



UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

From the Archives of Museums on the Green

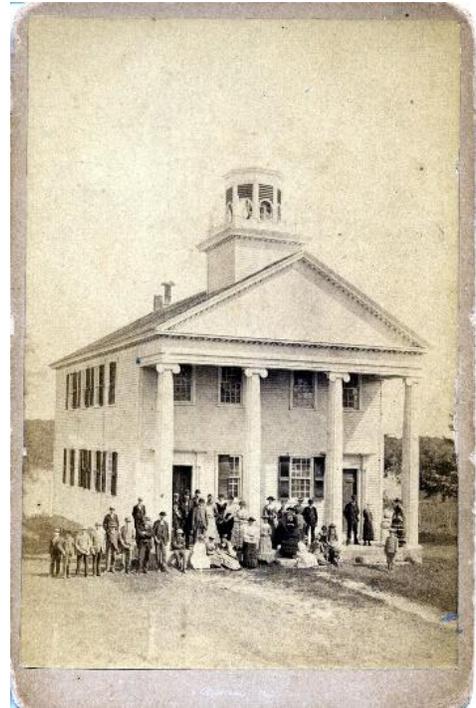
Remind Me about the Alamo

by Meg Costello

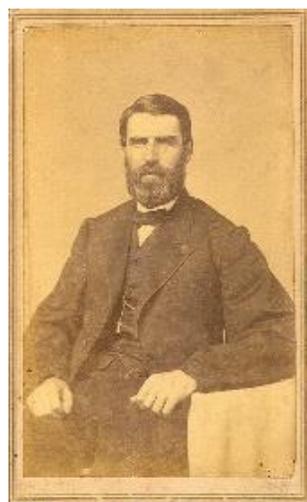
My history teacher told me it was important to remember the Alamo. And I do remember it, sort of. I remember that the Alamo is in Texas . . . somewhere. There was a big battle, of course. The Coonskin Cap Guy and the Frontier Knife Guy and many others died in the fight against a Mexican army led by General Santa Claus. (Well, obviously not Santa Claus, but something similar.)ⁱ Everybody got riled up and refused to forget the Alamo, so that eventually Texas joined the Union.

Pretty shaky, but I'm from New England. At the archives of Museums on the Green, I do Massachusetts history. Details about salt works, whaling, and the War of 1812 take up most of my memory space. Never have I needed to remember anything about the Alamo—until last month.

An email arrived from a professor at a southwestern university. He asked if I knew anything about a Texas resident named Leonard Garza, who allegedly was a student at Lawrence Academy in Falmouth, Massachusetts between 1855 and 1860. The professor didn't sound very hopeful that I would be able to verify this claim, and neither was I. Garza? Never heard of him. In fact, I'd never heard of any Latino Texan living in Falmouth before the Civil War.

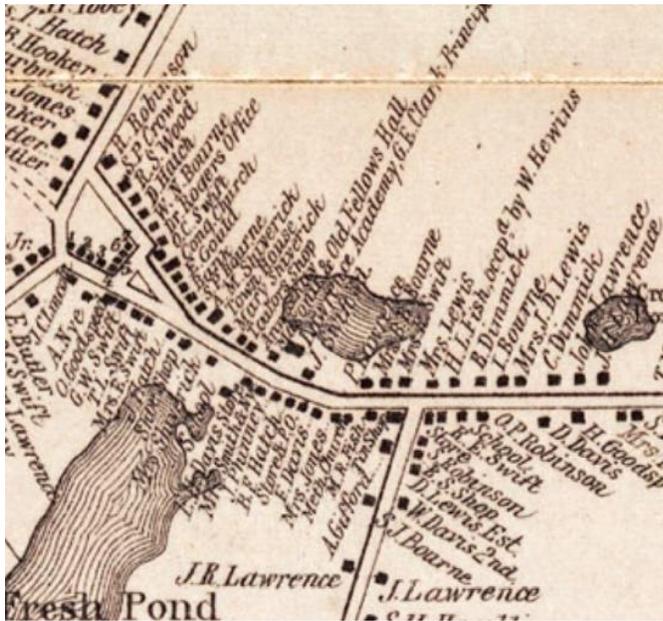


Lawrence Academy, ca. 1870. The Academy is now the Chamber of Commerce building.



Lawrence Academy was a private school, originally called Falmouth Academy, begun by a group of local citizens in 1835. When Shubael Lawrence of Hatchville bequeathed the school \$10,000 in 1842, the trustees cheerfully changed its name to comply with his wishes. Lawrence Academy offered instruction above and beyond what students could find in the town's public grammar schools.ⁱⁱ

Achsah (Shiverick) Clarke and her husband George Clarke, principal of Lawrence Academy.



