

**William Grimes**  
**A Brief Biography**  
**By Bill Poole**

**George Grimes the Great Grandfather of William Grimes (known as William Jr.),** the subject of this biography, was born about 1640 in an unknown location(based on his tombstone epitaph).<sup>1</sup> He was married in Charlestown, MA on April 15, 1675 to Elizabeth Blanchard by magistrate Richard Russell.<sup>2</sup> On February 29, 1675 he was recorded as a member of Captain Mosely's company in Dedham Plain. On October 9, 1675 he was listed as a member of Captain Samuel Mosley's Company taken at Dedham, MA during Metacomet's or King Phillip's War.<sup>3</sup> By 1679 George and Elizabeth were in Billerica, MA where their five children were born: 1. **William**, born November 11, 1677, died young; 2. **Elizabeth**, born June 28, 1679; 3. **Jonathan**, born June 22, 1683; 4. **Ruth**, born July 4, 1681; and 5. **William I, Grandfather of William the subject of this essay**, born June 28, 1679.<sup>4</sup>

George died in Lexington on July 28, 1716 at age 76. He is buried in Lexington/s Old Burying ground.<sup>5</sup> The record of Elizabeth's death or the location of her burial; have not yet been found.



Here Lyes ye  
Body of George  
Grimes Aged 76  
Years Who Decd.  
July ye 28th 1716.

**William Grimes I, Grandfather of William Grimes Jr.,** the subject of this biography, married Mary Simonds, born December 15, 1684, daughter of Joseph and Mary Tidd Simonds. They had seven children: 1. **William Sr. the father of William Jr.** born about 1706; 2. **Sarah**, born about 1709; 3. **Jonathan**, baptized in Lexington June 28, 1713; 4. **Joseph**, baptized at Lexington July 31, 1715; 5. **Mary**, baptized in Lexington August 26, 1716; 6. **Elizabeth**, baptized at Lexington, June 30, 1715; and 7. **Ruth**, baptized in Lexington August 23, 1719.<sup>6</sup>

William I is usually associated with the town of Billerica, MA, but also with the towns of Bedford and Lexington, MA as well. William himself was born in Billerica and was buried in Lexington, but his probate records give his place of residence as Billerica. The places of birth of two of his children are not recorded, but the other five children were baptized in Lexington, and all but one of them were married at Bedford.<sup>7</sup>

When William I died, the description of his homestead and other property suggests why there are records in all three towns, Billerica, Bedford and Lexington. In fact, in the probate records, he is described as being from “Billerica (Bedford).” It might have been proximity to the Lexington Meeting House that chose them to join that church. I

Homestead containing two hundred and thirty acres with the orchards plow land, meadow land, pasture land and wilderness land bounded southerly upon Lexington line westerly upon the land of John Hartwell and Josiah Fasset and then northerly upon Shawsheen River the river being the bounds to the bridge continuing northerly by a highway to the land of Francis Wilson & thereafter by the land of Lt. John Wilson upon his land to Woburn line continuing upon Woburn line to Lexington line appraised at 681 pounds ten shillings<sup>8</sup>

He additionally owned twenty acres in Lexington upland adjoining the homestead and also fourteen acres of meadow and swamp in Lexington. In Billerica he owned a six acre lot in the “Great Swamp” and a small lot in the center of town.<sup>9</sup>

Considering the description of the homestead as being bounded by the Lexington and Woburn lines and running along the Shawsheen River, it appears that the homestead was located in modern Bedford, MA. The Lexington land bordering the homestead and the names of John Hartwell and John Wilson also suggest the proximity to Bedford. Part of Billerica was set off to Bedford, which may also account for the family records appearing in both towns. According to the Lexington Tax Roles and their probate records, both his son William Sr., and his grandson William Jr. lived in Lexington, William Sr, as early as 1741 and William Jr. is listed on the 1774 and 1775 tax roles<sup>10</sup>

William I died on June 1, 1719 at age 43.<sup>11</sup> At his death, Mary was left with thirteen year old William, ten year old Sarah, 6 year old Jonathan, Mary almost 3, Elizabeth not yet 2, and her unborn child, Ruth, with whom she was over 6 months pregnant. Frustratingly, so far I have not yet found any more about Mary for nearly the next ten years, at which time guardianships were being arranged for her children.

