

“IF HE HAD BEEN A MAN, YOU KNOW?”: JO, TOWN FOUNDER

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The late 19th century in Connecticut was a time for writing local histories, an age when local authors put into writing so many of the oft-told oral traditions of how their communities had been founded and established — stories that local people had been passing down verbally for generations, but now decided to write down. So, when in 1892 the town of Windham, CT celebrated the 200th anniversary of its incorporation, a throng of townspeople gathered on the town green to listen to several local authors read prose and poetry narratives about how their town had come into being — narratives that the organizers then published in the form of a book that became the first written history of their town. Anthropologists call such stories creation or foundation myths or narratives, stories that explain what it had been like “in the beginning,” when the communities were first being formed. (The use of the word “myth” does not imply that such narratives are false. The English word myth derives from the Greek *mythos*, meaning story. Foundation myths can be true, false, or — perhaps most likely — a combination of the two.)

As with other, similar communities, a central figure in the Windham centennial authors’ foundation narratives was Windham’s “first settler,” an Englishman named John Cates (or Kates, or maybe Keats), who had arrived in 1688. In retelling the story of Windham’s origins, and in putting it into writing, the authors focused primarily on Cates and his contributions, but some of them also mentioned the presence another man, an enslaved African American, Jo, whom they called Joe Ginne. One of the writers, Jane Gay Fuller, a longtime local resident (she lived in the neighboring town of Scotland, which before 1857 when she was growing up had been part of Windham), a published poet and author of several cloyingly sentimental novels (including a tale of the Civil War South), commented that while most people in Windham had heard the story of Joe Ginne, they nevertheless didn’t really think of him as a “first settler.” Indeed, Fuller herself called Cates “the Father of our Town.” But she also slyly chided her audience for their racism in not also considering Jo a first settler, while at the same time pushing the trope of enslaved people as “faithful servants”:

Nor was he [Cates] Abolitionist, / For in the South he bought a slave, / A trusty servant, faithful friend, / Who loved his master to the end. / You all have heard of “Guinea Joe,” / Who would have been a settler, too, / If he had been a man, you know!

The story of the man that Windhamites called Joe Ginne is a good example of how African Americans, even when their presence has been acknowledged, too often have been denied their true place in the history of Connecticut and the rest of America. This essay discusses

what is known about Jo and his roles as early settler, enslaved man, and co-founder of the town of Windham.



WINDHAM GREEN, JUNE 8, 1892.

Above: Celebrating Windham's bicentennial in 1892. The bicentennial provided an opportunity for the community not only to review its history, but also to create an official written version of it. Numerous speakers read essays or poems based on the town's oral history and lore. Most of these stories were what anthropologists call creation or foundation myths, the stories people tell about how they believe their communities and cultures came into existence. Several of the speakers told, in various forms, the story of "first settler" John Cates and his slave, Jo. The essays and poems were published in book form the following year as A Memorial Volume of the Bi-Centennial Celebration of the Town of Windham, Connecticut (Hartford: New England Home Printing Company, 1893). This image appeared in the book.

Most of what has been recorded about Jo can be found in narratives written by 19th-century local historians 200 years after his death — writers like Jane Gay Fuller — who worked from a combination of preserved documents and oral traditions. "You all have heard of Guinea Joe," Fuller had written, acknowledging that she had used as sources the stories townspeople had told each other over the years. Oral traditions might seem untrustworthy as sources of history, but anthropologists who have studied them know that, unless outsiders become involved, such narratives are remarkably stable, as the same stories get repeated year after year with very little change. One of the first local historians to write down the story of John Cates and Joe Ginne was Ellen Larned, in her monumental *History of Windham County, Connecticut, Volume I (1600-1760)*, published in 1874, more than a century and a half after their deaths. Larned did use written documents in assembling her history,

but the numerous undocumented details in her narrative make it clear that she relied on oral traditions as well.

