

*It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.*

## George Clinton Gardner (1833-1904)

**From: William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, *George Clinton Gardner Papers*.**

*Papers, 1809-1900*

*150 items*

### ***Background note:***

*George Clinton Gardner served as assistant to William H. Emory in surveying the California-Mexico boundary from 1848-1853. He spent the following year working for his father, Charles K. Gardner, a former journalist and army officer who was then surveyor general of the Oregon Territory. From 1855-1865, Clinton Gardner acted as assistant astronomer and surveyor for both the Northwest and Southwest Boundary Commissions.*

*In 1869, Gardner was placed in charge of dredging operations at Erie Harbor, working for the Philadelphia and Erie Rail Road. His job involved an early experimental use of nitroglycerine (manufactured by George M. Mowbry) for submarine blasting. Ten years later, Gardner was general manager for the Mexican National Construction Co., and in 1895 he was involved in topographical engineering in Peru.*

### ***Scope and contents:***

*The Clinton Gardner Papers includes two letters and some accounts of Charles K. Gardner along with Clinton Gardner's correspondence concerning real estate dealings in Buffalo, NY. Three of Clinton Gardner's letterbooks are also included:*

*1869 February 9-1870 February 25 (33 pp.; re: dredging at Erie, with reports of drilling, equipment and crew and experiments with nitroglycerine);*

*1881 Sept. 8-1882 July 3 (212 pp.; re: business and family, contracting, trade, road construction, travel and mapping in Mexico);*

*1895 July 5-November 9 (84 pp.; re: engineering and travel in Peru). There are 10 letters of recommendations for Clinton Gardner written by prominent military and engineering experts.*

M-1898

***Subjects***

*Dredging--Pennsylvania--Erie*  
*Engineers--United States*  
*Mexico--Surveys*  
*Nitroglycerine*  
*Peru--Description and travel*  
*Peru--Surveys*  
*Real property--New York--Buffalo*  
*Road construction--Mexico*  
*Surveying--Mexico*  
*Surveying--Peru*  
*Surveyors--United States*

**From: This article by Edna Brandon Hanson appeared in *The Vancouver Sun* as "The Strange Life Story of Captain Charlie Gardner" between November 29 and December 27, 1941**

<http://explorenorth.com/library/bios/gardner-c.html>

***Charles Alphonsus Gardner***

*Pioneer Yukon River Captain*

***HIS BOYHOOD***

*The wild crabapple trees were in bloom along the banks of the Fraser in the Spring of 1860 when, in the Indian settlement of Matsqui, a child was born in whose veins ran the blood of two great races. His mother was Selaamia, daughter of the chief of the Indians of Matsqui and Sumas, and granddaughter of the last great See-am, chief of all the Indians from Yale to the mouth of the Fraser. His father was Lieutenant George Clinton Gardner, civil engineer and astronomer, who, at the time of the birth of his child, was in charge of the engineering party surveying the boundary line between British Columbia and the United States and who later became one of the leading railroad financiers of the continent. The child was given the Indian name of Quotaseltill and, at the direction of his father, was also named George Clinton Gardner.*

***NEVER SAW HIS FATHER***

*He was known as George Gardner for the first nine or ten years of his life but, when he started to school at Mission in 1869, he found that Father Cherouse had by mistake christened him Charles Alphonsus Gardner.*

*Charles Gardner accordingly he became, and for the last forty years, he has been known up and down the Fraser, on the Stikine and Skeena, on the Yukon and the Mackenzie, as Captain Charlie Gardner, one of the really great river boat captains of Canada. From both the vanishing Indian race and the incoming White race he inherited traits which led to his success. He was reared as a typical Indian boy and gained self-reliance, alertness, quickness of eye and hand, courage, and honor in dealing with the fellows. From his white ancestry he inherited that initiative, that outstanding intelligence and persistence that placed him in the front rank of his profession. The boy never saw his father. When the survey party was working east of Chilliwack Lake, Selaamia came home to Sumas as the child was about to be born.*