At that time it was usual for a guardian to be appointed to care for the children who had not reached the age of twenty-one. A parent could arrange for a guardian, a child after age sixteen could choose their own, or the court could appoint one. At the time that guardianships were being arranged.

On November 11, at Mary’s request, William Locke of Woburn, yeoman was named guardian of four of her children: Sarah age 19, Joseph age 14, Elizabeth age 12 and Ruth age 10. On February 1, 1729, Nathaniel Trask of Lexington, yeoman assumed guardianship of Joseph age 15, and on May 24, 1725 of Elizabeth age 14 and Ruth age 13.<sup>12</sup>

William Jr. at age 22 had reached his majority and was not subject to guardianship. Jonathan, at age 16, chose on November 13, 1727, Jonathan Bacon, blacksmith of Billerica to be his guardian.<sup>13</sup> There is no record of a guardianship of Mary’s fifth child and namesake, Mary.

William I died intestate, that is without a will. His estate was probated on June 17, 1719. It was valued at £752 and 15 shillings, and set out from this for the widow’s third was £250 and 8 shillings and 4 pence.<sup>14</sup> On January 15, 1759 sometime after Mary’s death, her third was divided among the six children each receiving, after charges, £14—5 shillings—11 pence—3 1/3 farthings.<sup>15</sup>



William I is buried in Lexington's Old Burying Ground and Mary's has not been located

Here Lyes ye  
Body of William  
Grimes Who  
Decd June ye  
1st 1719 in ye 43rd  
Year of His Age.<sup>16</sup>

**William Sr., father of William Jr.** the subject of this biography, married in Bedford, MA on January 1, 1740/41, Mary Whitney, who died in Bedford on July 15, 1742. William Sr. then married Bethia, maiden name and location of marriage unknown. Bethia died March 15, 1772 at the age of 49, so she was born in 1723, meaning that at the time of their marriage, she was 17 years younger than William Sr. They had 5 children all born in Lexington: **William Jr.** the subject of this biography, born September 19, 1744; 2. **Joseph**, born October 22, 1746, died March 26, 1750 aged three years 5 months; 3. **John**, baptized December 25, 1748, died March 28, 1750 aged about one year three months; 4. **Mary**, born July 27, 1751; and 5. **Sarah**, born July 18, 1753.<sup>17</sup>

There were repeated epidemics of smallpox in Boston and vicinity in the 1700s with those of 1721. 1752, 1764 and 1775 were particularly severe. Perhaps that what caused the deaths of Joseph and John, but childhood diseases of several types were deadly for children in that period. In fact, if you survived childhood, you had a fairly good chance of living a full life.

William Sr. and Bethia lived in Lexington. The description of the property as lying on the Bedford-Lexington line, the highway to Bedford and the road to Woburn would locate the property in Northeast Lexington. He died November 6, 1766 in his 60<sup>th</sup> year. He died intestate and his estate was probated on March 31, 1777 with Bethia named as administrator.<sup>18</sup>

The estate was valued as shown below.

£	s	p	
45	06	10	personal property
14	02	00	Two sheep at 12s, Horse £8 14s, a pair of Oxen £7
10	06	00	Horse £8 14s, swine £1 12
40	00	00	Note due from William Grimes Jr. payable 25 <sup>th</sup> of Oct 1768 without interest
04	08	06	Note of 8 pounds three pence due from Capt. Joseph Fitch of Bedford and eight year interest due 25 <sup>th</sup> March last year
<u>320</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>00</u>	all the Real Estate and Buildings
434	02	04	

