

Daniel Shed Comes to New England

According to the English ancestry section (by J. Gardner Bartlett) in the Shed Genealogy, Daniel Shed "was baptized 25 June 1620 in the ancient parish church of Finchingfield, County Essex, as appears from its old parchment register still perfectly preserved from 1617. The venerable church (except for loss of its spire) still presents the same appearance as it did just three centuries ago when the infant eyes of Daniel Shed first beheld it; even the very font, which held the sacred water with which he was christened, still remains in regular use. This baptismal record is the sole mention of him in these registers which have been carefully examined down to 1710; if he had died there his burial would have been recorded. His father, Daniel Shed, in no record in Finchingfield is ever termed 'senior,' nor is there anything to infer that there were ever two Daniel Sheds of adult age living there at the same time. In the Protestation Roll of February 1641/2, only one Shed appears in Finchingfield, Daniel Shed; at that time the son Daniel Shed was nearly twenty-two years of age; as all males over eighteen years old are listed, and as Daniel Shed does not appear on this roll either in Finchingfield or in any of the other surrounding forty-five parishes of the Hundred, it is evident that he had removed from the neighborhood before February 1641/2.

During the period of 1630-42, about twenty-five thousand English Puritans emigrated to New England, either to escape religious restrictions or with the hope of bettering their material condition. Over half of these emigrants were from the counties of Essex and Suffolk, and among them was Daniel Shed, who first appears on records in New England in 1643, in Braintree, Massachusetts. This town was named for Braintree in Essex, only eight miles south-east of Finchingfield, and a large majority of the early settlers of Braintree, Massachusetts, are known to have come from various parishes in Essex and Suffolk in England within a fifteen-mile radius of the mother town of Braintree. Neither the date of sailing, the port of departure, nor the name of the vessel which brought Daniel Shed to New England has been discovered; but his emigration must have taken place before 1642, so probably about 1640, or about the time he became of age.

So here may be framed a very real mental picture of the emigrant Daniel Shed, raised as a farmer's boy in rural Essex in eastern England, amid strong Puritan influences, and while yet a youth so imbued with their fervid religious faith and desire for liberty as to join the memorable throng that left their beloved ancestral homes and braved the perils of the deep and the hardships of pioneer life in a savage wilderness to found a new nation in the New World.