

Loyalists' Homes in Marblehead

by Judy Anderson

Robert “King” Hooper Mansion

8 Hooper Street

Robert Hooper was Marblehead's principal employer for half a century, and was eventually called “King.” In large part, it was he who led the development of the town's commercial prosperity from the 1720s to 1775, when most of his fellow townspeople zealously pursued separation from Britain. At age 68, “King” Hooper chose loyalty to the government under which both his own and his town's prosperity had been built throughout half a century (with his business partner, Joseph Swett, at first, who then became his father-in-law in 1735).

During the war, Hooper retreated to the King's high-style country house beyond the borders of his radically rebel home town, along with his youngest child, age 13 (of eleven born to his second wife, Ruth) and his third then fourth wives (both widowed twice also). His older grown children were Patriots (mostly in Newburyport).

King Hooper would live to age 81, dying in 1790, having watched in anguish as his town and its formerly thriving economy were devastated by the 8-year war in which such a huge proportion of Marblehead residents served. The Hooper country house (called The Lindens in the late 1800s) would be moved to Washington DC in 1934.

Loyalist Thomas Robie House

137 Washington St. *(one of the few brick pre-Rev. hss)*

Built in 1772 for Thomas Robie, a merchant who imported fine items and hardware from England, this house is one of the few brick houses built before the Revolution (perhaps one of only two). Thomas Robie was one of scores of merchants who prospered in the mid-1700s. But as early as 1771 he had been censured by his fellow townsmen when he did not refuse to import tea in the late 1760s, as the taxes on tea imports became a key symbol of resistance to British Crown and its parliamentary laws, authority, and taxes imposed without colonial representation — (though a handful of members of Parliament, including one of the Prime Ministers for a short time, William Pitt, endeavored to advocate on their behalf).

Robie was forced out of town in May 1775 by a mob in the nearly fully unemployed town, and left for Halifax with his family (wife Mary, a daughter of the minister of the Second Church, and their two daughters and one son) and their enslaved Black servant Flora. As ‘an enemy of the people,’ his real estate and household goods were confiscated by the town and state. Eventually, after the war ended, the family returned to Marblehead and Salem. Robie sued for compensation, but was unsuccessful, and never got their house back. One of his daughters had married in Halifax, and died young and unhappy not long afterward. But the older daughter waited until they returned, and married **Joseph Sewall**, a young man from Marblehead's prominent Sewall family (also Whigs, or Patriots), who became quite successful. Thomas Robie set up business in Salem, which was thriving after the Revolution due to the capital earned from that town's great success with Revolutionary privateering.

The house was subsequently the residence of **Major Joseph W. Green**, who for nearly thirty years was one of the town's “most enterprising merchants” in the 1820s to '50s (along with the extensive post-Revolution Hooper family / not “King” Hooper's descendants). As Marblehead's recovery from the Revolution grew stronger, he and others sent dried fish and other goods to New York, the West Indies (Caribbean), and elsewhere, benefiting the town. Samuel Roads wrote: “The Greens' wharves and ware rooms were filled with every commodity used in fitting out vessels for sea, and it is said that at one time they furnished 75 vessels with stores, anchors, cables, wood, and supplies of every kind necessary for a long voyage to the Banks. Through the influence of Major Green, the **Grand Bank** was established, and he was its first president.”

[That bank (the town's second) was formed in 1831, and its new building of brick and granite was constructed where one of the few fires in the historic downtown had burned the Sun Tavern and several houses on that block.]

Major John Pedrick (Mhd. militia pre-1775) **52 Washington St.** *(2 ½ stories at first / enlarged c.1770)*

Textile importer and merchant John Pedrick, who had been a Major in the town's militia, seems to have been a Loyalist in the mid-1770s — despite the heroic story that one of his many daughters invented for her father much later (perhaps around the patriotic 50th anniversary of the Revolution in 1824), about her father having been the person who heroically rode his horse to Salem, right past the British troops marching to seize weapons stockpiled beyond Salem's North River, to warn the Salem militia of the troops' imminent approach.

The house was apparently enlarged to three stories around 1770, soon after the construction of the Lee Mansion. It too is imposingly and lavishly faced with wide wooden boards (rustication) in the front, to simulate stone. A large arched or “round-headed” window visible at the rear would have crowned and enhanced the new staircase.

The house was stripped of its interior features by the 1950s, when converted into apartments or other lodging.