Larned interpreted the story of John Cates and Joe Ginne as part of the popular 19th-century narrative of colonial New England as a center of resistance to royal authority absolutism, thus presaging the American Revolution, the main theme in the first volume of her two-volume work. In England, Larned wrote, the autocratic King James II had challenged Parliamentary prerogatives. In New England, the King undertook a parallel challenge to the long-standing tradition of colonial autonomy and local control by attempting to merge the Puritan colonies of Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven with Rhode Island, New York, East Jersey, and West Jersey into a single, sprawling royal domain — the Dominion of New England — to be managed autocratically by a royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. James's Dominion was based on the structure of the authoritarian Spanish Empire to the south, where individual colonies were grouped into larger viceroalties in order to tighten imperial control. In New England, creating the Dominion meant requiring all of the colonies that would become part of it to surrender their old colonial charters and a good portion of their self-government. The proposed change especially alienated Connecticut, whose charter allowed it to choose its own governor. The Dominion was, Larned thought, an authoritarian structure designed for an authoritarian age, stiffly resisted by the colonists. When Andros came to Hartford to seize Connecticut's old colonial charter, local leaders hid the document in a hollow tree, the famous Charter Oak. The Dominion of New England lasted only from 1686 to 1689, when Parliament deposed James (an event known in England as the Glorious Revolution), broke up the Dominion, and restored the original colonial charters. The whole episode, though short-lived, would have a major impact on the way Connecticutans thought about government for years to come, Larned thought, a prelude to the American Revolution. It was in the midst of this crisis that John Cates and Jo arrived on the Connecticut frontier.



Above: The official government seal of the Dominion of New England. A settler and an Indian are pictured kneeling before King James II, reinforcing royal authority. Colonial leaders in New England resented such authority and resisted it, although they imposed their own authority on women and people of color, including enslaved people like Jo.

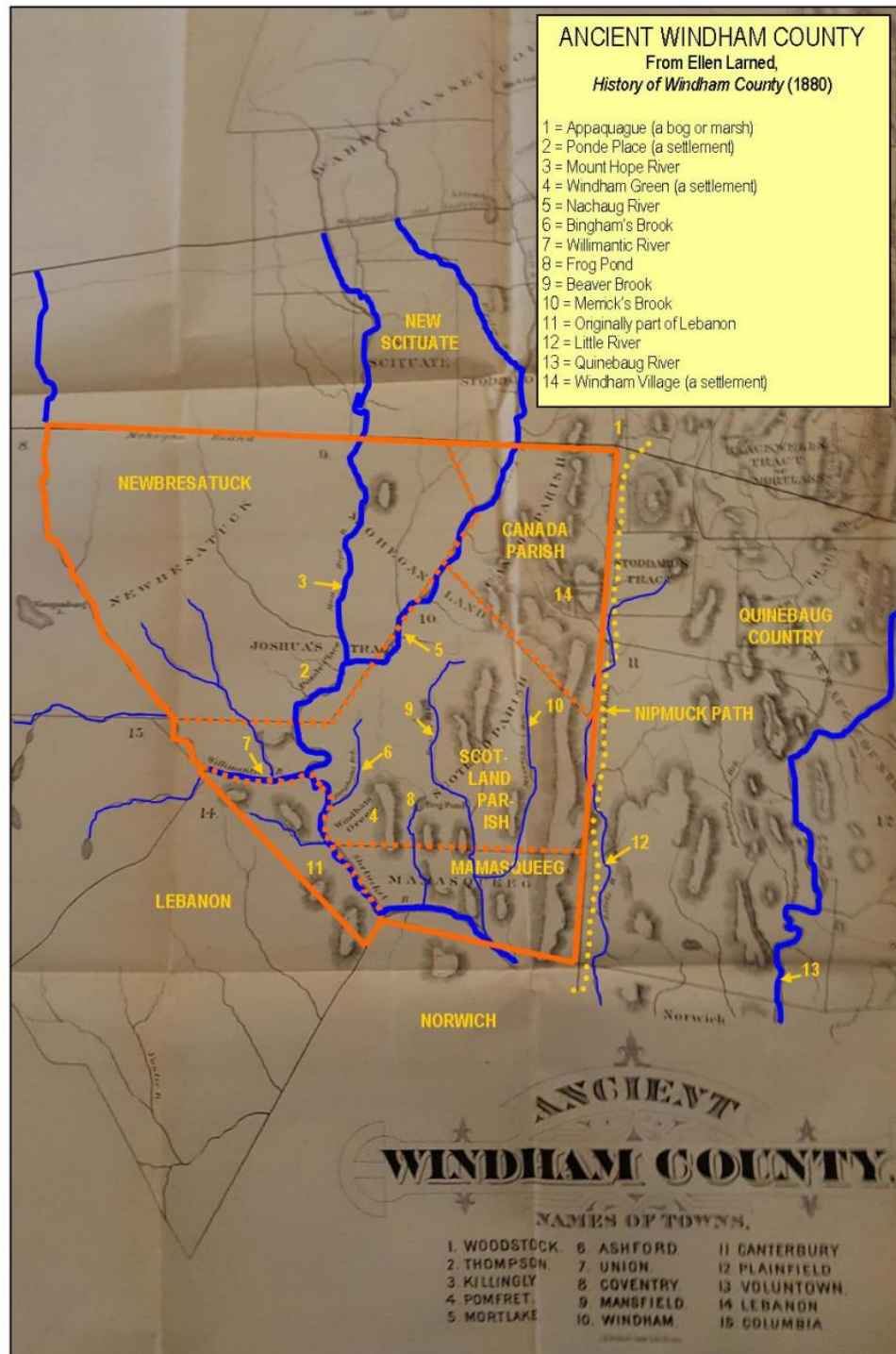
“In the autumn of 1688,” Larned wrote almost 200 years later, “Joshua’s tract [a large tract of land from which the Connecticut towns of Windham, Mansfield, Chaplin, Hampden, and Scotland would eventually be carved] received its first settler. John Cates, an English refugee, fearful of the spies of Andross [sic], found his way into this desolate, uninhabited wilderness, and passed the winter, Crusoe-like, in a cave or cellar, fashioned by the hands of his faithful negro, Joe Ginne. Little is known of the previous history of this gentleman [i.e., Cates]. Tradition [and here Larned seems to have meant oral tradition] represents him as a high political offender, a Commonwealth soldier and even a Regicide, but the shy Englishman kept his own secret. It is said that he landed first at Virginia, where he purchased his servant, and thence came on to New York and Norwich, but found no security till he took up his abode in this remote wilderness.”