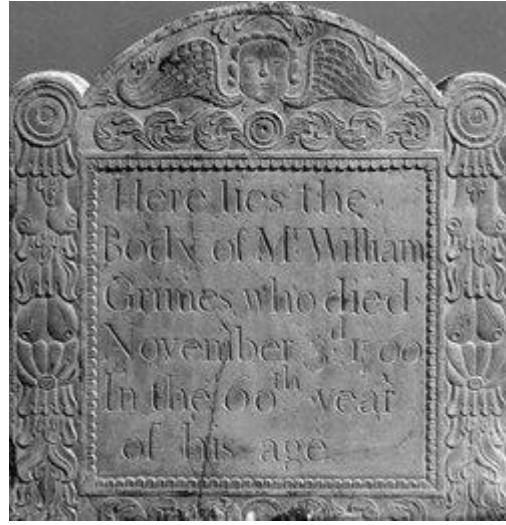
The widow's third was set off for Bethia while William Jr, received the other two thirds from which he was to give 49 pounds, nine shillings and five pence to each of his two sisters, Mary and Sarah.<sup>19</sup> Mary at 15 and Sarah at 13 were both placed under the guardianship of William Reed, yeoman of Lexington. Mary married Samuel Ditson of Billerica on September 18, 1770 and Sarah married David Blanchard of Woburn, MA about April 4, 1778. On March 29, 1782 they and their husbands signed a document agreeing that they had received all the monies owed them from their father's estate and released Deacon Samuel Reed of all further demands against the estate.<sup>20</sup>

It is stated that William Jr., the subject of this biography, lived on Grove Street in Lexington. That might have been land he had purchased himself or was part of his inheritance. However, it certainly would have located part of the family in northeast Lexington as suggested by the property descriptions. So the Grimes family lands would have lain partly in the towns of Billerica, Bedford and Lexington.

The graves of both William Sr and Bethia are in Lexington's Old Burying Ground. Thus, buried there are William Jr.'s great grandfather George, grandfather William I, father William Sr. and mother Bethia.<sup>21</sup>



Here lies the  
Body of Mrs.  
Bethiah Grimes,  
Wife of Mr. William  
Grimes who died  
March 15th 1772.  
In ye 49th year of her age.



Here lies the  
Body of Mr. William  
Grimes who died  
November 3d. 1766.  
In the 60th year  
of his age.

**William Jr., the subject of this biography**, lived at some distance from the Lexington Common, around which much of the town’s activities took place. The meeting house upon the common functioned not only as a place of worship, but also as the political center where the selectmen’s and town’s meetings were held. The Lexington Militia drilled and held their muster upon the common and despite the distance William Jr. would have rallied to the common with his fellow members of the militia.

It was here on the evening of April 18, 1775, having heard that there a British expeditionary force was on the way to seize and destroy the provincial arms and military supplies stored at Concord, that the men of the militia gathered in response to the summons of their captain, John Parker. Having no word of the approach of the Regulars, Captain Parker temporarily dismissed his men telling them to be ready to respond to the sound of the drum.

It was close to six o’clock in the morning when a rider rode hastily up to Buckman’s Tavern to warn Captain Parker that the Regulars “within a half a mile.”<sup>22</sup> In fact they were less than a quarter of a mile away when Parker called out to Drummer William Diamond to sound the assembly. The gathering of the militiamen was hurried and not yet complete when the British troops under the command of Major John Pitcairn came rushing toward the still assembling Colonials.

William Jr. was one of thirty-four participants of the engagement on the common who signed a combined deposition describing what had taken place.

