

THE SITE OF THE FIRST COLLEGE BUILDING AT
CAMBRIDGE.

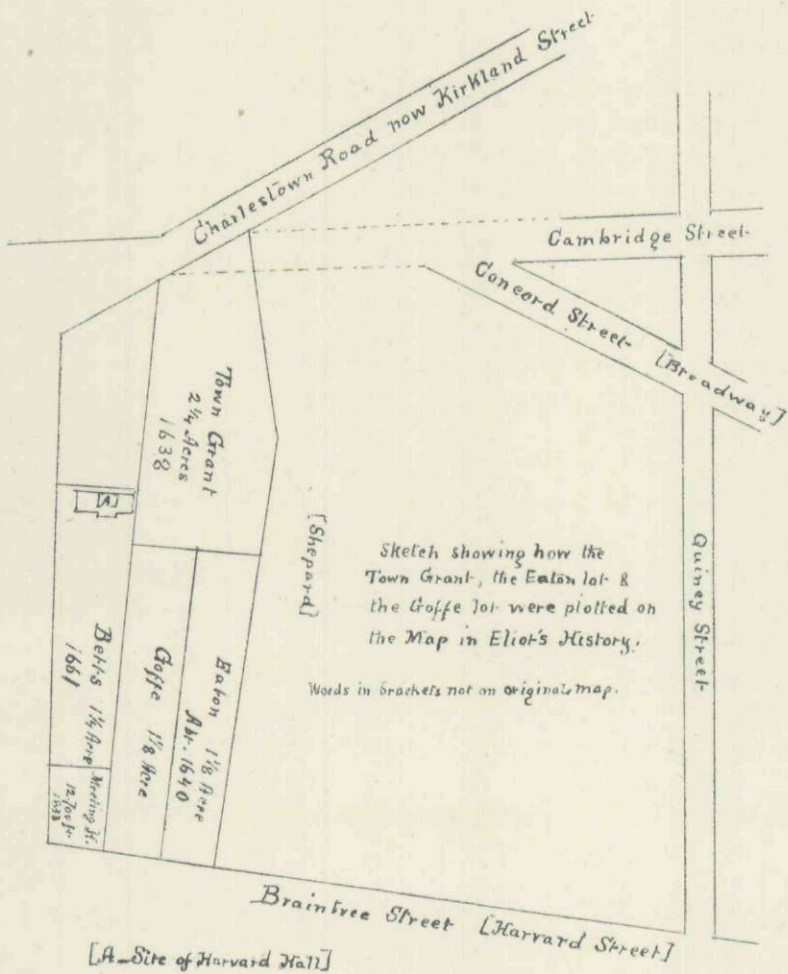
BY ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS.

It is a singular fact that knowledge of the exact site of the first college building has been lost. We know where Governor Dudley's house stood; a tablet marks the spot where Stephen Daye lived; knowledge has been preserved of the sites of the first meeting-house and the first school-house in Cambridge, but when we come to the first college building, by far the most interesting building to the historian and antiquary that has ever been erected in Cambridge, we cannot positively state that the spot where it stood is to be found within the limits of the present college yard. The probability that this was so is great and almost amounts to a certainty. If we can fix the title to any portion of the land which now constitutes the college yard, in the name of the college in 1638, it is to that spot we should direct our search for traces of the lost building.

The early records of Cambridge are contained in two volumes respectively devoted to "Town" and "Proprietary" records. The proprietary records do not mention any grant or title which can be construed as directly lodged in the college in 1638, but in the town records, in a list of the grants which had been made at that time out of the Ox pasture, mention is made of two and two-thirds acres to "the Professor" for a school or college. So far as is known this grant was the only one at that date through which title to any land had been given to the college. Do these two and two-thirds acres constitute a part of the college yard?