*After she had been home a few weeks a messenger arrived from her husband. "Lieutenant Gardner sent me to tell you that his government has sent him to Peru to do some work for them there. He must go but will come back when his work is finished. I am to wait until the child is born. If the child is a boy he is to be called George Clinton Gardner and I am to take back to his father a lock of his hair. Lieutenant Gardner has left two of his men. Mr. Peabody and Mr. Roder, who are at his main camp at Bellingham, to be guardians for the child while he is away. Anything you want for yourself and for the child you can get from them."*

*The child was born on May 15th, 1860, and the messenger left with the lock of hair.*

### **THE MYSTERIOUS 'THEY'**

*For three years and nearly four Selaamia got supplies regularly for herself and the child from the guardians at Bellingham. But one day in the early spring of 1864 a conversation took place between Selaamia and the guardians which changed the whole course of the boy's life. "What a fine big lad he is getting to be", Mr. Roder said on seeing the child. "That reminds me that we'd better be looking for a school for him. His father sends word that he is to be educated in the best school we can find. There's a good one over in Victoria. Perhaps we'd better send him there."*

*Selaamia and her boy went home. "They" - this mysterious world that the White people had made, of which her husband had gone and from which he had never come back - now "they" were going to take her child. She would not let him go. She and her mother and the men of her household could teach him all he needed to know. So she sent word to the guardians that the child was dead and that she would want no more supplies.*

*Then this little fair-haired son of Lieutenant Gardner began his life of a real Indian boy. Proudly he rode down the great river with his grandfather in his long high-powered war canoe and soon he learned to paddle a small canoe of his own. He learned to swim and run and climb, and feared nothing on the land or in the water. He learned to*

*track animals and to shoot with bow and arrows the muskrat, rabbit and raccoon. He went with the men to catch the sturgeon - the great "Squaworch" - that lay on the bottom of the river and was speared with long forked pole. He went with his grandmother to get reeds for mats and to get white, black and red chalk from the slough in Matsqui and made it into great round balls a little smaller than a football. These they baked in a strong fire of good wood and stored away to be sued for flailing into discoloured wool to cleanse it.*

.....(continues)

**From: "Ancestry in America, Vol. IX,"<sup>1</sup> 1894.**

*GARDNER, GEORGE CLINTON of Parkersburg, W. Va., b. in Washington, D. C., educated as a civil engineer, settled in Oregon, asst. astronomer and surveyor on International Boundary between British Columbia and Washington Territory, surveyed and marked the boundary from the coast to the summit of the Rocky Mts. and in charge of the office at Washington, D. C., had the maps and cross sections of the water ways between Gulf of Georgia and Juan de Fuca straits prepared, upon which the San Juan difficulty was settled by King William, as arbitrator, was engineer of maintenance of way of Phila. and Erie R. R., gen. supt. Pa. R. R., manager Troy and Greenfield R. R. and Hoosac Tunnel for State of Mass., gen. manager Mexican Nat. R. R. and completed that line from Texas coast to city of Sattillio, ptcs. Buffalo, N. Y. and Phila. R. R., chairman of investigating com. of Mo., Kans. and Texas R. R., pres. N. England and Western R. R. (Storm King Bridge), vice-pres. N. Y. and Mass. R. R. and now gen. manager Ohio River R. R.*

*(m. Oct. 13, 1863, Mary Frances Brodhead, dau. of George Hamilton Brodhead, pres. of N. Y. Stock Exch. and desc. of Capt. Daniel Brodhead, an officer of English army in command of Esopus, N. Y., and ancestor of the Brodhead family in America.)*