There is a lot to unpack in Larned’s paragraph. The first is that Jo’s life in Connecticut was inextricably connected to that of John Cates, his enslaver. The two men arrived together. They would live together for nine more years, until Cates died in 1697. For two of those years, until Jonathan Ginnings and his wife arrived at the settlement in 1690, they had only each other for company. A second is that Cates had enslaved Jo, probably purchasing him in Virginia before coming on to Connecticut. A third is that Cates may have been a political refugee. Local tradition held him to have been an English Puritan, a supporter of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Commonwealth, and an enemy of King Charles I, James II’s father. (In a subsequent paragraph, Larned added that Cates had brought a quantity of gold and silver with him, that he was an elderly widower, and that he had left children behind in England.) As no documentation exists for most of this information, it was probably based almost entirely on oral tradition. That it was oral tradition was backed up by Thomas Snell Weaver, who like the poet Jane Fuller had been one of the speakers at Windham’s 1892 bicentennial celebration, and who told essentially the same story as Larned, although he had the two men arrive in Windham in 1689, not 1688, a relatively minor detail. Weaver told his audience that he based his information not on Larned’s history, but on notes left to him by his late father, William L. Weaver, a longtime Windham resident. The elder Weaver, we know from another source (a newspaper article William Weaver had written several years earlier), had collected his information in the 1860s, much of it based on oral tradition, and may have been one of Larned’s sources.

Because John Cates and Jo were so closely connected, in order to understand the life and experiences of Jo it is necessary also to understand Cates. Although Larned wrote that Cates was rumored to have been a Regicide, that is unlikely, as the identities of most of the Regicides are known, and Cates was not one of them. But bringing up the possibility — even if it may not have been true — gave Larned another opportunity to tie the narrative of Windham’s founding into her larger theme of Connecticut resistance to royal authority.