In 1848, Samuel A. Eliot published a history of Harvard College. An attempt was made at that time to trace back the titles of the several lots which make up the college yard, and a map was appended to the publication, on which the approximate boundaries of the lots as originally granted were indicated. The history of some of these lots was sufficiently well known to disclose their situation and their boundaries with reasonable certainty. These having been identified, the location of other lots concerning which less was known, was determined with approximate accuracy. The plotting of these boundaries left a lot of two and a quarter acres on the plan, which fronted on Kirkland street, or the old Charlestown highway. This lot extended back to the middle of the quadrangle and comprehended within its bounds a portion of the present Cambridge street. The grant of two and two-thirds acres to the professor, which has been already alluded to, was accepted by the maker of the map as the probable source of title for this lot. The author of the history says: "The appropriation of two and two-thirds acres to the school appears on the plan reduced to two and a quarter acres; and it must be regarded as a pretty close approximation, considering the vagueness of the description given of so many of the adjoining lots, the prevailing inaccuracy of measurement in those days (before land was sold by the square foot and before square inches had become appreciable), and making allowance for the quantity which has been taken by public authority for widening the streets, which in the seventeenth century were merely lanes."

If this identification with the lot on the plan, of the grant to the professor in 1638, is correct, it is of great importance in connection with our search for the site of the original building, because in that event we have established the location of a lot, the title to which was in the college in 1638 and has remained in its unbroken possession until today. Moreover this grant furnished the only title, so far as



Charlestown Road now Kirkland Street

Cambridge Street

Concord Street [Broadway]

Quincy Street

[Shepard]

Sketch showing how the
Town Grant, the Eaton lot &
the Goffe lot were plotted on
the Map in Eliot's History.

Words in brackets not on original map.

Brainfree Street [Harvard Street]

[A - Site of Harvard Hall]

Town Grant
2 1/4 Acres
1638

Eaton
1 1/8 Acre
N.H. 1640

Goffe
1 1/8 Acre

Beh's
1 1/4 Acre
1661

Manning's
12 7/10 Acre
1693

M

is known, that the college then had to land in Cambridge. Let us examine the premises on which the identification rests. If they are incorrect, then the preference which would be given to this particular lot will be correspondingly diminished.

To ascertain whether the grant of two and two-thirds acres can properly be located in the college yard we must have recourse to the original grants. We find in the town records the following entry: "1638. Md. It is agreed that the old ox pasture that lieth [two or three words gone] the way to Charlestowne, shall have the other part on the North side of the path added to it and impropriated to some of the purchasers and others that it now stands in manner hereunder written."

Then follow two lists of grants in separate columns headed respectively "The North Side" and "On the South side of the Path." In the column headed "The North Side" is this entry: "The Professor $2\frac{2}{3}$." In the column headed "On the South side of the Path" this entry appears: "Mr. Eaton $\frac{3}{2}$ r." It is not important what the missing words in the heading were, but it is not improbable that the sentence if filled out would read, "the old ox pasture that lieth on both sides the way to Charlestowne." There is no doubt, however, that the record shows that "The Professor" had $2\frac{2}{3}$ acres granted him on "the North Side," and that Mr. Eaton had 2 acres 2 roods granted him "on the South side of the Path."

The following entry describes more particularly the intent of the town in making the grant to the Professor.

"Md. The 2 acres and $\frac{2}{3}$ above mentioned to the Professor is to the Town's use forever for a public school or College; and to the use of Mr. Nath. Eaton as long as he shall be employed in that work; so that at his death or ceasing from that work he or his shall be allowed according to the charges he hath been at in building or fencing."

An analysis of this record shows that, while the grant is

plainly enough to the College for a public use, the identification with the two and one-quarter acres of the plan fails. The grant is on the north side, while the lot is on the south side of the Charlestown path or way.

There can be no reconciliation of this difference in the descriptions of the two lots unless it shall appear that the identification of Kirkland street with the Charlestown highway is a mistake, or that the location of the Charlestown highway was, during the period under discussion, changed to the northward, so that lots which in 1638 were properly described as on the north side, were at a later date to be found upon the south side of the highway. There will be no occasion to examine these two questions separately. The discussion of the second proposition will practically carry us over grounds which will enable us to determine the first.

