

**PROCEEDINGS OF LEXINGTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND
PAPERS RELATING TO THE
HISTORY OF THE TOWN. VOL. I**

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PROCEEDINGS OF
LEXINGTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AND PAPERS RELATING TO THE

HISTORY OF THE TOWN

READ BY SOME OF THE MEMBERS

VOL. I!

LEXINGTON MASS.
PUBLISHED BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE FIRST ENGLISH PROPRIETORS OF THE SITE OF LEXINGTON VILLAGE.

READ BY REV. C. A. STAPLES, MARCH 12, 1889.

It would be interesting to know when and where the first clearing was made and the first house built on the land now occupied by the village of Lexington. The ground, no doubt, was covered by a heavy growth of timber and by fallen trees, large monarchs of the forest that had been uprooted by the tempests and lay strewn in every direction. To cut down the trees, clear away the fallen wood and prepare the land for gardens and fields must have been a difficult and laborious undertaking. Who began this work here it is impossible to determine; and yet it must have been commenced soon after the first settlement of Cambridge. As early as 1636 a road was cut through the woods from Cambridge to Concord for Rev. Peter Bulkley and his company to transport their goods to that place, where they formed a settlement. It probably ran through the woods near where our main street and the Concord road are now located.

In 1635 Rev. Thomas Shepard came from England with several friends and parishioners, and located at Cambridge. Being a Puritan, he was ejected from his pulpit in England, and for a time remained in concealment, to escape the persecuting zeal of Archbishop Laud. At length he was able to elude the vigilance

of his enemies and take ship for America with some of the men who had befriended him. In his company was Roger Herlarkenden, a young man of twenty-four, in whose house he had lain concealed.

When they arrived at Cambridge, then called Newtowne, they received a warm welcome from the settlers, whose numbers had been greatly reduced by the emigration of Rev. Mr. Hooker and his party to Connecticut, where they formed the settlements at Hartford, Windsor, and Weathersfield. The church at Cambridge was without a pastor, and Mr. Shepard was immediately installed in that office, where he remained until his death, widely useful and greatly beloved. Roger Herlarkenden had left an elder brother, Richard, in England, also a devoted friend to Mr. Shepard, whom he desired to bring to America. Probably to induce him to come, he obtained an extensive grant of land for him from the Cambridge proprietors. According to the records that grant was made January 2nd, 1636, and contained 600 acres of upland and meadow at a place called Vine Brook, in the Shawshine country, midway between Newtowne and Concord.

Richard Herlarkenden was to have this land upon the following conditions, viz: "1st. He was to send over his man, or order some other man to build upon it and improve it for him, the next summer after this next ensuing, that is the summer of 1637, and this spring, give certain intelligence that he will do so. 2d. That he come himself the next summer after, being the third from this time (that is, the summer of

1638), and if he shall fail in any or all of these conditions, then this grant to be void."

Now, there can be no doubt but that this grant covers the site of Lexington village. It was on Vine Brook, midway between Newtowne and Concord, and lay on both sides of the brook, and on both sides of the highway, as we learn from other descriptions of it. But Richard Herlarkenden did not send over his man, nor order some other man to begin a clearing and build a house on the grant; nor did he come himself, so this great tract of 600 acres, nearly a mile square, was lost to him. However, on April 2d, 1638, the grant was transferred to his brother, Roger Herlarkenden, who promised to fulfill the conditions imposed by the proprietors. But whether he made an attempt to clear the land and build we cannot tell, as he died the same year, Nov. 17th, 1638, at the age of 27, leaving a widow and two children. His loss was a great grief to Mr. Shepard and the Newtowne church. At this time they were sadly disheartened, owing to the abandonment of the place by so many families which had removed to Connecticut, and to the death of prominent men. But the college had been planted there, and soon began to draw about it generous supporters and friends.

The Herlarkenden name now disappears from our history; the children were girls and grew up in Cambridge, but probably returned to England, and we hear nothing further of their connection with the Shawshine Grant.

A more imposing personage now appears upon the