“We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, Mos. Harrington, Sr., Thomas Harrington, Daniel Harrington, William Grimes, William Tidd, Isaac Hastings, Jonas Stone Jr., James Wyman, Thad. Harrington, John Chandler, Joshua Reed, Jr., Joseph Simonds, Phineas Smith, John Chandler, Jr., Reuben Locke, Joel Viles, Nathan Reed, Samuel Tidd, Benjamin Locke, Thomas Winship, Simeon Snow, John Smith, Mos. Harrington, 3d., Joshua Reed, Ebenezer Parker, John Harrington, Enoch

Wellington, John Hosmer, Isaac Green, Phineas Stearns, Isaac Durant, Thos. Hadley, Jr. all inhabitants of Lexington in the County of Middlesex, and Colony of Massachusetts Bay, in New England, do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about one or two o'clock in the morning, being informed that several officers of the Regulars had, the evening before, been riding up and down the road, and had detained and insulted the inhabitants passing the same; and also understanding that a body of Regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord, with intent (so it was supposed) to take the stores belonging to the Colony in that Town, we were alarmed; and having met at the place of our company's parade, were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present, with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare, that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing the drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us. Some of our troops were coming up to the parade, and others had reached it; at which time the Company began to disperse. Whilst our backs were turned on the troops we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded. Not a gun was fired by any person in our Company on the Regulars, to our knowledge, before they fired on us, and they continued firing until we had all made our escape."<sup>23</sup>

William Jr. performed other service after the engagement on Lexington Common. The following are taken from *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* compiled and printed between 1896—1908.<sup>24</sup>

GRIMES, WILLIAM. Lexington. Private, in a detachment from Lexington militia co. commanded by Capt. John Parker; service 1 day; detachment reported on command at Cambridge from May 6 to May 10, 1775, by order of Committee of Safety; *also*, same detachment; service from June 17 to June 18, 1775, 2 days at Cambridge, by order of Committee of Safety.

This duty was during the initial stage of the siege of Boston and also to support the army during the Battle of Bunker Hill, but in which the detachment did not take part.

GRIMES WILLIAM. Sergeant, Capt. Edmund Munroe's detachment from the alarm co. of Lexington; service from May 10 to May 20, 1775, 5 days, at Cambridge, by order of Committee of Safety.

This service was again in support of the siege of Boston.

GRIMES, WILLIAM. Private, Capt. John Bridge's co., Col. Eleazer Brooks's regt.; service from March 4 to March 8, 1776, 5 days; company stationed at Roxbury.

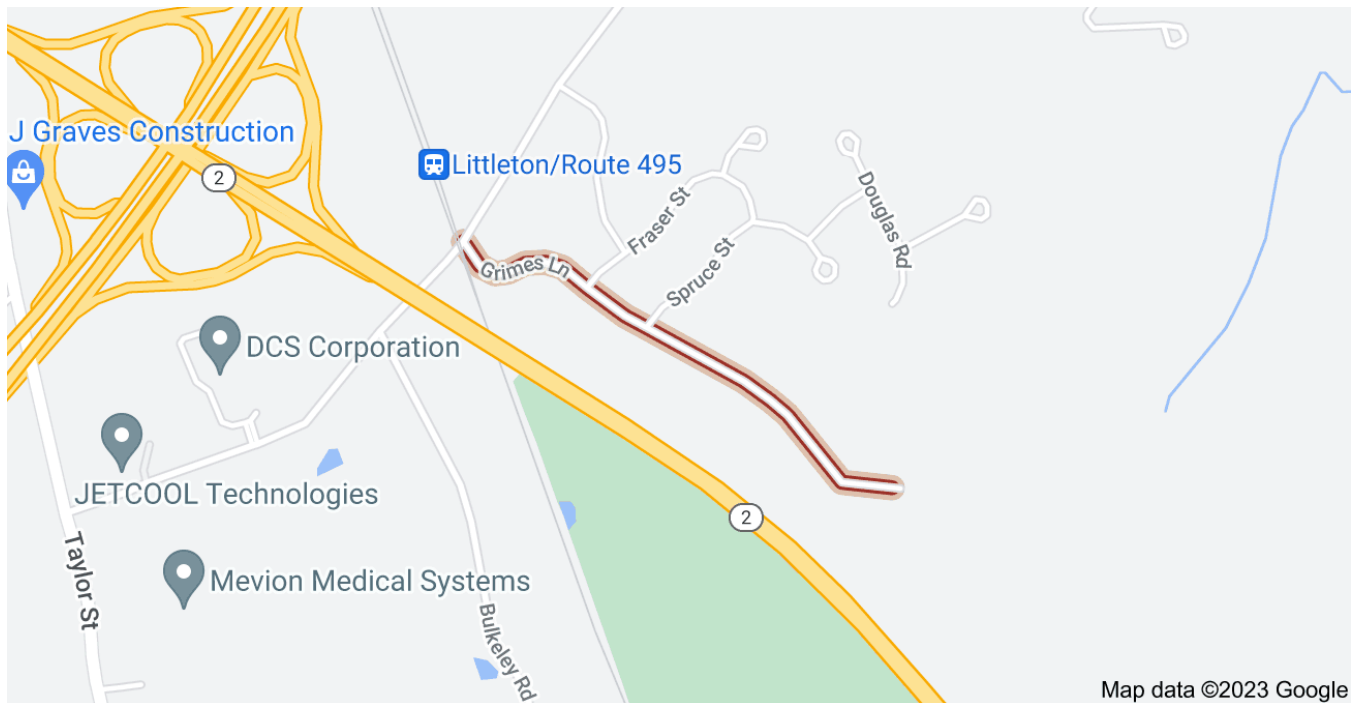
This was during the fortifications of Dorchester Heights and the mounting of the cannon brought from Fort Ticonderoga by Colonel Henry Knox. This action eventually forced the British to evacuate the town of Boston.

