

= Henry Gardner =

Henry Joseph Gardner (June 14 , 1819 ? July 21 , 1892) was the 23rd Governor of Massachusetts , serving from 1855 to 1858 . Gardner , a Know Nothing , and was elected governor as part of the sweeping victory of Know Nothing candidates in the Massachusetts elections of 1854 .

Born in Dorchester , Gardner was a dry goods merchant from Boston active in the local Whig Party in the early 1850s . With the sudden and secretive rise of the nativist Know Nothings in 1854 , Gardner opportunistically repudiated previously @-@ held positions , and joined the movement , winning a landslide victory over Whig Emory Washburn . During his three terms in office the Know Nothing legislatures enacted legislation on a wide @-@ ranging reform agenda , and made several significant changes to the state constitution , including important electoral reforms such as the replacement of majority voting with plurality voting .

The Know Nothing movement began to disintegrate not long after its 1854 victory , dividing over slavery . Gardner won reelection in 1856 only with Republican support , given in exchange for Know Nothing support for the Republican presidential candidate , John Frémont . Republican Nathaniel Prentice Banks easily defeated Gardner in 1857 , and the Know Nothing movement effectively dissolved . By 1860 Gardner had left politics and returned to his business interests ; he died in relative obscurity .

= = Early life = =

Henry Joseph Gardner was born in Dorchester , Massachusetts (then a community separate from Boston) on June 14 , 1819 , to Henry Gardner and Clarissa Holbrook Gardner . His grandfather , also named Henry Gardner , was a well @-@ respected Harvard graduate , was politically active during the American Revolution and served as the state 's treasurer 1774 ? 82 . The younger Henry was first educated in private schools in the Boston area , and then attended Phillips Exeter Academy , from which he graduated in 1831 . He then attended Bowdoin College , and embarked on a career as a dry goods merchant in Boston , a business in which he remained until 1876 . In 1844 he married Helen Cobb of Portland , Maine ; they had seven children .

= = Entry into politics = =

In 1850 Gardner , politically a Whig , was elected to the Boston City Council , serving until 1853 . He was a moderately conservative Websterite Whig who was involved in the state party organization , serving on its central organizing committee . In 1854 he broke with the Whigs over their support of the pro @-@ slavery Kansas @-@ Nebraska Act , and became involved in the nativist Know Nothing movement . This shift in position was fairly radical on Gardner 's part , and was viewed by contemporaries and recent historians as politically opportunist . Prior to joining the Know Nothings he had not displayed any nativist sentiments , and had even supported an Irish American in a bid to become justice of the peace . He also switched from a moderate Websterite position on slavery to an abolitionist stance , and supported positions on prohibition of alcohol that he had previously opposed . The Whig statesman Edward Everett described Gardner as " a man of some cleverness , but no solidity of character . "

The Know Nothing convention in October 1854 chose Gardner as its gubernatorial candidate , in part because his stand on slavery was not as radical as that of Republican candidate Henry Wilson , who was also seeking Know Nothing support . Wilson eventually made a deal with the Know Nothings , withdrawing from the race at the last moment in exchange for Know Nothing support in a United States Senate bid . The campaign was relatively sedate , because both the Whigs and Democrats did not organize large @-@ scale events . The larger parties may have been concerned that rallies would be poorly attended due to defections to the Know Nothings . The aristocratic Whigs fielded incumbent governor Emory Washburn to stand for reelection . They were particularly dismissive of the Know Nothings : one commentator described the Know Nothing ticket as " spavined ministers , lying toothpullers , and bugging priests " who were led by " that rickety vermin

of a Henry J. Gardner . " Gardner was , however , optimistic , warning one journalist that he would win by a large majority . The election was a landslide : Gardner won 79 % of the vote , and the state legislature and Congressional delegation were almost entirely populated by Know Nothings .

= = Governor of Massachusetts = =

The legislature elected in the Know Nothing sweep was unlike any that preceded it : almost all of its members were new to elected office . The 1855 session was one of the most productive in the state 's history , with about 600 bills and resolutions passed . In his inaugural address , Gardner set what he hoped was a tone that would solidify his position as the party leader . The speech focused almost to exclusion on nativist issues , and included hyperbolic claims that the level of immigration was reaching crisis proportions . Gardner notably omitted popular substantive reform issues such as the ten @-@ hour workday , and also avoided the contentious subject of slavery .

= = = Reforms = = =

The 1855 legislature passed a wide variety of reform legislation , most of which Gardner signed . A board of insurance with broad powers of inspection was created ; bankruptcy laws were changed to benefit lower @-@ class individuals ; imprisonment for debt was abolished . Vaccinations were mandated for all school children , women were given the right to own property on their own , and exempted from responsibility for their husbands ' debts ; and restrictions were placed on child labor . Schools were desegregated , a reform school for girls was established , and state funding was withdrawn from parochial schools . Cities and towns were authorized to engage in a wide variety of civic improvements , including the building of highways , gas , water , and sewer lines , and public transport facilities such as docks and wharves . One of the major reforms that was not enacted , despite vigorous debate , was legislation calling for a ten @-@ hour workday .