1858 map of Falmouth Village. Fresh Pond is now Siders Pond. The triangular Village Green is north of the pond. Mary Shiverick's house, where Leonard boarded, was near the Congregational Church and the academy.

that reproduces the handwritten original pages. It didn't take long, scanning the lists of residents' names, to find what I was looking for.

In 1855, Leonard Garza, aged 9, birthplace Texas, was living in the household of Mary Shiverick, not far from where I was sitting in Conant House. In the 1860 federal census, Leonard, aged 16, was still living with the same family, although now the head of household was listed as George Clarke, son-in-law of Mary Shiverick. George Clarke was the principal of Lawrence Academy.

Holy cow! How did this kid from Texas end up going to school in Falmouth in the 1850s?

When stumped, I often turn to the *Falmouth Enterprise* online. Back issues from 1896 to 1962 are available through the website of Falmouth Public Library.ⁱⁱⁱ The *Enterprise* didn't exist when Leonard Garza was a student in Falmouth between 1855 and 1860. But an article might have been written about him in later years. It never hurts to run a search.

Bingo! I found eleven hits on the name "Garza." The social column gave numerous examples of the now elderly Leonard visiting Falmouth to meet with his old school friends, up until his death in 1923. He even wrote a letter to the editor in 1904 to excuse his absence from Old Home Week. After some more digging in the *Enterprise*, I finally found the hidden link between Texas and Lawrence Academy—a [link that was forged in the shadow of the Alamo](#).

Falmouth native Nathaniel Lewis moved to San Antonio in 1832 and opened a store on the main plaza. Soon everyone knew him as a jolly man with a sharp business instinct. His completely bald head earned him the nickname of "Don Pelon" (Mr. Baldy). When Santa Anna's army approached in February of 1836, many Texans took a stand inside the Alamo. Lewis grabbed his most valuable portable merchandise and headed for open country. He explained later, "I'm not a fighting man, I'm a businessman." After all the fighting was over, Lewis reopened his store and participated in many other ventures. He became known as one of the city fathers of modern San Antonio.

The archives have only incomplete records from Lawrence Academy. Whole years are missing. Student records and grades are mostly not preserved.

Our ledgers from Lawrence Academy were digitized just months ago by volunteer Brian Nickerson, so I didn't have to retrieve the original volumes from the vault. Clicking through the pages on my computer screen, I soon realized that we had only a few financial records for Lawrence Academy between 1855 and 1860, and nothing about the students at all.

Well, that wasn't very helpful, I thought.

But, if Leonard Garza really did live in Falmouth for five years, he might have shown up on a census. Our digital archive includes the 1855 state census and the 1860 U.S. Census for Falmouth, in a PDF format



Leonard Garza, c1890. From L. E. Daniell's [Types of Successful Men of Texas](#) (Austin, 1890).

Nathaniel Lewis was friendly with the Garza family. Garzas had been present in Bexar County, Texas since the early 1700s. They owned a sprawling ranch near the San Antonio and Medina rivers, as well as prime real estate near the center of the city itself. Leonard's father, [Jose Antonio de la Garza](#), had received permission from Spanish authorities in 1818 to operate a mint. His coins, the first ever made in Texas, bore a single star on the back—perhaps an inspiration for the Lone Star flag. Jose died in 1851. Where did his widow Josefa get the idea to send her youngest son to school in Falmouth? It must have been from their family friend Nathaniel Lewis.

Wait -- didn't I just see that name Lewis somewhere else?

I went back to the computer and pulled up the digitized records of Lawrence Academy again. Yes, there it was! Each routine financial entry had been signed by the Lawrence Academy secretary, Thomas Lewis. He was Nathaniel's first cousin.^{iv}

That's how a boy, born in 1844 in the Republic of Texas, wound up in a Cape Cod village for his secondary education—through a series of personal connections. Even in the old days, Falmouth people got around, and people from far away got to Falmouth, more than we think. You just never know who's going to turn up in this town.

Tip O'Neill famously observed that all politics is local. Considering Falmouth's unexpected ties to the Alamo, maybe we should admit that all history is local, too.

LEARN MORE:

[Read about Nathaniel Lewis's career in San Antonio.](#) [Page 327ff.]

[Read a history of the Garzas in Texas, with pictures and maps of some of their property.](#) [Search for the name Garza. See especially pages 191-221.]

ⁱ Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, respectively. I looked them up. Please don't send angry letters from Texas.

ⁱⁱ In 1890, the town acquired Lawrence Academy and turned it into a public high school named "Lawrence High." Not until 1973 did the local high school change its name to "Falmouth High." The Lawrence name has lived on in the middle school ever since.

ⁱⁱⁱ Go to falmouthpubliclibrary.org and click on "Digital Archive Enterprise." Then click "Search" at the top right of your screen and enter search terms and dates.

^{iv} Barbara Lewis Williams, *400 Years with a New England Lewes-Lewis Family* (Gateway Press, Baltimore, 1990).