GRIMES, WILLIAM, Lexington. Sergeant, Capt. Simon Hunt's co., Col. Eleazer Brooks's regt.; company return [year not given]; said Grimes reported as in camp at White Plains; *also* reported sick, and as having lost a coat in battle; *also*, same co. and regt.; enlisted Nov. 3, 1777; service to April 3, 1778, 5 mos., at Cambridge.

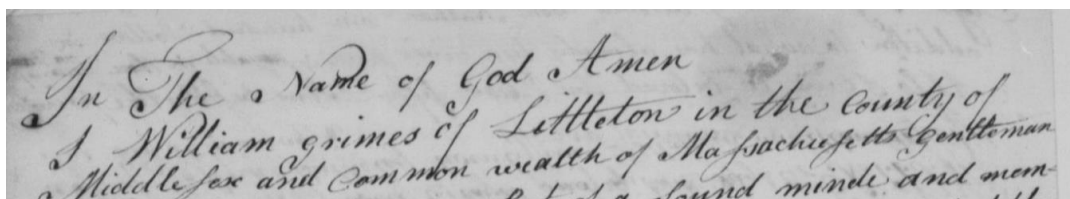
This is an interesting entry since it obviously refers to two different periods of service, the first undated. However, Colonel Brooks commanded a regiment of Middlesex, MA militia at the Battle of White Plains in October of 1776. The inference might be that it was during this battle that William Jr. lost his coat, and before or after which he was reported sick. The second 5 month period from November 3, 1777 to April 3, 1778 would have been in garrison duty at Cambridge.

William Jr. had married in Lexington on January 21, 1766, Abigail Reed, born in Lexington on September 22, 1746, daughter of William Jr. and Abigail Stone Reed. Their first three of their children were born in Lexington: 1. **William**, born May 27, 1768; 2. **Nabby**, born June 22, 1770; and 3. **Nathan**, born December 16, 1772. Sometime before 1780, William Jr. and Abigail left Lexington for Littleton, MA where their last two children were born. 4. **Eliab**, born March 20, 1780 and 5. **Thaddeus**, born January 25, 1782.<sup>25</sup>

In Littleton, William Jr. was a property holder. According to the October 1, 1798 tax records of Littleton, he owned a farm, one barn thereon, one cooper shop, and 70 acres of land valued at \$862. 50. He also owned a dwelling house on a piece of property of 20 purchases (605 square yards) valued at \$360.<sup>26</sup> There is a Grimes Lane that still exists in Littleton, but it is not certain that it is the site of William Jr.'s property.