At the outset, the suggestion that the Charlestown highway may have been moved to the northward, thus affecting the descriptions of the lots in their relation to the highway, seems improbable, but a moment's reflection will show that it is entitled to consideration. When Braintree street was laid out, several lots which are now included within the College yard, each containing a fraction of an acre, were granted as house lots. These lots faced to the southward on Braintree street, and ran through to a lane in the rear called Cow Yard Lane, which evidently must have been parallel to Braintree street. Each of these house lots carried with it an acre of land on the north side of Cow Yard Lane, granted out of the Ox pasture, on which, according to the descriptions in the records, stood the barns and out-buildings belonging to the several house lots. The lines of these lots nearly coincided with the cardinal points of compass, and these points alone are mentioned in the descriptions in 1642, although in 1638 in the first record that we have of the lots, they are spoken of as if the sides ran N. W. to S. E. and N. E. to S. W. It will be easily understood that a series of lots each containing with the lot in the rear an

acre and a fraction of an acre, must, in order to secure the amount of land represented in the grants, have extended back into what now constitutes the college yard, so as to include nearly one-half the present quadrangle. In 1638, the descriptions of the house lots and of the acre lots in the rear show that the two classes of lots were separated by Cow Yard Lane. In 1642, no mention of the lane is made in the descriptions, but the house lots and the acre lots in the rear are described as if they were united. Cow Yard Lane has between these dates entirely disappeared. In a similar way Field Lane, another lane within the limits of the College Yard which is mentioned in some of the early descriptions, subsequently disappeared. If these lanes could be appropriated by the owners of adjoining lots, it would, of course, have been an easy matter to move the Charlestown highway to the northward to suit the convenience of those who owned lots in the Ox pasture.

There is a curious phrase used, in 1638, in the description of a lot belonging to Edward Goffe, which at first sight seems to carry with it the idea that the highway must have been so moved. In this description, Goffe's lot is bounded on the Northwest—or, correcting the point of compass to correspond with a later description—on the North, by Cow Yard Lane and “the common gate likewise to Charlestowne.” Goffe's house lot contained but half a rood, but he had the full acre lot in the rear which went with these Braintree street lots. His rear lot was probably carved out of the Ox pasture by continuing the side lines of the Braintree street lot to the northward until they comprehended between them the necessary amount of land. Between the house lot and the acre lot was Cow Yard Lane. There is no probability that the north line of this house lot actually abutted against the gate to the Charlestown highway. This gate could not have opened into Goffe's rear lot. It could not have opened into Cow Yard Lane. In either of these cases the highway would have been recog-

nized in the descriptions. The phrase can only mean that the gate to the Charlestown highway was sufficiently near the north line of the house lot to furnish a land-mark, and the circumstances of the case require that it should have been to the westward of the lot. The grants of the several Braintree-street lots with their acre lots in the rear determine the primary direction of the road which was entered by the Common gate. If it had borne to the eastward at once it must have intersected these lots. It must, therefore, at first have taken a northerly direction through the Common in order to avoid them, and this direction must have been maintained long enough to avoid other lots which had been granted out of the Ox pasture, which were described as having their northern boundaries on the Charlestown highway and which must have been to the north of the acre lots. From all this, it would seem that the Charlestown highway and the route through the Common which led to it, may be traced through modern landmarks somewhat as follows: Goffe's house lot was near where Harvard street becomes Harvard Square. Adjacent to, or near the northwest corner of the lot, was the gate through which entrance was effected to the Common. Through this "Common gate" those who wished to go to Charlestown passed, and, skirting the lots which had been granted out of the Ox pasture, they proceeded in a northerly direction until they reached the highway. In seeking to identify this highway we must look for some old street which will take us to Charlestown neck. Kirkland street fulfils the necessary conditions. It starts at the Common, it leads towards the Neck, and it is put down on plans of a later date as the Charlestown highway. The rudeness of the descriptions of these early grants compels a corresponding looseness of language in discussing their interpretation. Bearing this in mind, the identification of Kirkland street with the Charlestown highway of the records may be accepted as probably correct. Further, it does not seem probable that

there was any change in the location of the highway which would enable us to reconcile the difference in the descriptions of the grant and the lot.