The bloody English Civil War (1642-51) had ended with the triumph of Parliament, led by Oliver Cromwell and other Puritans, and the execution of Charles I. The colonists in Connecticut, Puritans themselves, had sided with Parliament and against the King in the struggle. Cromwell had then governed England until his own death in 1658, and although a controversial figure in England, he remained popular in Puritan Connecticut. (The period of English history 1649-60 is known as the Commonwealth.) Two years later, in 1660, tired of the sectarian strife, a newer, more moderate Parliament had invited Charles's son, Charles II, to be king, an event known as the Restoration. In return for the throne, Charles II and his allies had agreed to pardon most of the supporters of the Commonwealth, but 104 men were excluded from the blanket pardon, most of whom had been members of the commission that had served as Charles I's jury and who had assented to his execution. Historians refer to all 104 as the Regicides, not a term used at the time. Many of the Regicides (including Cromwell himself) were already dead by 1660, but many were not, and most of those still alive were rounded up and either executed or imprisoned. Twenty-four fled, however. Three of them went to New England, where they were given refuge by the New England Puritans. Cates was not one of the three (historians know who they were and what happened to them), and likely was not one of the 104 at all (the fates of most of these men also are known). But he may have been a supporter of the Commonwealth who had enemies among the allies of the king.

It is also possible that Cates (sometimes spelled Kates or Keates) was an alias. All that is known for sure is that he and Jo arrived in Norwich, Connecticut in the 1680s and in 1688 or 1689 continued on to a tract of unsettled land further north known as Joshua's Tract. "Joshua" was actually Attawanhood, a son of the legendary Mohegan sachem Uncas. Under the influence of old age (and, some say, alcohol), Attawanhood had in his will devised Joshua's Tract – which included the later town of Windham – to a group of Connecticut land speculators known as the Legatees. Cates was not one of the Legatees, however. Rather, he was a squatter with no legal title to the place where he had taken refuge. Making Cates a Regicide was almost certainly romanticizing him, which was why Larned was wise enough to attribute the story to tradition rather than to state it as fact.



Above: Joshua's Tract (outlined in red), from Larned.

There is, however, some tenuous evidence linking both John Cates and Jo to Virginia. According to *Cate-Cates Family of New England*, four Cate (not Cates) brothers – William, John, Joseph, and James — sailed from England to Virginia in 1635. Citing oral tradition, Larned

and other 19th-century sources believed that Cates had been in Virginia before coming to Connecticut, and that he had purchased Jo while he was there. The *Genealogical Dictionary of New England Settlers*, vol I, adds, “There was a report, that he [John Cates] came from Virginia and possibly he was [a] passenger from London in the ship *Safety* [in] 1635.” If Cates did sail to Virginia in 1635, then he could not have been fleeing the government of Charles II, who did not ascend to the throne until 1660. Nor could he have been a Commonwealth man, for the Commonwealth did not come into being until 1649. He could not even have been a participant in the English Civil War, which did not begin until 1642. Was he then a political refugee at all? Or did he have some other reason for hiding out on the Connecticut frontier? “Perhaps,” opines the *Genealogical Dictionary*, “he was only a misanthrope, humorist, perhaps had been a buccaneer, and thought seclusion his safest course.” Or were John Cate and John Cates different people? If they were the same man, and had been old enough to have left children behind in England, Cates would have been nearly 80 years old by the time he arrived in Connecticut, more than 50 years after docking in Virginia. Perhaps neither Cates nor Jo had come to Connecticut from Virginia at all. If Cates was a buccaneer, as the *Genealogical Dictionary* opines, he could have acquired and enslaved an African or African American in other ways. There was, after all, a tight connection between piracy and the slave trade in the 17th century.