Joseph Hooper (middle son of King Hooper) **55 Pleasant St.** (*where 1905 former US Post Office is now*)

The house, which no longer stands, was built of wood sometime after Joseph's marriage, in a fashionable 4-square Georgian style with a hipped roof that is unlike any other known to have been built in Marblehead. It was located where the town's large brick Beaux-Arts style post office at the corner of Pleasant & Watson Streets was built in 1905. Hooper's house had already been torn down in 1878 for a large Victorian-style house to be constructed, which does still stand. But that replacement house was moved up the hill on Watson St. soon after 1900 for the post office to be built. The post office was converted to condos in the later 20th c. (later 1900s).

A middle son of Robert 'King' Hooper, Joseph managed a rope walk / rope-works that his father had set up for him, and he seems to have been the only one of King Hooper's three Harvard-educated older sons who was not a Patriot. Instead, as a flaming Tory who may have not been widely liked, he and his house were menaced in 1775 by a mob of "Liberty Boys" (as he is said to have called them) who threatened to burn it down. In May, Joseph fled surreptitiously to England, leaving his wife and their 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. In late-pregnancy, his wife returned to her mother's home in Newburyport. Joseph never returned from England, leaving his wife in a very socially compromised position for the next two decades. After the relatively early deaths of his wife and daughter (ages 54 and 23, following their son's suicide at age 19), Joseph married the woman he had been living with in England, having a few children with her and managing a paper-making mill.

Benjamin Marston **near 12 Watson St.** (*torn down 1878 & 1878 house moved up*)

An affable young merchant, originally from Plymouth (MA), Benjamin Marston appears to have lived briefly in Joseph and Mary Hooper's former home *or* in an equally fine house a bit higher up on Watson Street with a garden in front of it which was called "Tory Hall." (*Note: This writer's recollection of which of the two non-existent houses was Tory Hall (and perhaps there was just one house) is clouded by the passage of several decades since a conversation about it with researcher Robert Booth long ago.*)

Marston had had married Sarah Swett, the second-to-youngest half-sister of half-sisters Martha & Ruth Swett (who had married Jeremiah Lee and Robert Hooper) in 1755. But by the 1770s, he had chosen the Tory side. After Sarah died childless in the summer of 1775, and their house was attacked by a local patriot mob in Nov. (*see more on that below*), just a few months after so many 'Headers had set out from Beverly on the first American privateer vessels, Marston fled staunchly rebel (Patriot) Marblehead for British-occupied Boston.

When the British left Boston in March 1776, Marston went with them, traveling first to Halifax. and endured a misfortunes over several years in eastern Canada, England, the West Indies, and elsewhere, before he sailed to an island off northwest Africa in 1792 with a re-settlement program for formerly enslaved Black individuals who left the American Colonies. However, he and many others died of disease soon after their arrival.

Before he died, he admitted in a letter to his sister that independence was truly the best path for America.

Benjamin Marston's home, dubbed 'Tory Hall,' was later purchased at an auction of confiscated Tory estates by a nephew named Marston Watson, who had been an apprentice in Col. Jeremiah Lee's shipping firm until Col. Lee's death in May 1775. The young Watson was then offered the rank of lieutenant in Col. John Glover's regiment. Unlike many others in Marblehead, he continued in the Continental Army after 1776, and served through 1778. Returning home, he married a daughter of Jeremiah Lee's older brother John in 1779 (*see further above*), and later served in official town positions, including as an officer in the Mhd. militia in the 1790s, well after the war, as tensions with France mounted during and after France's own revolution, when French vessels were harassing American ships. He represented Marblehead in the MA general court in 1792, before he and his Marblehead wife relocated to Boston in 1797 for better opportunity. He died soon after, in 1800, at age 45.

Benjamin M.'s papers are at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. *Excerpt from a biography:*

In 1774, when the censured Mass.-born Governor Thomas Hutchinson was ready to sail for banishment to England, more than 200 merchants, lawyers, and other citizens of Boston, Salem and Marblehead signed kind "addresses" as he left, approving of his administration, and desiring his future prosperity. These expressions gave great offence to most of the people, and those who uttered them were called "addressers." Benjamin Marston was one of the "addressers," and therefore incurred the displeasure of many of the townspeople. After that, he was regarded with suspicion, and "sometimes harshly treated by the most noisy and turbulent among them." In 1775, his "house was visited by a Marblehead committee, who without any legal authority entered his doors, broke open his desks, embezzled his money and [merchant trading] notes [money & IOUs], and carried off his books and accounts. He made his escape from the town with difficulty, and remained for some time concealed among his friends in ... Boston" before leaving for Halifax with the departing British.

(B. Marston's wife Sarah Swett had been the tenth and second-youngest child of Martha Swett's father, Joseph (King Hooper's business partner) and the second child of his fourth and last wife (Martha's step-mother). After Joseph Swett's death in 1745, his widow would marry Jeremiah Lee's recently widowed father that same year — which was also the same year 19-year-old Martha Swett married Jeremiah !