It may be contended that there is an error in the heading "The North Side," or in the entry of the grant under that heading. The person who plotted the map in Eliot's history, apparently did not look for the grant on the north side of the highway, and there was no other allusion in the town or college records to attract his attention to property in that vicinity standing at that time in the name of the college. It might, perhaps, be considered a complete answer to this suggestion of a possible error in the heading or entry, that these lists were prepared for the express purpose of classifying the lots according as they were either to the north or to the south of the highway, and for that reason alone were likely to be correct. We are not, however, limited to this list for proof that the college was actually in possession of a lot on the north side of the highway in 1639 and in 1642.

In 1639 Richard Jackson bought an acre of land in the Ox pasture, which was described in the Proprietary records as north of "the College lot," and which abutted on land of Nathaniel Sparrowhawk to the north. In 1642 the boundaries of this lot are similarly described, except that Sparrowhawk then owned also to the east. There is no reference here to the Charlestown highway, but the fact that Jackson's lot was to the north of the college lot cuts off any attempt at identification with the lot of two and one-quarter acres, the northern boundary of which was the Charlestown highway. It will be observed that Jackson's lot abutted on land of Sparrowhawk. By means of the description of Sparrowhawk's land we are enabled to show that these lots were all on the north side of the Charlestown highway. This description is found in the list of property in 1642, from which it appears that Nathaniel Sparrowhawk then had a dwelling-house and lot north of the Charlestown highway.

From an examination of the boundaries we learn that there was "College land" and land of Richard Jackson on the west, and on the north "land of his own."

Thus we have the original grant in 1638 of land to the college north of the highway; evidence of ownership in 1639, through the description of Richard Jackson's lot, and evidence of continued ownership in 1642, through the descriptions of the Jackson and the Sparrowhawk lots.

It forms no part of my purpose to trace the title of the college land which was situated north of the Charlestown highway. It is evident, however, that in 1638 a grant was made to the college from that portion of the Ox pasture north of the highway, and that in 1642 the college still owned it. Ought we to look for the site of the first college building on this grant? I think not. All the traditions of the college point to the college yard as the home of the college from the time of its birth. If the building had stood outside the present yard knowledge of its site would have been preserved. Moreover, Hubbard tells us that the new building, subscriptions for the erection of which were begun in 1672, stood "not far from" the first building. The foundations of the present "Harvard Hall" are on the exact site of Hubbard's new building, and, although his language is vague, it would point to some spot near at hand in the college yard, rather than to a site on a different lot separated by an intervening public way. We must, therefore, look elsewhere for the site of the first college building than on the two and two-thirds acres, the title to which was lodged in the college in 1638.

The identification by Eliot of the grant and the lot having been rejected, what are the claims of the two and one-quarter acres for special consideration in our search for the site of the first College building? We can easily show that the lot was in possession of the College in 1642, but prior to that date we find no record of ownership. In the Town records, we have seen that at the same time that the grant of

two and two-thirds acres on the north side of the Charlestown highway was made to the Professor, a grant of two acres and two roods on the south side of the Charlestown highway was made to Eaton. The close relation in size that this latter grant bears to the lot under discussion, combined with the intimate manner in which Eaton's affairs were intermingled with those of the College are to say the least suggestive. There is still another grant to Eaton in this list, but as it was for four acres and the land was situated on the north side of the Charlestown highway it does not seem probable that it has any bearing on the subject.

