

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts**



HISTORY BY THE YARD

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∞ Pickled Fish and Salted Provisions ∞
Historical musings from Salem Maritime NHS
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During the last week of June, two large, overgrown trees were removed from the yard behind the Derby House. Although part of the original 1939 historic landscape, the trees were exhibiting ongoing rot, with some large branches either dead or dying. The action was taken in a continuing effort to maintain the vegetation in respectable condition and as the opportunity arises, to renew the plantings as indicated on the Basic Guide Planting Plan, which was approved on May 9, 1939.

The grounds plan at Salem Maritime is based on a design by Norman Newton, noted landscape architect, author on landscape design and later professor of landscape architecture at Harvard. His objective was to provide a setting which would complement the various aged structures which compose the north section of the park. The landscape is not in any way intended to replicate the actual appearance of the property during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but is an early instance of a "planned landscape" in the spirit of designs popularized by Frederick Law Olmstead. While the area remains relatively intact as completed in 1941, some minor features need to be added, removed or replaced to restore the landscape to the original configuration.

The 18th century garden in the rear of the Derby House is NOT intended to replicate the actual

gardens of Elias Hasket Derby. Derby was an avid gardener and experimented with a multitude of seeds and cuttings brought back by his ship captains from around the world, so it can be assumed that Derby had a garden here. However, there is not enough documentation extant to accurately reconstruct this garden, hence the decision was made five years ago to plant a typical 18th century garden.

The present garden incorporates species appropriate to the 18th century. It was designed as a volunteer project to represent a generic garden of the period and is maintained by park volunteers.

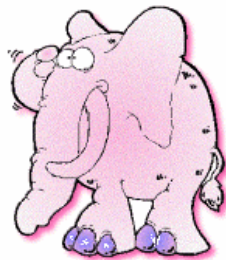
Salem Maritime's 18th century garden occupies ground which originally contained a barn and an outhouse at the least, and later an automobile garage and a small orchard which survived until the implementation of the 1939 planting plan. During the landscaping, the rear yards of the Derby and Hawkes houses were graded and extraneous structures removed. Basement holes were filled in and an average of two feet of loam was added to level the ground.

The description given by Dr. William Bentley of Derby's gardens addresses the Derby estate in present day Peabody, located at the site of the North Shore Shopping Mall. Bentley makes reference to some of the species present, including lemons, but this is

certainly not a complete picture of the extent of Derby's plantings.

Proposed design sketches exist for the grounds of Derby's mansion property between Front and Essex streets in downtown Salem. They are completely different from one another. We do not know which, if any, reflect the actual layout. Eliza Southgate, a contemporary of the Derbys, recalled the garden as being “. . . laid out with exquisite taste, and airy irregularity.”

When interpreting the park grounds, remember to point out that the garden is not an attempt to recreate Elias Derby's actual garden. This will provide an opportunity to tell the equally interesting and totally obscure story of the other buildings which occupied the area, such as the Custom House Place tenements in the Hawkes yard, and the development of the park landscape plan.



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