Sarah had been a baby when her oldest half-sister Ruth married Robert Hooper at age 16, and she was 10 when her middle half-sister Martha married Jeremiah Lee at age 19 — when Martha's step-mother from the time she was eight became her mother-in-law ! — and Martha's young half-sister Sarah was now her sister-in-law ! ... Sarah died childless soon after the war began, after 20 years of marriage.)

Other Loyalists Not many can be identified ~ and indeed there were very few in Marblehead.
And, interestingly, more than half of Mhd.'s known Loyalists returned to Marblehead after the war.

Stephen Blaney address ? Although “one of the most objectionable Loyalists,” he later returned to Mhd.

Michael Coombs address ? Although “among the most obnoxious of the Loyalists,” he too returned after the war, and also resumed his position as a Vestryman at St. Michael's. He is buried in St. Michael's churchyard.

William Bodin address ? He was a member of St. Michael's, and a vestryman before and after the war.

Woodward Abraham **143 Washington Street** (*street level renovated in later 1800s*)

This house retains its original dormer windows, which were not common on 18th c. homes until often added later, well into the 1800s and 1900s. The street level was later removed in the later 1800s for a retail store.

W. Abraham seems to have remained in Mhd. through the Revolution, and after. He had been the town's first postmaster, appointed by Benjamin Franklin before the war, and he was a U.S. postmaster afterward as well.

Henry Saunders address ? A Henry Saunders was a member of St. Michael's Church. This might be him. Records of his involvement there stop in 1775. So, like Thomas Robie, he may have moved to Salem after the war, since he might have lived there before, because he seems to have married his late wife Mary Swett in Salem in 1751.
**(see next pg. for more about the family connections of a man of this name to Mhd.'s principal pre-Rev. family network)*

Rev. Joshua W. Weeks (rector at St. Michael's Anglican Church) ~ lived in church **Rectory, 110 Elm Street**

As a devout minister in service of and under England's national church, Reverend Weeks and his family quickly left Marblehead in May 1775 as Tories were officially declared “enemies of the country” by rebel Patriot groups, and as local town meetings decreed that Loyalists could be expelled from their communities.

He and his family left M'head secretly at night, lodging at first at the farm of the late Colonel Jacob Fowle (who had died in 1771 but probably would have been a Loyalist) on the outskirts of town, near the border of Lynn (now Swampscott), then probably continued into Boston which was occupied by the British. They continued on to Maine in September 1775, staying with relatives until May 1777. They escaped to Rhode Island in June 1778, hiding in a ship that was heading to Nova Scotia, and remained there for some time.

St. Michael's Church essentially closed for a few years after 1775, but re-opened by 1780.

During and before the war, it was difficult for those people who did not agree with what ~ in their eyes ~ were radical and harmful Patriot policies and actions.

However, a high proportion of the few M'hd. Loyalists did return, as evidenced by the names on this page — (and **UNLIKE so many Boston Tories who never came back to America**) — including Thomas Robie's wife and daughter, who married into a prominent family in Marblehead soon after the war ended, though Thomas himself ended up in the more welcoming Salem.

In Marblehead, those who had generally been not liked before the war (such as **Thomas Robie**) found it difficult to return afterward. But Robie became a merchant in Salem, while his daughter was welcome here.

On the other hand, “**King**” **Hooper's middle son Joseph**, who had been vilified in town and left under threat in 1775, chose to remain in England, despite having left a wife and young family in Massachusetts. His father “**King**” **Hooper** did return after years probably mostly spent in his country house in Danvers.

Many or most people who left Boston and were unable to return had difficulty being accepted into new communities in Nova Scotia or England, as Marblehead's **Benjamin Marston** experienced also — even though he had generally been a popular and optimistic person in Marblehead. Remarkably, he remained hopeful despite his many tribulations and misfortunes out of town after 1775, until his death in Africa in the 1792 resettlement effort for formerly enslaved Americans. (*info about that on previous page above*)

* This **Henry Saunders** may have been the one who was married to a woman named Desire. But in 1742, a Henry Saunders also wed **Mary Swett** (who died before 1750). Mary was one of 5 daughters of merchant Joseph Swett ~ a full younger sister of **Martha Swett Lee** (wife of Patriot Colonel Jeremiah Lee) and a middle half-sister of the other Swett half-sisters: **Ruth Swett Hooper** (Loyalist Robert “King” Hooper’s second wife, who had died in 1763), **Sarah Swett Marston** (Benjamin Marston’s wife, who died in 1775), and **Hannah Swett Lemmon**, who would have become the mother-in-law of Wm. Raymond Lee had she not died 5 years after her middle daughter, Mary (WRL’s future wife) and her older & younger sisters were born.

