

Henry Rhodes, Patriarch of Lynn, Massachusetts
1608-1703

by

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No good genealogist should romanticize a life from sparse written records, still, there is quite a bit to be inferred about Henry Rhodes. He came to New England, an educated man who could read and write, appearing in Lynn about 1640. He sired a strong group of sons who provided family support for him and his wife in their old age. He left close to 40 living descendants when he died at age 95. He was well thought of by his old neighbors and friends, as many of them mentioned him in their wills as an administrator, witness or just in friendship. He was accorded the title "gentleman" and the town meeting dignified him by reserving a place for him at the table in meeting. He also had a litigious side, never fearing to defend his rights as he saw them.

Henry Rhodes appears in most of the classic works on early Massachusetts settlers. Frank Holmes in the Dictionary of the Ancestral Heads of New England (p.66) has Henry listed as an ironmonger born in England in 1608 and located in Lynn, Massachusetts by 1641. Several other sources agree on the c. 1608 date for Henry's birth. James Savage, in his Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England ^(p. 516) also gives a birth date of 1608, as does Howard J. Rhodes in The Rhodes Family in America (p.23) Mr. Rhodes goes on to have Henry residing on the west side of the Saugus River by 1640, representative to the General Court in 1657 and serving in King Philip's War in 1675. The History of Lynn by Alonzo Lewis

and James Newhall (p.190) has Henry Rhodes, farmer, living again on the West side of the Saugus River in 1640. Henry also operated a mill, as testified to by Captain Thomas Marshall t2 May 1638, " about 38 yeares since, the ould Water mill at Linn, which was an under shott mill, was by Mr. Howell committed to him, or before the said time, and bout 38 yeares since, the building of an over shott mill was m ved to the towne of Linn, and for incuragement to go with the said worke, they then of the Towne of Linn, Granted their Priviledges of water and water Courses to the said mill, and that this said water mill is now in the possession of Henry Roades; as witness my hand, Thomas Marshall: May 12, 1683" History of Lynn (. 157).

Henry was married to Elizabeth, possibly White, and their first, recorded child was born in 1641 when Henry was 33. This seems a bit late for the customs of the day, but there may have been another marriage or children born in England that didn't survive. Savage gives Henry's children as follows:

Eleazer b. Feb. 1641
Samuel b. Feb. 1643
Joseph b. Jan. 1645
Joshua b. April 1648
Josiah b. April 1651
Jonathan b. Aug. 1654; (d. 7 April 1677, Lynn Vital Record)
Elizabeth b. Mar. 1658

Although his son Jonathan died young, his other sons, excepting Eleazer, married and remained in Lynn, living near their father and forming what must have been a rather formidable clan. Using

c. 1700 as a cutoff date, the Vital Records of Lynn show the following marriages and births for Henry's family. Eleazer has no marriages or births recorded in Lynn but he is mentioned in his father's living will, drawn in 1693, of which more later. It is thought that three of Henry's sons married sisters, Samuel marrying Abigail Coots (or Coats), Joseph marrying Jane Coots and Josiah marrying Elizabeth Coots. Henry's family is as follows:

Eleazer -- No marriage listed nor any children mentioned in his father's deed.

Josiah and Elizabeth Coots, m. 23 July 1673

Henry b. 1 June 1674
Elizabeth b. 13 August 1676
Mary b. 21 October 1677, d. 4 February 1677/8
John b. 27 May 1679, d. 1684
Josiah b. 19 January 1680
Eleazer b. 8 July 1683
John b. 22 ~~May~~ 1685 *March*
Mary b. 26 March 1687
Jonathan b. 18 September 1692

Joseph and Jane Coots m. 25 May 1674

Samuel b. 6 March 1674/5, d. 9 July 1675
Elizabeth b. 22 August 1676
Joseph b. 14 April 1678, d. 26 July 1678
Jane b. 14 July 1679
John b. 2 January 1681
Susannah b. 18 November 1684
Mary b. 23 November 1687