If John Cates is a mystery, even less is known about Jo, besides that he was Black and enslaved. Even his name is a question mark. It is unlikely, for example, that he was actually called Joe Ginne. In the only 17th-century document in which he is named, Cates’s will, he is called “Jo,” perhaps an abbreviation for Joseph (or Josiah or Jonathan), or perhaps not. In the recording of 17th-century English names, abbreviations were commonplace but nicknames were not, and it may be that he was called Joseph rather than Joe. Or perhaps Jo (without an -e) was not an abbreviation at all, but a name he acquired in some other way — it is spelled without a period, although periods were not always used in abbreviations in the 1600s. As we peel back the layers to his identity, we would probably be closer to the mark, then, to call him simply Jo.

And what was the origin of the surname, Ginne? Was it pronounced with a soft or hard “G”? In the 17th, 18th, and even 19th centuries, “Ginne” was often an alternate spelling of the feminine name “Ginny,” with a soft “G” and a long “E.”

The 19th-century poet Jane Gay Fuller, however, thought “Ginne” might be an alternate spelling of “Guinea,” a place in Africa, calling him “Guinea Joe,” a hypothesis that suggests that he had perhaps been born in Africa and then transported to Virginia. The English word Guinea derives from the Portuguese Guine, which is pretty close to Ginne, and which referred to the Atlantic coast of Africa south of the Senegal River, a place of origin for many of the people who came to America in the slave trade. There are several hypotheses about the meaning of the place name Guine, the most common being that it derives from a Senegalese word for “black,” and “guinea” has often been used in English as an alternative word for “black.” Also known as the Gold Coast or Slave Coast, from the 1400s through the 1700s Guinea was a major source of gold, spices, and slaves, and the majority of the

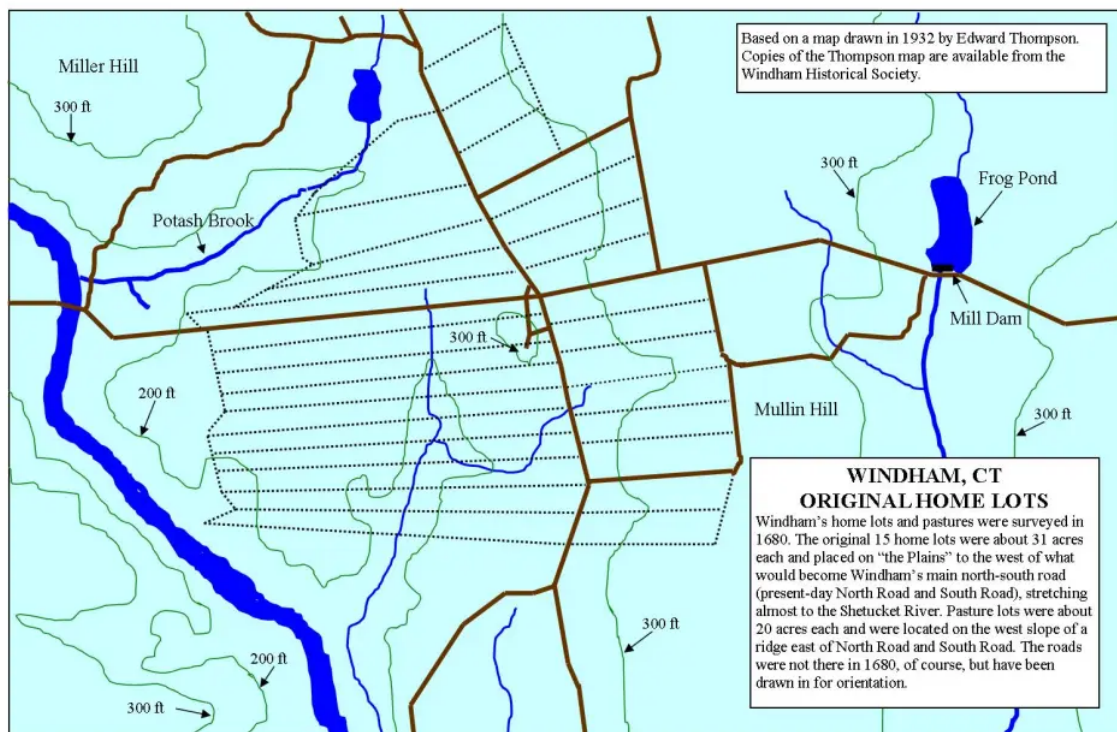
Africans transported to North America in the transatlantic slave trade came from there. The English gold coin called a guinea, dating from the mid-1600s and valued at one pound and one shilling, was minted from gold from Guinea. Had Jo been born in Guinea and survived the dreaded Middle Passage across the Atlantic, to wind up in Connecticut? Perhaps. But a quick search on Ancestry.com failed to find any examples of African Americans bearing the name Guine, Guinea, or Ginne. Ancestry.com did turn up a few white Americans with the surname Guinea, most of whom were Irish. There were even fewer Americans with the surname Ginne, and all of them seem to have been of German descent.

