

With a faithful negro attendant whom he had purchased in Virginia, he dug a cellar in a rocky hillside a little north of the present village of Windham, and in that forlorn spot spent the long winter of 1688-9. That he had silver and gold remaining after so long an exile subsequent events fully proved; but miles and miles from a human habitation, it could at first have contributed little to their comfort. Game was abundant, however, and the faithful Joe ever on the alert; so the winter wore away in safety and spring dawned happily for the colonies and thrice happily for the exiles. The vindictive monarch had been deposed and William and Mary were seated on the throne. The infamous Andross was driven from the country, and the royal offenders could now emerge from their rocks and caves and breathe in comparative security.

The proprietors of the tract that had afforded an asylum for the English exile began to take measures for its immediate settlement. Cates came forth from his hiding place, purchased land, and with his servant built the first house in the nameless township. Already advanced in life, with a constitution impaired by hardship and privation, he lived for several years to be the firm ally and prudent counsellor of the youthful settlement. His name is often seen in the early records of the town, and the interests of education and religion lay near his heart. The first minister, Reverend Samuel Whiting, became his warm friend, but not even to him nor to his trusty housekeeper was his identity ever revealed. Only occasional allusions to his past fell from his lips, and he died as he lived, unknown.

To the church, of which he was one of the earliest members, he bequeathed a service of plate and two hundred acres of land in trust for the poor. He also gave two hundred acres as a permanent school fund to his adopted town. To his friend, Mr. Whiting, he gave a bed, a chest and his wearing apparel, also the trusty servant who had been the companion of his dreary solitude. That he had been a kind master the inconsolable grief of Joe fully attested, and the poor fellow did not long survive

him. Both were buried near the place of their first concealment, and a rough stone, rudely initialed, marked for a time the spot. When the first cemetery was laid out the body of Cates was removed thither and a stone, ample for the times, bore the following inscription:

IN
MEMORY OF
MR. JOHN CATES.
HE WAS A GENTLEMAN BORN
IN ENGLAND,
AND THE FIRST SETTLER IN THE
TOWN OF WINDHAM.
BY HIS LAST
WILL AND TESTAMENT
HE GAVE A
GENEROUS LEGACY
TO YE FIRST
CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
WINDHAM,
IN PLATE AND A GENEROUS
LEGACY IN LAND
FOR YE SUPPORT OF YE POOR.
AND ANOTHER
LEGACY FOR YE SUPPORT
OF YE SCHOOL
IN SAID TOWN FOREVER.
HE DIED
IN WINDHAM
JULY YE 16th, A. D.
1697.

The stone is mossed with age, and it seems but just that the several towns, that for nearly two centuries have shared his munificent bequests, should now unite in the erection of a more lasting monument to the memory of their generous benefactor—the stranger and exile.

Excerpt From: Bayles, R.M. (Ed.). (1889). *History of Windham County Connecticut*. W.W. Preston & Co., pp. 206-207.