I have said that we can easily show that the College was in possession of this lot of two and one-quarter acres in 1642. At that date, the Proprietary Records show that Thomas Shepard held lands in the Ox pasture, south of the highway to Charlestown and east of "Land intended for the College." The lots of Edward Goffe, and John Betts, the former on Braintree street, and the latter on the east side of the Common, both adjoined "land intended for the College." The boundaries of these lots help us in approximately identifying the site of the land "intended for"—that is to say—set apart for the use of the College. It can only be the two and one-quarter acres on Eliot's plan which he identifies as the two and two-thirds acres granted to the School. The peculiar language used in the descriptions would indicate that this land had been specially assigned to the College. The manifest meaning of the phrase "intended for the College" is, "set apart for the use of the College." We have found no other lot standing in the name of the College prior to 1642 than the one north of the highway. The question naturally suggests itself was the grant to Eaton of two acres and two roods south of the highway a grant to the College? Or, if not in itself an original grant, is it possible that the College derived title in any way through him? We know that when he was removed from office his affairs were put in the hands of a

Commission,¹ and that special instructions were given by the General Court² the apparent purpose of which was to protect the interests of the College which were inextricably involved in his personal affairs. If this was the lot granted to Eaton then the transfer to the College in the adjustment of his affairs was possible and the only objection to its selection as a probable site for the building would be that in 1638 the title was not in the College.

Whatever the explanation of the foregoing facts may be, this at least is certain—the claim of the lot of two and one-quarter acres for especial consideration on the ground that it was the only lot owned by the College in 1638 can no longer be put forth. If the title did not come through Eaton then we have no evidence, direct or indirect, of ownership prior to 1642 when we find it mentioned as “intended for the College.” If title is derived through the grant of two acres and two roods to Eaton then the conditions compel us to admit in the competition one other lot which in 1638 was in Eaton’s name and which in 1642 was known as College land. The two lots stand upon the same basis whether the claim be made that the grant to Eaton was in reality a grant to the College or whether the College derived title through the adjustment of Eaton’s affairs after his departure.

In 1638, Edward Goffe’s house lot on Braintree street was described in the Proprietary Records as bounded on the east by a lot in the name of Eaton, the language used being “Mr. Eaton on the South East, Brayntry street South West.” The acre lot in the rear also had “Mr. Eaton South East.” In 1642, the house lot and acre lot in the rear are described as one lot, bounded on the East by “the College” and on the North by “land intended for the College.” At the same date John Betts had an acre of land West of the Goffe lot and South of “land intended for the

¹ Winthrop, I., 312.

² Mass. Col. Records, I., 282.

College.”¹ The same record shows that Thomas Shepard was the owner of a lot on Braintree street which was bounded on the West by “the College” and that he owned four and a half acres in the Ox pasture which were bounded on the north by the Charlestown highway and had on the west “Land intended for the College.” Shepard therefore owned at that time about six acres in what is now the College yard. His land was bounded on the north by the Charlestown highway, on the south by Braintree street and on the west by College land which extended from Braintree street through to the Charlestown highway. This College land was composed of two parcels, the Braintree-street lot which in 1638 was described as Eaton’s and the lot bounded on the Charlestown highway defined as “land intended for the College.” To the West of the College Braintree-street lot was Goffe’s lot, which was bounded on the north by the “land intended for the College.” The “land intended for College” was the two and one-quarter acres identified by Eliot with the original grant of 1638.

The lot between Goffe’s and Shepard’s is the one which I have said stands upon the same footing as the two and one-quarter acre lot in the plan, as far as title goes, in its claims to recognition as a competitor for the site of the building. The title is in Eaton’s name in 1638. The lot is entirely within the college yard. It abuts against the two and one-quarter acre lot in the rear, and thus is on equal terms, not only in respect to title, but also in regard to the application of Hubbard’s description.

In this connection it may be worth our while to note certain peculiarities in the use of language in the records, in referring to the several lots which were in possession of the college in 1642.

¹ On the map in Eliot’s history the Betts lot is bounded on the north by land of Sweetman, and in the description, p. 189, the lot is said to have been bounded by “Sweetman on the North, and land of the College on the East.” If this description was taken from the records, it must have been from a later return than that of 1642.