Could “Ginne” have been a contraction for “Virginny” (for Virginia), where, according to tradition, Jo once lived? Another possibility is that Ginne was an alternate spelling for Ginnings, itself an alternate spelling for Jennings. Jonathan Ginnings and his family were among the early settlers of Windham, but Joseph was never enslaved by the Ginningses, so it is unclear how he would have come to carry their name. Furthermore, if he was born in Africa, his African name is lost. And while it is possible that the name Jo (or Joseph) was bestowed upon him by his owner, it is true that enslaved people occasionally named themselves. The best known example of such self-naming in 17th-century Connecticut was the enslaved man John Jackson of New London. A more famous (although 18th-century) example is Olaudah Equiano, although in Equiano’s case, the self-naming came after he became free. The most accurate answer to the question of the origin of the name Joe Ginne is, “we don’t know.”

Larned and other 19th-century writers all claim that Jo was a “loyal” and “faithful” servant. Was he really? Or did he actually resent his enslavement, but wisely choose not to say so? Nineteenth-century white Americans, even Northerners, frequently accepted uncritically the trope that Black slaves became emotionally attached to their white owners. But the historian Eugene Genovese has written about “puttin’ on ol’ massa,” the wisdom of *acting* happy around whites, who could exercise the power of life and death over enslaved people. It was simply safer if white folks *thought* you were loyal, faithful, and happy. Jo may have been playing a role. Or, it is possible that 19th-century writers simply assumed that he must have been loyal, faithful, and happy, because they assumed that Cates, as the town’s first settler, must have been the sort of master who would have inspired such feelings.

It does seem that Jo worked hard. Larned said that the “cave or cellar” that he and Cates lived in for their first winter in Windham was “fashioned by the hands of [the] faithful negro.” Considering Cates’s age, it is likely that she was right — if Cates was around 80 years old, such work was likely beyond him. Moreover, the next summer Cates and Jo abandoned the cellar. Cates used some of his loot to purchase a settler’s lot from the Legatees and built “with his servant, in the summer of 1689, the first house in the new Plantation.” Again, because of Cates’s age, it is likely that Jo did much, most, or all of the work. Weaver wrote that Jonathan Ginnings had also helped with the construction, although Larned said that Ginnings did not arrive until the next year in 1690, after the house was constructed.

And there was other work for Jo to do. A. W. Parkhurst, another 19th-century Windham local historian, wrote that, during their first winter in Windham, Cates and Jo survived largely on game that Jo had hunted or trapped. Parkhurst also said that Cates and Jo inhabited the cellar “happily.” Did they really? Was Jo actually pleased to be occupying a hole in the ground during a cold New England winter with a man who owned him? It seems more likely that 19th-century white folks, living after abolition, wanted to believe that Jo was happy, loyal, and faithful. Postbellum Northerners did not always want to recall that slavery had once been commonplace in New England as well as in the South. While the story of Joe Ginne did remind late-1800s Windham residents of their own uncomfortable history with slavery, choosing to believe that Jo had been a happy and faithful servant would have served to minimize that history.



Jo did not, of course, play any public political role in the new settlement. Several of the 19th-century local historians reproduced documents relating to Windham's early history, such as its petition to the Connecticut General Assembly for incorporation as an independent town. Cates was a frequent signer of such documents, as were most of Windham's other adult male heads of household. Neither a freeman nor a householder, Jo signed none of these documents. Like women, children, and indentured servants, he could neither vote nor hold office. His name was absent from church records.

