowell Gardiner I was chief architect of the city's economic development. He rebuilt wharves, mills, and dams, built stores on Water Street, chartered the Gardiner Savings Bank, erected Christ Church, laid out the Gardiner Common as an ornamental park, and established the first vocational school in the nation. He also built the Gothic-Revival mansion of Oaklands where three American presidents have visited.



Robert Hallowell Gardiner I
(1782-1864)



Gardiner's “Old Post Office” was built in 1763 by Dr. Silvester Gardiner at the foot of Vine Street. At the time of its demolition in May 1882, it was the oldest building in the city. This gambrel-roofed house became a post office in the 1790s, when its owner, Seth Gay, became postmaster. Originally, mail came by packet up the river in summer and monthly in winter by a man on snowshoes. In 1803, it took a rider on horseback three days to bring the mail from Boston. In 1799, it took 18 days for news of Washington's death to reach Gardiner.

