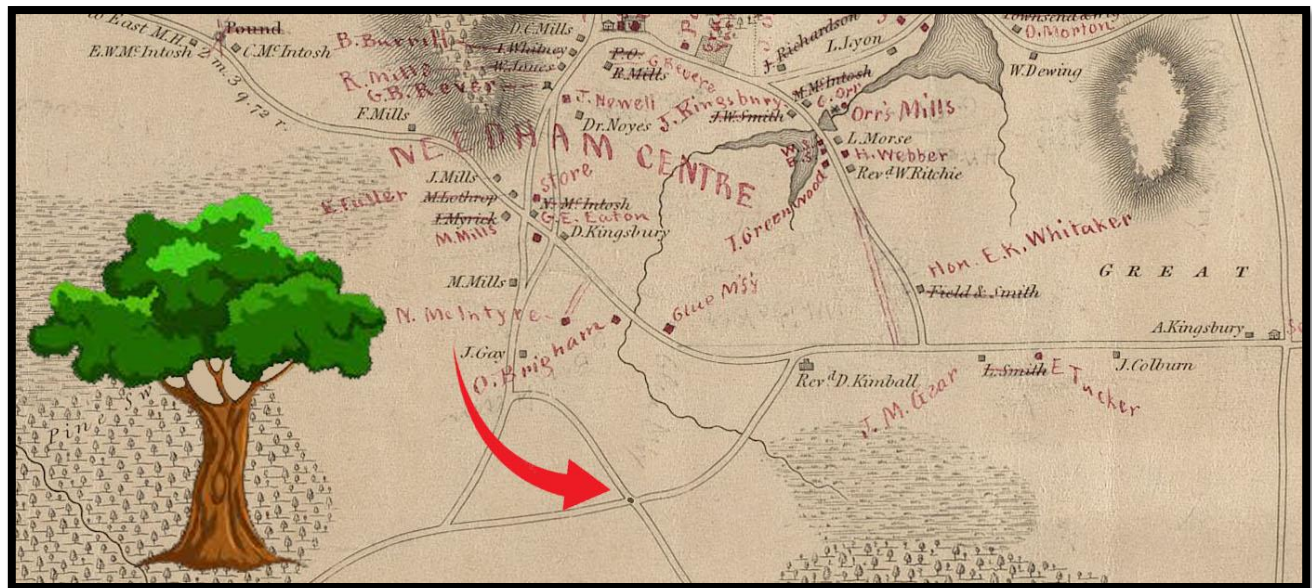


The Marked Tree



1836 Map of Needham, with a dot at the intersection of Marked Tree Road and High Rock Street, indicating the location of the Marked Tree.

The name Marked Tree Road commemorates the Marked Tree, an ancient oak that once served as a reference point and boundary marker. The actual location of the Tree was at the (now) intersection of Marked Tree Road and High Rock Street. The name “Mark Tree Road” was in use since at least the 1820s if not earlier, and the road itself is shown on the map of 1836, with a small dot at the intersection to indicate the Tree. The Marked Tree itself died and was cut down sometime in the late 1800s.

In the absence of fixed reference points like GPS or the USGS Survey, property and community boundaries, milestones, and so forth were measured from familiar landmarks – trees, stone walls, houses, rocks. These would be markers that everyone knew, and that were also relatively immovable (just in case). Using locally-familiar landmarks insured that the whole community had a stake in the various boundary lines. We might have no idea now where to find “a Road laid out from John Kingsbury’s house, as the Road is now traveled, until it comes to the Road leading by John Alden’s house” – but it made perfect sense to Needhamites in the 18th and 19th centuries. (PS – that’s now Webster Street, from about Rosemary Street to the intersection of Central Avenue).



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