John Cates died in 1697, apparently of old age. He left a will, in which he made specific reference to Jo.

I John Kates of Windham, in the Colony of Connecticut, doe make this my last Will & Testament: I give 200 acres of my Land not yet laid out to the Poor of the Town of Windham, to be Instayled to sd. Poor for their Use forever. I doe also give and Instayle 200 acres more of my lands not yet laid out to a scoole House for the Use of the above said Town forever. And further I doe give unto the Reverend Mr. Samuel Whiting (Minister of the Gospel), of said Towne, I say I give unto him my Negro Jo, one bed and bedd Clothes, one Chest, and my Wearing Clothes. And further, I do give unto the Church of Windham ten pounds in Money. I doe make Mary Howard my Executrix, and doe give unto herr all my Estate not above mentioned, both personal and real. And I appoint Ensign Jonathan Crane and sergt. Thomas Bingham to be Overseers of this my Will. Always provided that if any of my Children should Come over out of England, then my Will is that they, he or she, should enjoy my Estate notwithstanding what is above exprest. Otherwise, to stand Exactly in all Points. The Negro Jo An Exception. Jno. X Kates.

What can we discern from Cates's will? For one thing, he was illiterate (or perhaps disabled), signing his name with a X. For another, he was prosperous. Larned and other 19th-century sources agreed that he brought a quantity of gold and silver with him to Connecticut, which he used to purchase several hundred acres of land in Windham. How had he acquired such wealth, especially if he was indeed illiterate? Piracy is one possibility. (And if he was illiterate, that would have made him a very atypical Puritan man, although a much more typical pirate. Puritans, especially men, had one of the highest literacy rates in the world.) Cates wanted to be a benefactor, leaving 200 acres of land to benefit the poor and another 200 to finance a school. He also had plenty left over to endow his housekeeper, Mary Howard, the unmarried sister of one of his neighbors. He had left children behind in England. Did he always hope they would come looking for him, even after his death? In any case, none ever did.

And then there was Jo, whom he bequeathed to the town's minister, Rev. Samuel Whiting. Whiting was young, a recent graduate of Yale, and was said to be a passionate preacher. Whiting remained in Windham for the rest of his life, settling into the comfortable role of community pastor. He spent at least as much time caring for his parishioners' social needs as for their spiritual well-being. Whiting's negotiations with the town to become minister had been protracted, and he had received a decent living as part of the bargain. He was not poor, as ministers in other towns sometimes were. His father, Rev. John Whiting, was the minister of the prestigious Hartford church. Samuel Whiting was married, with children. Did Cates bequeath Jo to Whiting as a further economic incentive to stay in Windham, a valuable servant still able to contribute a good day's work? Or was Jo, like Cates, getting on in years, and Cates wanted to place him with someone he trusted to care for him? In addition to Jo, Cates also bequeathed Whiting a bed, bed clothes, a chest, and his old "wearing clothes." It is likely that these were for Jo. Larned reported that Jo did not long survive his old enslaver, evidence that he, too, may have become infirm by this time, worn out either by old age or by a life of toil. (Larned also reported that Jo exhibited much grief

at Cates's death.) Although we cannot be certain, it seems likely that the bequest of Jo to the minister was made to ensure that Jo was cared for more than anything else. That Cates made Jo the sole exception in the clause in his will that provided that all of his property would pass to any of his children who might show up to claim it reinforces that interpretation. It suggests that while Cates continued to see Jo as property, he may have viewed human property as something different from other kinds. It hints that the relationship between Cates and Jo was complex.

Parkhurst wrote that both Cates and Jo "were buried near the place of their concealment [the cellar in which they had lived together during their first winter in Windham], 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." In other words, the townspeople exhumed Cates's body and reburied it in the new town cemetery. Did they also move Jo's body? Parkhurst did not say. If they did, they did not mark it with a stone. Was a slave's body not worth the effort? Cates's new gravestone, paid for by the town, was for its time large and ornate. By contrast, there are no slaves' gravestones in the Windham Cemetery. As eventually many enslaved people came to live in Windham, one wonders, what happened to them after they died?