Lee family tradition says that Mary Lemmon Lee had been a very much beloved niece of Martha Lee. She had also been born in 1745, the year the Lees married. And her son would marry the eldest daughter of the Lees eldest daughter. Her future husband was **William Raymond Lee**, a son of Jeremiah’s older brother **John Lee**, and therefore a nephew of Jeremiah. AND W. R. was an apprentice in Jeremiah’s shipping office (perhaps almost a future junior partner), maybe with Wm. R.’s cousin **Joseph Lee** (Col. Lee’s eldest son and a Harvard graduate), plus a few other young men who had also been sent to Col. Lee’s shipping office inside the Lee Mansion as apprentices (with some of them lodging there – perhaps including Wm. R.).

While Mary (Lemmon, b.1745), her older sister Elizabeth (b.1743), and their younger sister Ruth (b.1747) were growing up, they may have spent a good deal of time in the home of their uncle Jeremiah and their aunt Martha Swett Lee, in both the first and the later “Lee Mansions.” Martha was just 15 months younger than the three girls’ mother Hannah, Martha’s slightly older half-sister, had been. And because Hannah’s mother died just three weeks after Hannah was born, the two half-sisters (Martha and Hannah) had probably been quite close, with Martha’s mother essentially being Hannah’s “mother” as well, , rather than just her step-mother, from the time Hannah was six months old. The two half-sisters therefore probably felt like full sisters, and they might have shared a sense of solidarity — especially after Martha’s mother (Hannah’s step-mother) died when the two girls were just 7 and 8 years old. (Martha’s three younger full siblings were only 6, 4 and a baby boy, Martha’s mother’s fourth child, whose birth might have been the cause of her death, and who may or may not have lived beyond infancy — though their father remarried soon after... But that new step-mother for the girls and an additional middle brother also died within that very same year.)

(Yet another new step-mother arrived the next year, and soon gave birth to 2 more daughters. One of them (Sarah) later married Benjamin Marston. The Swett children’s father Joseph died ten years later, in 1745, when Sarah was 10 (after 4 wives and 11 children total). That same year, Martha married Jeremiah Lee. And later that year, that last Swett wife (Joseph’s widow, and Martha and Hannah’s step-mother) married Jeremiah’s father, who had also recently been widowed. So, Martha’s step-mother from the time she was 8 also became her new mother-in-law! And her younger step-sister Sarah became her step-sister-in-law.)

Five years later, in 1750, as Martha Lee and her 15-months-older half-sister Hannah (the three Lemmon girls’ mother), approached their 24th and 25th birthdays (with Martha married for 5 years and about to move into her and Jeremiah’s first home of their own the following year, next door to the home of her oldest half-sister, Ruth Swett, who at age 16 had married **Robert ‘King’ Hooper** as his second wife), Hannah (Lemmon, the 25-year-old mother of the 3 young girls, and the wife of a doctor) also died — perhaps due to complications from a fourth pregnancy that wasn’t recorded, or perhaps wasn’t known, or simply from illness. She died just three years after her third and youngest daughter was born, and five years after the birth of her middle daughter Mary, who had been born the year Martha married. *(All that must have been “déjà vu all over again” for Martha Swett Lee, who had lost her mother AND step-mother so young, as her younger siblings had too.)*

Martha might well have felt a special affinity for her three nieces, and would name her first daughter Mary. Perhaps she even cared for them while they were young, because there is no evidence that the girls’ father, Dr. Lemmon, ever remarried until 1765, when the oldest was 17 and Mary was 15. Mary married **William Raymond Lee** in 1770, when she was 25 ~ the same age her mother had been when she died after the birth of her three young girls. Just five years later, he would leave for his Continental Army service years as a Major in his uncle Jeremiah’s then **Col. Glover’s regiment** — six months after the birth of their first child, a son who would eventually marry the oldest daughter of Jeremiah and Martha Lee’s oldest daughter Mary.

The three Lemmon girls’ father (a well-liked doctor in Mhd.) died in or by 1772. The following year (1773) his new wife married **Captain Thomas Gerry**, the recently widowed (1771) father of Elbridge Gerry and his ten older & younger siblings (all grown). The senior Gerry would then die the very next year (in 1774).

And in 1775, the American Revolution’s major hostilities began. All those losses for key local figures in the Revolution (and their families) occurred in the midst of the turbulent years leading up to it. **But that is a part of the Revolutionary story that doesn’t get told.** Perhaps those complex sagas above can help expand our view of what was happening with families then. And it shows how difficult those revolutionary times were for families, which were **also** often split, if they did not share the same political philosophies or inclinations.