It will be observed that, in the description of Shepard's and Goffe's lots, it is "the College" which is to the east or to the west of the respective lots. It will be readily admitted, by those who contend that there is some significance in this use of the word, that even if the college building was referred to as "the College," the building itself could not have covered the whole lot. The equivalent of the phrase to such believers would be "the land on which the College building stands." This being admitted—the right to suggest that the phrase means only in general terms "College land," must be allowed to those who contend that the college building stood elsewhere. While the full force of this argument is freely granted, it must be remembered that the Shepard lot and the Goffe lot are the only lots described as abutting on "the College."

In the several descriptions of other lots bordering on college land, which have been referred to, this specific phrase does not occur. The lot of two and one-quarter acres is referred to as "College land," or as "land intended for the College." The college land adjoining Richard Jackson's lot on the north side of the Charlestown highway is spoken of in the description of Jackson's lot in 1639, as the "College lot," while in 1642 it is "College land." In 1639 the grant of two and two-thirds acres was the only grant which had then been made directly to the college in this part of Cambridge. It was, therefore, natural to refer to it as the "College lot," even if the building was elsewhere. In 1642 the college owned other land in the immediate vicinity, and the lot north of the Charlestown highway is no longer spoken of as "the College lot."

No conclusive deductions can be drawn from the language used in these descriptions, but if any inference whatever is to be made, it favors the Braintree street lot as the site of the building.

The facts bearing upon the question, which have already been cited, are all taken from the town and proprietary

records. We have one other place to which we can turn for information. College Book No. III. is not a book of original entry, but is a collection of transcripts from other records, and of copies of important papers and documents. The handwriting in which these entries are made is identified by Quincy as that of Thomas Danforth. Danforth was appointed Clerk of the Overseers in 1654, and it is evident that the necessity for making some systematic effort to preserve copies of the more important papers of the college impressed itself upon him very soon after entering upon the duties of his office. At all events there is no reason to doubt that we are indebted to him for all the earlier records in College Book No. III. Danforth spent his boyhood in Cambridge, and although but a youth when the college building was erected, the events connected with the early history of the college had taken place within the period comprehended by his memory. He prefaces the copy of Nathaniel Eaton's account of expenditures upon the college, which is entered in College Book No. III., with the following heading :

“Mr. Nathaniel Eaton was chosen Professor of the said school in the year one thousand six hundred and thirty-seven, to whose care the management of the donations before mentioned were intrusted, for the erecting of such edifices as were meet and necessary for a college and for his own lodgings, &c.”

Taking the statement that Eaton was authorized to erect “such edifices as were meet and necessary for a college and for his own lodgings,” in connection with the memorandum explanatory of the grant of 1638, according to which, “at his [Eaton's] death or ceasing to work, he or his” were to be allowed “according to the charges” they had been at “in building or fencing,” the intention is evident to provide Eaton a home on the college property. The author of an article entitled “The First President of Harvard College,”¹

¹Timothy Farrar.

printed in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Vol. IX., p. 270, speaks of Eaton's house, "near the college in 1639," and refers to the *Massachusetts Colonial Records*, Vol. I., p. 282, for his authority. An examination of this reference will show that there was nothing in the record as to the position of the house. The language of the record is, "Thomas Symonds was enjoined to appear at the Quarter Court about Mr. Eaton's house and the College." Eaton's house is again referred to in the fragmentary record quoted by Savage in the note in *Winthrop's New England*, Vol. I., p. 310, which is supposed to be Mrs. Eaton's testimony as to the food furnished Eaton's pupils, but there is nothing in the testimony which helps us in determining the situation or character of the house.

The series of facts just recited suggest the possibility that the house, towards the erection of which Eaton was authorized to use college funds, and concerning which, after Eaton's flight, Thomas Symonds was enjoined to appear before the Quarter Court, may have been built on the Braintree-street lot which, in 1638, was in Eaton's name. If this lot was Eaton's house lot, it is evident that the college building would not have been put there.