*George Clinton Gardner had five children, viz.: Julia Brodhead, Alida, Delia Brodhead, George Clinton, Jr. and Mary Frances; son of Charles Kitchell Gardner of Washington, D. C., b. at Bottle Hill, now Madison, N. J., June 24, 1787, d. in Washington, D. C., Nov. 1, 1869, studied medicine under Dr. Hossac of N. Y., entered army, 1808, resigned, 1818, succeeded his father-in-law as commissary - general of N. Y. State going to Washington, 1827, asst. postmaster-general under Pres. Jackson, first auditor of P. O. Dept., postmaster of city of Wash., surveyor- general of Oregon and Washington territories, afterward returning to the homestead in city of Washington (m. Jan. 30, 1817, Ann Eliza McLean, b. in N. Y. city, Feb. 27, 1799, d. in Washington, D. C., Dec. 26, 1876, dau. of Gen. John McLean, who was commissary-general of State of N. Y. and brother-in-law of Robert Burnet, the last survivor of the military family of Gen. Washington, having died in 1854.)*

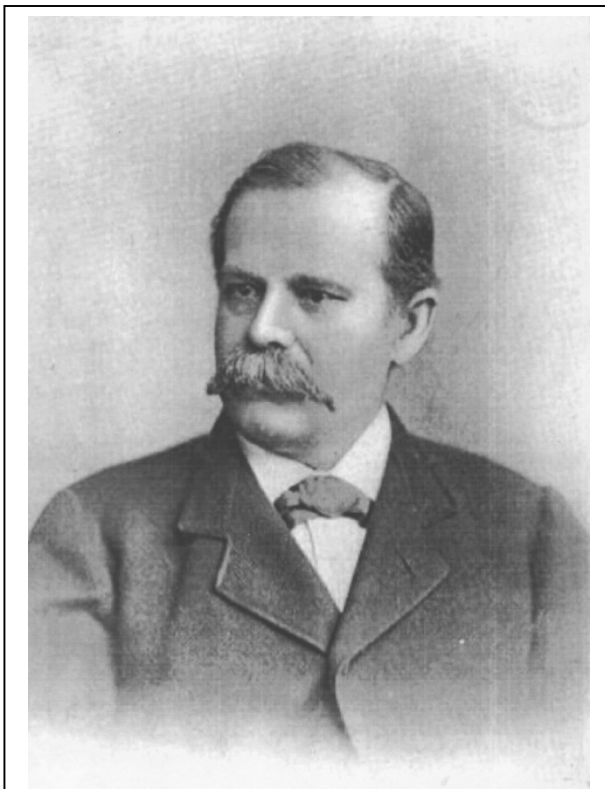
*C. K. G. had 8 children, viz.: John, a lawyer who died at his sister's house in Louisiana, Emma Kitchell (m. Gov. Alex. Morton of Louisiana), Dr. Jacob Brown who*

was mayor of I Falls Church, Va., Gen. Frank of Confederate States service, Sarah A. M. (m. Commodore John J. Almy of U. S. navy), Major Charles Thomas who was adj.-gen. of Gen. Parke's brigade in U. S. service, George Clinton, as above, and Alida Armstrong (m. Adm. Almy) ); son of Thomas Gardner of Newburgh, N. Y., b. in Morris, co., N. J., Oct. 18, 1752, d. in Newburgh, Mar. 7, 1813, moved there after the war, capt. of Wagon brigade, that transported Gen. Rochambeau's army across N. J. to Yorktown (m. Sarah Kitchell, b. Dec. 8, 1761, d. in Newburgh, Apr. 22, 1833, dau. of Abraham Kitchell, and niece and adopted dau. of Maj. Joseph Morris, who ' d. of his wounds received in Rev. war, Abraham was brother of Senator Aaron Kitchell of N. J., and desc. of Robert Kitchell of Guilford, Ct.); son of Thomas Gardner of N. J., b. Apr. 4, 1718, d. July t, 1771 (m. Mary); son of Thomas, b. Feb. 16, 1688, d. Aug. 5, 1745 (m. Mary); son of John of London, Eng., d. 1720, supposed to have come to America.