Joshua and Ann Grays m. 12 June 1678

Hannah b. 28 March 1679
Joseph b. 19 January 1680, d. September 1693
Henry b. December 1682
Thomas b. 14 February 1684
Jane b. 25 February 1687/8
Mary b. 13 April 1690
Elizabeth b. 30 November 1692

Samuel and Abigail Coots m. 16 January 1681

Jonathan b. 28 November 1683
Samuel b. 2 August 1685
Abigail b. 19 January 1686
Eleazer b. 5 November 1688
Sarah b. 31 July, 1690, d. 8 October 1690
Obadiah b. 13 May 1693
Sarah b. 16 August 1696, d. July 1698
JEANE ~~Jeane~~ b. 19 August 1699
Joseph b. 25 August 1701
Benjamin b. 12 June 1704

Jonathan b. August 1654, d. 7 April 1677

Elizabeth b. March 1658

During the early years of the Lynn settlement when Henry was establishing himself and his family there is little on record about him. The records of the Town of Lynn, from its inception in 1635 until 1691, are missing, possibly having been burned, so this period in Lynn's history has had to be reconstructed from county and state records of the time. An early mention of Henry is in the Armitage Petition in the State Archives. This was a request by Joseph Armitage's wife to the Governor that she be allowed to keep the ordinary that her husband had established in Lynn (probably the Blue Anchor Tavern), he having been censured and unable to function in his usual capacity. This petition was signed by 35 residents of Lynn, one of whom was Henry, and was granted 26 October, 1643. History of Lynn Vol II, 1864-1893 (p.106-7) by James Newhall.

The probate records of Essex County do give some glimpse of Henry's standing in the community. As Henry and the men of his generation began to age he was often appointed executor or a witness to their wills.

On June 12, 1663 Richard Rooten of Lynn willed his estate to his wife while she lived, then the bulk of his estate to his kinsman Edmond Rooten with bequests to Jonathan Hartshorne, Rev. Mr. Whiting "our pastor . . . allsoe I will that Henery Rhods have 20 shillings to bee given him". Henry was a witness to this will and Mr. Rooten's wife named chief executrix and "Henery Rods my overseers and George Tayler with him". This will was proved in Salem Court 25 September 1663 by Henry Rhodes and Robert Driver. Probate Records of Essex County Vol., 1635-1664 (p. 430).

Robert Mansfield of Lynn in his will dated 3 August 1664 left bequests to his sons Joseph, John and Andrew and half his estate to his wife Elizabeth, naming his son John executor and Henry Rhodes and Nathaniel Hanford overseers. The will was proved in Ipswich Court 26 March 1667 by Henry Rhodes and William Clarke, Probate Records of Essex County Vol. II, 1665-1674 (p. 79). Henry and Nathaniel Kirtland inventoried the estate of Elizabeth Mansfield, Robert's wife, who died about 6 September 1673, aged 87, Ibid (p. 373).

George Taylor of Lynn made his will 20 December 1665 leaving his estate to his wife Elizabeth with bequests to his servant Joseph Farre and appointing Henry Rhodes and William Clarke overseers. Henry and William witnessed the will and later proved it in Ipswich Court 31 March 1668. They also took the inventory, Ibid (p. 123). Henry must have been the scribe of this inventory team as William Clarke signed with "his marke". Henry was also a witness to Henry Hall's will 2 February 1667 and on 18 October 1670 he was appointed an overseer for the will of Mrs. Frances Axey. He also witnessed it, with Joseph Armitage, the luckless proprietor of the Blue Anchor, Nathaniel Handforth and William Clarke. The will was proved by the witnesses in Salem

Court 1, 10th month, 1670. The above four also inventoried the estate.

When Thomas Coldham of Lynn made his will 14 March 1674/5 mentioning his wife Joannah, his son Clement and his grandsom Samuel Simonds he also stated, "I make choyce of my loveing wife and my loveing brother and friend Mr. Henrye Rhodes joynt executors". The will was witnessed by two of Henry's sons, Samuel and Joseph and proved in Salem Court 21:5:1675 by Andrew Mansfield and Joseph Rhodes, Probate Records of Essex County, Vol. III, 1675-1681 (p. 11 & 12).