The several statements which have led up to this suggestion are not, when taken separately, of much importance in determining the site of the first college building.

They are, however, entitled to examination, and it will not be amiss to note certain patent facts in connection with them which may influence our conclusions.

In the first place as to the use of the college funds in building the house. Eaton was appointed in 1637 and was removed in September, 1639. He did not handle any part of the appropriation made by the General Court in 1636. That appropriation stood to the credit of the college in 1644 in the account rendered by County Treasurer Tyng.¹ We are not able to trace any money into the college treasury

¹ College Book No. I., quoted in Quincy, Vol. I., p. 455.

prior to the death of John Harvard. Eaton in his accounts charges himself with £200 received from Harvard's administrator and accounts for its expenditure on the college building.¹ It is probable that Eaton was in possession of his house and that his school was in operation before he received any part of this money.

Second. As to the right to build on land belonging to the college. This privilege was limited by its terms to the grant of 1638. If an allowance was to be made to him or his heirs for improvements on other lots in case of death or removal, no mention is made of it in the records.

Third. As to the intervention of the General Court. The only inference to be drawn from this as to the situation of Eaton's house, is that Eaton's house was not on the college land, for if it had been, the college would have needed no protection.

Finally, on the general question whether the Braintree-street lot was Eaton's house lot, the proprietary records furnish an independent answer. In 1638 there was granted to Nathaniel Eaton "in the old ox pasture two acres for a house lot." This lot was described as follows: "By the ox pasture East, a town lot South, Richard Jackson, North, Cow common, West." This is evidently not the Braintree-street lot.

The language of the inventory of the college estate in the year 1654, as given in the copy entered in College book No. III., comes nearer being a direct statement as to the site of the first college building, than any of the descriptive phrases from the records which have been heretofore quoted. At that date the college was the owner of a house lot situated

¹ Quincy publishes Eaton's account, Vol. I., p. 453. Winthrop gives the following account of the steps taken after Eaton's flight: "Being thus gone his creditors began to complain; and thereupon it was found, that he was run in debt about £1,000, and had taken up most of this money upon bills he had charged in England upon his brother's agents, and others whom he had no such relation to. So his estate was seized and put into commissioners hands to be divided among his creditors, allowing somewhat for the present maintenance of his wife and children."—Winthrop's New England, Vol. I., p. 312. The omission of any reference to the appropriation of College funds is noticeable.

on the southwest corner of the streets now known as Harvard and Holyoke streets. The lot is to-day covered by the building known as the Holyoke House. It is described in the inventory of 1654 as follows :

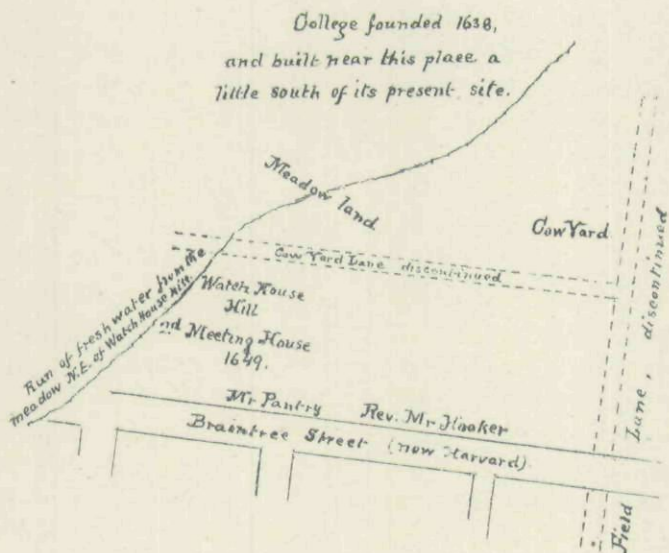
“ Item. A small piece of land lying before the College and was formerly the house lot of Robert Bradish.” If, in our endeavor to give weight to all the arguments against the Braintree-street lot, we grant that there was no special significance in the fact that the lots to the east and west of it were described as abutting on “the College;” if we admit that wherever the word “College” is thus used in the description “College land” is meant, and further that there is no inference to be drawn from the fact that the use of this peculiar language is confined to this lot; still we shall have to furnish some reason for abandoning the natural interpretation of the phrase “lying before the College” which is used in the inventory. If the college building stood upon the Braintree-street lot, facing Braintree street, the Bradish lot lay before it. Thus situated the new building which was first occupied in 1677 might well be described by Hubbard as being not far from the old one. The two sites were within the same enclosure, so that communication between them could be had without going off the college land, and they were but a short distance apart.¹