**From: "General Superintendents of the Pennsylvania Railroad,"<sup>ii</sup> 1900.**

*George Clinton Gardner, Eighth General Superintendent, March 1873-April 1 1879.*

*George Clinton Gardner, son of Colonel Charles K. Gardner, was born in Washington City in 1834. His education was partly acquired at the Rittenhouse Academy in*



**Figure 1.. George Clinton Gardner**

*Washington City. At an early age he left that institution and entered Columbia College, then on Fourteenth Street, just beyond the city limits. Whilst attending the latter institution he developed a preference for mechanical, mathematical and engineering studies. During his sophomore year he left college and took up the special study of engineering, and for some years afterwards was instructed in the higher branches of geodetic and astronomical work by Professor James Noonan. In the year 1850, at sixteen years of age, he repaired to the Pacific Coast, where, under Major, afterwards General, William H. Emory, Engineer Corps, United States Army, he was associated with the officers and engineers in establishing the United States and Mexican boundary from the Pacific coast to the Gulf of Mexico. Resigning from the Mexican boundary survey he joined his father, who was*

*then Surveyor General of the Land Office of Washington and Oregon, located at Salem, Oregon. Whilst pursuing his profession he was selected a representative of Washington and Oregon in the work of the International Boundary Survey. In 1856, the United States Government commissioned him as Assistant Astronomer and Surveyor of the Northwest boundary survey for running and marking the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude. This work, from the Pacific coast to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, he performed under Archibald Campbell, United States Commissioner, and Lieutenant, afterwards General, J. G. Park, United States Engineers, as chief astronomer and surveyor, and in conjunction with the English Commission, represented by Colonel Hawkins, C. E., and Captain Haig, of the Royal Artillery. He gained distinction in this international survey, being a strong advocate of the boundary being in Canal de Haro as against the claim of the English Government that it was through the Rosanis Straits. The dispute which grew out of this claim, and known as the "San Juan difficulty," was settled by King William of Prussia as arbitrator. During its progress Mr. Gardner illustrated the channel and otherwise furnished valuable information to our Government. His geographical determinations along the line are the initial points of the United States land surveys.*

*Upon the completion of the work in 1869 he tendered his resignation, which was accepted by the President who, through the State Department, thanked him for the able manner in which he had performed the duties assigned him. Although up to this time he had had no practical experience in railroad engineering his talents were of such an order that he experienced no difficulty in securing an engagement with the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad. His first service with the Company began in 1869 as Assistant Engineer. Whilst performing his duties as such in building the coal docks at Erie he was the first to use nitroglycerine in submarine blasting. On April 1, 1870, he was transferred from Erie to Altoona as Assistant Superintendent of Motive Power and Machinery, and promoted to Superintendent of Motive Power, April 1, 1872. As Assistant Superintendent of Motive Power he was in charge of the motive power and rolling stock of the United Railroads of New Jersey leased to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, December 1, 1871, and he organized their shops under the Pennsylvania Railroad system. In March, 1873, he was elected General Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad Division, filling that position until April 1, 1879, when his resignation took effect. The Board of Directors at their meeting, March 13, 1879, passed the following resolution:*

*"Resolved, That this Board accepts with regret the resignation of G. Clinton Gardner, General Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad Division, and in doing so they desire to place on the minutes an expression of their thanks for the satisfactory manner in which he has administered the important trust confided to him, their appreciation of the zeal and energy with which he has performed the duties of his office, and of the best wishes for success in his new field of duty."*

*This was one of the many expressions of esteem in which he was held by those connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. He studied the welfare of the employees of the road, aided in the Railroad Association and Reading Rooms at Altoona, and constantly aimed at elevating the standard of employees by devising means for their instruction, etc. It was under his administration that the school for special apprentices was established, out of which many officers, not only of the Pennsylvania Railroad, but of other lines throughout the United States, were graduated. Insurances and relief for*