CATES MEMORIAL TABLET AT WINDHAM CEMETERY.



As the poet Jane Gay Fuller wryly noted, the inhabitants of 19th-century Windham considered Cates their town's first settler and founder, but did not extend that designation to Jo, who had arrived at the same time, dug the cellar hole in which he and Cates had lived for a winter, hunted and trapped to make sure they had enough to eat, and built or helped build the first house in the town. "He would have been a settler, too, / if he had been a man, you know!" she wrote with accusing sarcasm. Because Jo had not been "a man" – not a freeman, anyway, not a full person in the same legal sense as free white men – local tradition made Cates the first settler, the "father of our town," but relegated Jo to a supporting role, a shadow standing on the edge of the community, not fully part of it, not even worthy of a gravestone.

Like Fuller, not everyone in 1892 thought that was just. Theron Brown, who also wrote a poem to commemorate Windham's bicentennial in 1892, thought Jo deserved better. After several verses extolling Cates, Brown – a Windham native, Yale graduate, and in 1892 an editor at *Youth's Companion* magazine in Boston – brought up the subject of Jo. In 1892 the people of Windham remembered the recent Civil War as (at least in part) a war to end slavery, and doubtless some of them were embarrassed that their ancestors had once accepted slavery as normal. Not as sentimental as Fuller, Brown was a didactic writer who expressed strong disapproval at Jo's marginalization.

Pious he [Cates] was, and Puritan, possessed / Of worldly goods, a gentleman, a guest / Of Pilgrim Land, a friend of high and low, / A freeman – and he owned a slave, black Joe!

Enough that by the moral light he saw, / When liberty was only white man's law, / His human chattel was no swift reproof / To one whose soul had felt oppression's hoof, / Since Right, to even a Mayflower refugee, / Implied no negro's title to be free.

We trust the legend that John Cates was kind, / As kind of heart as liberal of mind. / And, after twice four years of upright deeds, / And generous thoughts for Windham's future needs, / When, praised for scattered blessings, he who gave / The town's first dwelling filled its earliest grave. / That the green threshold of his churchyard inn / Was watered by the tears of black Joe Ginne.

While Brown was didactic, Fuller was sentimental, and her poem was designed to stir emotions of wistfulness and longing rather than righteousness. After penning stanzas that described both Cates and Jo as people, she moved on to an unusual stanza in which she wrote only in masculine pronouns, so that what it said could have been understood to have been about either man, or both. Fuller was not always a skilled poet, and perhaps the stanza's structure was an accident, but it can be read to apply to both Cates and Jo, to say that both men were refugees in a strange new land, longing for their former homes.

The forest welcomed him! The breeze / Brought back the tuneful melodies / His childhood loved beyond the seas! / And blue-birds sang, and blossoms sprang / To cheer the lonely-hearted man, / Till others came; then life began / Anew for the poor refugee / Unsought in his obscurity.

Did Fuller refer only to Cates? Or did she intend this verse to apply to Jo as well? Whatever her intent, her lines described the experiences of both men. In his lifetime, Jo would have been much alone, a "lonely-hearted man." He was the only enslaved person and the only Black person in Windham. There was no one else like him, no one who could understand his feelings — indeed, no one to whom he would have dared unburden those feelings. It is difficult to imagine anyone more lonely, more isolated. Tragically, he died before "others came." Even more tragically, others did come. In time, after Jo died, other enslaved persons were brought to Windham, and that, too, is part of the the sadness of the story, that slavery in Windham only began with Jo, but did not end with him. The first census of Connecticut, conducted in 1756 when it was still a colony, found 2,406 white folks and 40 Blacks living in Windham Town, all or most of them enslaved. Windham County had 19,670 whites and 345 Blacks. "These blacks were mostly negroes," Larned wrote, "owned by the opulent families. A few Indians held as slaves were probably included among them. Apparently, the list is not complete.... Several negroes were owned by Colonel Thomas Dyer [of Windham Town]; a still larger number occupied Godfrey Malbone's plantation in Mortlake." Indeed, as the story of Joe Ginne — of Jo — reminds us, people of color have been here all along.