¹ Charles Deane, LL.D., possesses a tracing of a map entitled as follows: “Plan of Cambridge adapted to the year 1635 by James Winthrop, January, 1801. Used by Rev. A. Holmes, D.D., for history of Cambridge.” On this map the following words are written “College founded 1638 and built near this place a little South of its present site.” A reasonable interpretation of this language would throw the site within the limits of the Braintree-street lot. It is unfortunate that Mr. Winthrop did not give his authority for the statement.

I wish to acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Deane for the privilege of inspecting this map and for the patient interest he has taken in my investigation of this subject.

The lot marked Pantry on this map is the Eaton lot. The first record that we have of the lot, it stood in the name of “William Peyntree” and was described as follows: “in the town, one house with backside, and garden about half a rood.”

“More in Cow Yard Row, one cow house with a backside, about one acre; Thomas Hooker South East, Cow Yard Lane South West, James Olmstead North West, the Common pales North East.”



Sketch showing Cow Yard Lane and Field Lane
as represented on a

Plan of Cambridge.

adapted to the year 1635.

By James Winthrop, January 1801.

To sum up then. The college building did not stand upon the lot granted in 1638, because that lot was north of Charlestown highway. The Charlestown highway can not reasonably be supposed to have been moved to the north between 1638 and 1642, so as to make the grant in 1638 of land north of the highway in 1638 south of the changed road in 1642, because the grants south of the road, already made in 1638, require that the road should be at least as far north as Kirkland street. The two and two-thirds acres granted at that time are not to be confounded with the two and one-quarter acres with which Eliot identifies them, because they are on different sides of the Charlestown highway. If the two and one-quarter acre lot on Eliot's plan can not be identified with the two and two-thirds acre grant, then the argument that the college building should be found there because it was the only lot owned by the college at that time falls to the ground; and, whether title be claimed through Eaton or not, the college ownership can not be traced farther back than the college ownership of the Braintree-street lot. If title to both of them be traced through Eaton, then both stand on the same ground. To offset the suggestion that inasmuch as the title to the Braintree street lot was in Eaton's name in 1638, his house may have stood there, we can only rely, first, upon the fact that he had a lot granted him elsewhere which was specifically designated as a house lot, and, second, on the weight which attaches to the peculiar language used in the descriptions and in the Inventory, when mention is made of the Braintree street lot. The Goffe lot on Braintree street adjoined "the College" on one side; the Shepard lot on Braintree street adjoined "the College" on the other side. Both these lots are comprehended within the college yard, and their situation is known with approximate accuracy. The Bradish lot "lay before the College." The situation of this lot is known with absolute certainty. If descriptive language means anything, the site of the first college building at Cambridge

ought to be found within the lines of the lot marked Eaton on the plan in Eliot's History of Harvard College. Perhaps the eastern part of the Wadsworth house may cover a portion of the old foundation. Perhaps a part of Gray may overlap the spot where the old building stood. The limits of the lot would even permit that the building should have stood within the present Quadrangle. As the Inventory of 1654 records, with scrupulous minuteness, the fact that the building had a cellar, it is not unlikely that systematic search might reveal the site, unless subsequent excavations have obliterated the traces which the searchers would naturally hope to find. It is not impossible that more direct evidence as to the site of the building may be exhumed. Until this shall be the case, it seems to me that the evidence preponderates in favor of the Braintree-street lot.

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