The records of Lynn's town meetings have been published beginning with the year 1691. These records show that Henry never feared to take on the establishment and indeed must quite often have been a thorn in the side of the town fathers.

Henry's farm bordered on town lands and the line between the town common and his land was run regularly. In April 1691 a committee was chosen to run the line between the common and Henry's farm and again in 1693 a supposedly neutral person ^{From} ~~the~~ Woburn was brought in to measure Henry's 80 acres, as Henry and several of his sons said they would be satisfied with Mr. William Johnson of Woburn's measurement. Records of the Town Meeting of Lynn 1691-1701/2 Part I (p. 17-18).

Even though Henry Rhodes professed to accept Mr. Johnson's decision regarding his boundary he apparently wasn't satisfied. At the Town Meeting of 20 March 1693/4 "itt was There said Mr. Appleton desired to have a treaty with some persons in the Town about the Land Mr. Rhodes Layes Clame to: : the Town then Chose: Leftent John ffuller Leftent John Lewes Robert Potter senr

& Cornet Samuel Johnson in order to Treat with him: & thay have power to agree if thay see Cause", Ibid (p. 24). At a town meeting held 18 June 1694 it was agreed to stand by John Duiin who was being sued by Henry Rhodes for cutting wood upon land the town and Henry both laid claim to. The town also agreed to pay costs to defend John Duiin in this suit. Ibid (p. 25-26). This wasn't Henry's only problem in 1694. During the same period the town was in the process of laying out a road between Lynn and Reading that went through Rhodes' land "said way to Run straight from thence through Rhoads Land to the gate Neare Rhoades barn and soe to Continue a Longe by the stone Wall as afore sd" Ibid (p. 26).

At the town meeting of 8 March 1697/8 it was voted that the town should pay the charges arising from the action between Henry Rhodes and John Duiin "for ye sd Diuins going on ye highway throug sd Rhoads Land" Ibid (p. 53). Vol. 2 of the town meeting records continues to mention Henry Rhodes.

At his request the boundary between the Town Common and his farm was run yet again on 9 May 1701. Henry had appointed Robert Coats senr to represent him. The Selectmen's representatives could not agree with Henry on where the line ran but they finally settled the matter by designating Henry's land with several piles of stones and several marked trees and "ordered the fence should be set according Ly". The final word on the whole boundary question comes after Henry's death. Part 2 of the Lynn town meeting records (p. 19) said that on 22 October 1703 the men selected to run the boundaries of the Town Common and "ye land of Joshua & Josiah Rhoads that Lys wher sd Josiah Rhoads Now Lives" met with Josiah and Joshua & two people appointed by the Rhodeses. The two groups couldn't agree on the stone markers "which heaps

of stones was raised on ye town Common in an indirect way contrary to ye mind of ye selectemen & denyed by them to be ye bounds of sd Rhoadses Land therefore we puled down & demollished sd heaps of stones". That seems to have settled the matter. A rather pathetic note appears in the minutes of the selectmen's meeting 9 March 1702/3. Joshua Rhodes appeared before the Selectmen to plead his inability to serve as constable "by Reson of his fathers age & Infirmitie & his owne inability of body by Reason of weaknes & other things". He offered to hire Zechariah Rand to serve in his place and the offer was accepted Ibid (p. 13).

Establishing the date of Henry Rhodes' death was the original impetus for writing this article. On page 395 of Colonial Families of the United States of America Vol. VII by Nelson Osgood Rhoades (a descendant of Henry) a death date of 1675 is given. This same date is also found in a hand-written genealogy of the Rhodes family by Stanley Wordbury Carleton (#170a) in the Lynn Historical Society. The citation for this date is the terrifying phrase, "family records". Since one can't consult them it is difficult to refute them. A search of county and state records has, however, produced several documents that do prove conclusively that Henry Rhodes lived into the 18th Century. ^{IN} The State Archives, Ecclesiastical Records 1679-1739, Vol. II (p. 1) is a document witnessed by Henry Rhodes and Samuel Cobbet. It is a petition by Lynn's minister, the Rev. Samuel Whiting, dated 23 April 1679 to the General Court stating that when he came to New England 43 years before, his brother-in-law Richard Westland of Boston, England, Alderman, loaned 50 pounds to "this colony, then low" expecting to receive 500-600 acres of farmland in return, this land he gave to Rev. Whiting. Rev. Whiting, knowing that he was dying, asked the Court for the 500-600