*employes and the establishment of a home at Altoona, upon the Company's farm, found in Mr Gardner a strong advocate. During the time he was General Superintendent, many of the improvements which aided in making the great property the finest road in the world, were commenced. His labors at Altoona were arduous. He was in charge during the transportation of the millions of people moved over the Company's lines to the Centennial Exhibition, and during the extensive labor troubles of 1877. Pinkerton in his book, "Strikes, Communists, Tramps and Detectives," pays a tribute to Mr. Gardner, who was ordered by Colonel Scott from Pittsburgh the second day of the trouble to protect Altoona, and says: "Insults and threats were common at all times, but the lawless elements were pretty thoroughly held in check by the constant exhibition of a competent force on the one hand, and pacific measures on the part of shop superintendents on the other. In this connection it is only just to state that the cool judgment, careful foresight, determined bearing, but at all times the kind and friendly manner of the General Superintendent of the road, G. Clinton Gardner, Esq., had more to do with preventing wide spread destruction and bloodshed than any other one cause. "These things gave a lasting impression to all, and during the strikes Mr. Gardner was constantly on the alert without taking rest for many days.*

*Whilst serving as General Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad, he was made General Superintendent of the Northern Central Railway, and administered that property under the system of the Pennsylvania Railroad. His health beginning to show the effects of the constant strain upon him, he decided to take lighter work on some other road, and having been invited by the Governor and Council of the State of Massachusetts to take charge of the State road — the Troy and Greenfield Railroad and Hoosac Tunnel — he moved his residence to Greenfield, Massachusetts, in 1879. In the discharge of his duties in Massachusetts, from 1879 to 1881, he soon gained expressions of satisfaction as to his work. He arranged for and commenced the double tracking of the road, built the ventilating galleries leading to the central shaft, and experimented with the electric lighting of the tunnels, besides suggesting various other improvements subsequently adopted. He had the gratification of seeing the road reported by the Railroad Commissioners as the best single track in the State, if not in New England.*

*After his two years of service on the State Road, during which time he received several propositions to take charge of other properties, he was made General Manager of the Mexican National Construction Company, the Mexican National Railroad Company, and the Texas-Mexican Railroad Company, and took up the construction of those roads, which employment occupied his attention from 1881 to 1884.*

*On the northern division he completed the line as far as Saltillo, Mexico. Construction having ceased for want of funds, he returned north and resigned. Immediately upon his return in 1884 he was elected to the presidency of the Buffalo, New York and Philadelphia Railroad, now the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad, and continued to fill that office until March, 1888, when he resigned. This property, like many others, was unable to meet its fixed charges, and required complete reorganization and improvement in its facilities for the development of its business. The system represented 660 miles of road, and, connecting with the great trunk lines, was subject to all the vicissitudes of the rate wars which then prevailed.*

*The contest between the Lake Shore and the New York Central greatly affected its revenues, and the competition on all sides between Buffalo and Rochester made the task of reorganization and improvement a most difficult one, but under Mr. Gardner's management, the road's facilities were improved and its local trade so built up that its friendly relations with the connecting roads were strengthened and its financial condition bettered. Although the facilities for doing the work required to improve the property were perhaps proportionally less than any manager of a railroad ever had at his disposal, Mr. Gardner undertook it with a determination to succeed, and the results achieved by him justified his efforts.*

*In 1892 he was appointed General Manager of the Ohio River Railroad and continued to serve, as such until 1896, when he became General Manager of the Pacific Company, Pacasmayo, Peru, South America, where he has been for several years and is at present engaged in railroad work. In addition to the above, Mr. Gardner was Chairman of the Investigating Committee of the affairs of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, President of the New England and Western Railroad (Storm King Bridge) and Vice President of the New York and Massachusetts Railroad.*

*Mr. Gardner is regarded as one of the ablest railroad men in active service and by his abilities and faithful service has built up a reputation for personal integrity, practical skill and painstaking attention in directing the affairs of railroads. Wherever he has been, and wherever he goes, he has the warmest esteem of officers and employees.*




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<sup>i</sup> **“American Ancestry, Vol. IX”**, Joel Munsell's Sons, Publishers, Albany, N. Y., 1894.

<sup>ii</sup> William Bender Wilson, **“General Superintendents of the Pennsylvania Railroad Division”**., The Kensington Press, Philadelphia, 1900.