William Jr. died in Littleton on May 24, 1815 age 70. In his will he styled himself a gentleman



His will was probated on September 15, 1815. He first ensured that his widow Abigail would be taken care of and then left bequests to each of his children that would supplement what he had already given them.

First I give and bequeath to my Beloved Wife the southeasterly part in my Dwelling house also the use of the stove and a rite in the sellar and Chamber also a horse and Chaise to be provided for her use at any time and all times when she pleases also I give to my Wife two good Beds and Beding for the same and all the other household Furniture during her natural life Also I order my executor to provide her firewood cut up at the Door fit for the fire. Also I give her five bushels of Indian corn and four of rie [rye] Eighty weight of pork and fifty weight of Beef five barrels of Sider one quarter of a hundred of flour ten pounds of flax six pounds of Cotton wool and four pounds of Sheeps wool and three pairs of shoes all to be

brought into her yearly, Butter and Cheese Sugar and Tea and any kind of Spirits and other Small necessary articles to be brought in as she needs them.

Also I give to my beloved Son William one hundred Dollars to be paid in Three years after my decease it being in addition to what I have already given him;

Also I give to my well beloved and only daughter Nabby, the wife of Joseph Bulkeley twenty five Dollars in addition to what She had at marriage;

Also I give to my beloved son Nathan one hundred dollars in addition to what has already been given him: payable in three years after my death;

Also I give to my beloved son Eliab fifty dollars besides the privilege of learning a mechanical art:

Also I give to my beloved Son Thaddeus whom I likewise Constitute make and ordain to be the Sole executor of this my last will and testament All the remainder of my Real and Personal Estate; And all the household Furniture and other effects which I have given the improvement of to my wife that may remain after her Decease to return to my son Thaddeus With his paying my just debts and funeral charges and bringing into his mother as I have given her and paying out to his brothers and sisters as I have given them. Likewise to pay the funeral charges of his mother and to provide for each a decent pair of grave stones.

After which by him freely to possess and enjoy.<sup>27</sup>

Abigail died in Littleton on March 3, 1835 at the unusually advanced age of 90. They both are buried in Littleton's Westlawn Cemetery as are three of their five children.<sup>28</sup>



In memory of  
Mr.  
William Grimes  
who died  
May 24, 1815;  
Æt. 70



In memory of  
Mrs. Abigail  
wife of Mr.  
William Grimes,  
who died  
May 3, 1835;  
Æt. 90





The plaque affixed to William Jr.'s gravestone to honor his service on April 19th



Grave of Nabby Grimes  
Died age 88



Grave of Thaddeus Grimes  
Died age 75



Grave of Nathan Grimes  
Died age 88

The other two children, Nathan and William, moved to New Hampshire and Vermont. Nathan Died in Orford, NH, and William after living in Orford for ten years moved to Newport, VT where he died. The children of William Jr. and Abigail all lived to advanced ages as had their parents.