acres for his children as a recompense for his many years of pastorship, "having little of considerable estate I brought left for them". This petition was granted 29 May 1679. Rev. Whiting died 11 December, 1679, aged 82, having preached at Lynn for 43 years. This surely is the same Henry, as Rev. Whiting would have chosen someone who knew him in the old days to witness his statement.

The History of Lynn (p. 281-282) cites a petition presented to the General Court by some of the inhabitants of Lynn and surrounding towns, for recompense for their services in King Philip's War, 1675. This petition was signed by Henry Rhodes, among others. On 3 June 1685 the Court granted them a tract of land in Worcester County, 8 miles square, on condition that 30 families with a minister should settle there within four years. George Mason Bodge, in Soldiers of King Philip's War, also mentions Henry Rhodes as among the signers of this petition and says that few of those entitled to the land ever settled it as the place was remote from other Massachusetts settlements and in Nipmunk County (p. 406-7).

The Records of Ye Towne Meetings of Lyn, 1691-1701/2 Vol. I (p. 8) show a vote that "Mr. Henary Rhodes (among others) should set at the table". A young man would most likely not have had this honor.

The best proof of Henry's surviving until 1703 came from the Grantor Index at the Essex County Registry of Deeds. Vol. 18, page 10 listed a document recorded 30 March 1705 from Henry Rhodes to Josiah Rhodes. This proved to be a deed of sale executed 27 March 1693 "Henry Rhodes Senr personally appearing before me this 27th day of March 1693 acknowledged this instrument

to be his voluntary act and deed before William Johnson, Justice..... Signed, sealed and DD in ye presence of us John Witt: JX Jeremiah Swaine". In the body of this deed Henry Rhodes Gentleman gave to his son Josiah his house and lands "for divers causes & upon good considerations moving me thereunto but more especially for & in consideration of the dutyfullness of my son Josiah Rhodes of Lynn & for other causes & considerations more especially moving me thereunto and that my son Josiah Rhodes with his brothers namely Eleazer, Samuel, Joseph & Josiah (Should this be Joshua, who is mentioned later?) do provide for & maintain myself & my dear & loving wife Elizabeth Rhodes their own & natural Mother during our natural lives as I have covenanted & agreed with my sons & heirs named & they with me during mine & my wives life". This names all Henry's known sons except Jonathan who had died many years before this. It is also interesting to note that Elizabeth, his wife and mother to his sons, was still alive in 1693. She died, according to Lynn Vital Records, in 1700. "Elizabeth, w. Henary, Nov. 25, 1700°, just a small thing but it didn't say relict or widow, but wife, which implied that Henry still lived.

Henry's Deed of Sale continued to enumerate his lands, a fascinating list including two islands of sedge lying in the Saugus River. He reserved only the mineral rights to his other sons, if any were found. He also says "my intent & meaning of this deed of gift is that if my son Josiah Rhodes die & leave no male heir nor if his son or sons survive him & ---- any of them leave a male heir begotten in lawfull marriage that then this inheritance of lands he shall return to my sons Eleazer & Joshua Rhodes & to the sons after them & to any surviving of them equally to be divided & so to continue a good & lawfull Estate of Inheritance to ye last & longest liver of the male heirs begotten in lawfull marriage".

This living will mentions all of Henry's known sons and his wife Elizabeth and was entered in court records after Henry's death in 1705. A last note, the Lynn Vital Records records a death for Rhodes, Henry ---- 1703. With Henry's death, an era came to an end. No doubt he was the last survivor of the early days of Lynn's settlement, having lived through 63 years of Lynn's history. He truly deserves the title patriarch, as his descendants have multiplied and spread across the length and breadth of America.