Several amendments to the state constitution were enacted during Gardner 's term . All of them originated in the 1853 constitutional convention , whose proposals , although popular , were poorly organized and defeated in a popular referendum . Plurality voting , which had previously been enacted legislatively to apply to federal elections , was extended to state elections . More state executive offices were made elective , including the Governor 's Council , Attorney General , Secretary of State , Auditor , and Treasurer . The state 's rules for districting were reformed so that they were based on districts drawn by population instead of by towns .

One reform that was immediately a subject of controversy was a harsh prohibition law , which criminalized the service of a glass of grog with a six @-@ month jail sentence . The bill , signed into law by Gardner , was immediately protested , and legislators who passed it were later criticized for charging bar tabs to the state when they traveled .

= = = Nativist issues = = =

Some legislation and executive action was squarely aimed at addressing nativist concerns . So @-@ called " foreign " militia , composed of Irish immigrants , were disbanded , and foreigners were not allowed in police forces or state government jobs . The state deported more than 1 @, @ 000 allegedly indigent aliens , inciting protest over abuses . One notable case involved the deportation to Liverpool of a woman with an American @-@ born infant without any means of support . Gardner reported that the state saved \$ 100 @, @ 000 by this process .

The most scandalous aspect of the nativist agenda was the legislature 's investigation of alleged abuses in Roman Catholic boarding houses . Joseph Hiss , one of the principal investigators , was reported to have made lewd remarks to nuns in these establishments , and was later found to engage in drinking and the hiring of prostitutes . The scandal received a great deal of press and badly tarnished the Know Nothings .

= = = Slavery = = =

Before Gardner 's election , on May 24 , 1854 , Anthony Burns was arrested in Boston as a fugitive under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 . Edward G. Loring , a Suffolk County probate judge who also served as U.S. commissioner of the Circuit Court in Massachusetts , ordered that Burns be forced back into slavery in Virginia , outraging abolitionists and the increasingly antislavery public in Massachusetts . Under the pressure of a public petition campaign spearheaded by William Lloyd Garrison , the legislature passed two Bills of Address , in 1855 and 1856 , calling for Judge Loring to be removed from his state office , but in both cases Gardner declined to remove Loring . A third Bill of Address to remove Loring from office was later approved by Gardner 's Republican successor , Nathaniel Prentice Banks .

The Know @-@ Nothing legislature also passed , over Gardner 's veto , one of the most stringent personal liberty laws , designed to make enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 as difficult for slave claimants as possible . Gardner said that the law would exacerbate relations between North and South , and called for its repeal . Minority parties in the legislature sought to weaken the bill , but its major provisions , including rights of habeas corpus , jury trial , and state @-@ funded defense , survived .

= = = Later elections = = =

In 1855 the national Know Nothing convention split on the subject of slavery . Prominent antislavery Know Nothing supporters in Massachusetts , including Henry Wilson , began another attempt (after having failed in 1854) to form a party with abolition as a major focus . This effort resulted in the formation of the Republican Party , which sought to negotiate with the Know Nothings for a fusion of the two parties . However , Massachusetts Know Nothing leadership refused fusion and Republican leadership refused coalition , with many Republicans skeptical of Gardner 's fidelity to the antislavery cause despite his support for fusion . The parties ended up fielding separate slates of candidates , and many Know Nothing politicians and supporters switched allegiance . In the fall election Gardner , running on a strictly nativist platform , garnered 38 % of the vote , to the 27 % of Republican Julius Rockwell . With the new plurality voting rule in effect , Gardner won the election , but the split (and disaffection in some circles with the Know Nothing agenda) cost him support from former Free Soilers and Democrats . In the 1856 election Gardner benefited from a deal with the Republicans , who refused to run a candidate for governor in exchange for Know Nothing support for their presidential candidate , John C. Frémont . He easily won reelection , although many Republicans voted for a protest candidate instead of supporting him . He attempted to parlay the Republican support into an election to the United States Senate (a matter then decided by the state senate early in its session) replacing Charles Sumner . However , Republican operatives maneuvered the Senate into voting before Gardner 's speech opening the 1857 session , and Sumner was easily reelected .

Although the nation was wracked by the Panic of 1857 and Bleeding Kansas , the election in Massachusetts that year hinged on other factors . Gardner was opposed by Republican (and former Know Nothing) Nathaniel Prentice Banks and Democrat Erasmus Beach . Gardner was accused of having become little more than a tool of the formerly Whig industrial interests , and Banks was adept at bringing many former Know Nothings into his camp , most importantly John Z. Goodrich who attested to Banks ' strong antislavery credentials . Gardner sought to focus the contests on local issues , but slavery predominated as an issue , and Banks won a comfortable victory .

In 1858 Gardner sought to bring what remained of the Know Nothings into a coalition with the Democrats , but his attempts to find a suitable candidate were unsuccessful . That year 's Know Nothing candidate , Amos A. Lawrence , trailed well behind Banks .

= = Later life = =

Gardner continued in his dry goods business until 1876 , and became an agent for the Massachusetts Life Insurance Company in 1887 . He died in Milton , Massachusetts on July 21 ,

1892 . In the 1850s he was recognized by Harvard University with honorary degrees , and he was made a member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in 1855 .