Nathan Grimes died at age 83  
Buried in West Cemetery Orford, NH

William Grimes died at age 74  
Buried Lake Road Cemetery Newport, VT

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Brown, Francis H., M.D., *Lexington Epitaphs, A Copy of EPITAPHS in The Old Burying Ground of Lexington, Massachusetts, Lexington, MA, The Lexington Historical Society, 1905, p. 43.*
- <sup>2</sup>Massachusetts Vital Records Volume Charlestown VI p. 92.
- <sup>3</sup>Vital Records from the New England Historical and Genealogical Register, volume 8, Indian War Papers, pages 241-42.
- <sup>4</sup>Vital Records of Billerica, MA to the End of the Year 1849 at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Billerica/>
- <sup>5</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>6</sup>Hudson, Charles, *History of the Town of Lexington from First Settlement to 1868 Revised and Continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society, in Two Volumes, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912, Volume II, Genealogies, p. 255.*
- <sup>7</sup>Vital Records of Bedford, MA to the End of the Year 1849 at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Bedford/>
- <sup>8</sup>Middlesex County, MA: Probate File Papers 1648-1871, Volume Middlesex Cases 8000-9999, pages 9626:1-24.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup>Tax Rolls at [http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual\\_exhibit/vex8/images/032E44F5-EB00-4097-BC8B-368341231190.jpg](http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual_exhibit/vex8/images/032E44F5-EB00-4097-BC8B-368341231190.jpg); [http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual\\_exhibit/vex8/images/48C4FAAD-1A2F-4CA8-B080-201628682570.jpg](http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual_exhibit/vex8/images/48C4FAAD-1A2F-4CA8-B080-201628682570.jpg); [http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual\\_exhibit/vex8/images/635E7BD4-E0B6-460A-A63E-210223006073.jpg](http://lexingtonheritage.org/virtual_exhibit/vex8/images/635E7BD4-E0B6-460A-A63E-210223006073.jpg)
- <sup>11</sup>Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 255; Vital Records of Lexington, MA to the End of the Year 1897.
- <sup>12</sup>Middlesex County, MA: Probate File Papers 1648-1871, Volume Middlesex Cases 8000-9999, pages 9627:1-11.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pages 9728:1-8.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pages 9626:1-18.

- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pages 9626:19-24.
- <sup>16</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 43, Find a Grave at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16639494/william-grimes>
- <sup>17</sup>Hudson, *Genealogies, op. cit.*, p. 255; Vital Records of Lexington, MA to the End of the Year 1897 at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Lexington/>
- <sup>18</sup>Middlesex County, MA: Probate File Papers 1648-1871, Volume Middlesex Cases 8000-9999, pages 9939:1-12
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, page 9939:11
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, pages 9940:1-3
- <sup>21</sup>Brown, *op. cit.* page 43; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16639495/william-grimes>;  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16639492/bethiah-grimes>
- <sup>22</sup>Kehoe Vincent J.R., "We Were There April 19, 1775 The American Rebels," Self-Published, January 1, 1975
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, Affidavit of Sylvanus Wood, p. 260.
- <sup>24</sup>Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A compilation from the Archives Prepared and Published by the Secretary of the Commonwealth in Accordance with Chapter 100, Resolves of 1891, Boston, Wright & Potter, 1896-1908, Volume 6, page 898.
- <sup>25</sup>Vital Records of Lexington, MA; Littleton, MA: Records, 1629-1851. (Online database: **AmericanAncestors.org**, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2004), (Orig. Pub. Town of Littleton, Records of Littleton, Massachusetts, 1900).
- <sup>26</sup>*Massachusetts and Maine: Direct Tax, 1798*. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2003.) Original manuscript: Direct tax list of 1798 for Massachusetts and Maine, 1798. R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.  
<https://www.americanancestors.org/DB183/i/13163/256/235220409>
- <sup>27</sup>Middlesex County, MA: Probate File Papers 1648-1871, Volume Middlesex Cases 8000 9999 pages 9941:1-9.
- <sup>28</sup><https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25521336/abigail-grimes>;  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25521350/william-grimes>  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25006223/nabby-bulkeley>  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25521347/thaddeus-grimes>  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25521339/eliab-grimes>
- <sup>29</sup><https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/83189062/nathan-grimes>  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/147521810/william-grimes>

The elm tree by the Baptist parsonage was set out by Mrs. Nye, the mother of the late Mr. Thomas Nye. The elm tree on the sidewalk between Mr. Everett E. Kimball's and Mr. William Grimes' is the ' Rogers Tree," so named by Mrs. Zadoc Rogers, who lived where Mr. Grimes does, and paid some young men live dollars to set it out where she designated.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/83189062/nathan-grimes>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/83189272/hepsibah-grimes>  
west Cemetery Orford, Grafton County, NH