

NATHANIEL FOOTE (1593-1644) ae. 51

ELIZABETH DEMING (abt. 1595-1683) ae. 88

Henry R. Stiles recorded the following excerpt from Nathaniel Goodwin's 'Genealogy of the Foote Family,' which is found in his 'History of Ancient Wethersfield', 1904.

"Nathaniel Foote, the Settler, from Wat., (Watertown) 1635, or perhaps, late in 1634; his ho'd (holding) was a ho. (home) and out bldgs. and 10 acs. ld. (located) S.E. side Broad St., and lying betw. (between) Carpenter's Lane S.W., and Jeremiah Jagers ho'd, whose ho-lot (home lot) lay S.E. of it, Carpenter's Lane S.W., Wm. Palmer's ho-lot and Robert Rose's "Adventure ld" (land), N.E. This is where the ho'd, some yrs. occup. by Levi Warner, stands. Mr. Foote was the richest ld-owner (land owner) in Wethersfield in his day, especially in ld. W. of the River. His wife, whom he bro't from Eng. was Elizabeth, sister of Henry Deming, of Wethersfield, and after Foote's dth. (death) she became the second wife of Gov. Thos. Welles. Foote was a dep. to the Gen. Ct., 1641-4. The best account of him and of many of his distinguished desc'ts, can be found in 'Goodwins Genealogy of the Foote Family'." ¹

A very early record of Nathaniel was found in the Court Rolls of the Burough of Colchester, England. Mr. George Rickword, the Librarian and Secretary of the Public Library of that town in England, sent, by request of Judge Nathaniel Foote of Rochester, N. Y., in 1919, a copy of the abstract as follows:

"Nathaniel Foote aged 16 years, son of Robert Foote of Shalford in Com. Essex Yeoman doth put himself apprentice to Samuel Croylye of Colchester, aforesaid grocer and Free Burgess from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel last past for the term of eight years. Dated 21 Sept. V James I (1608). Sealed and delivered in the presence of me Robert Foote and of me George Lumpkin." ²

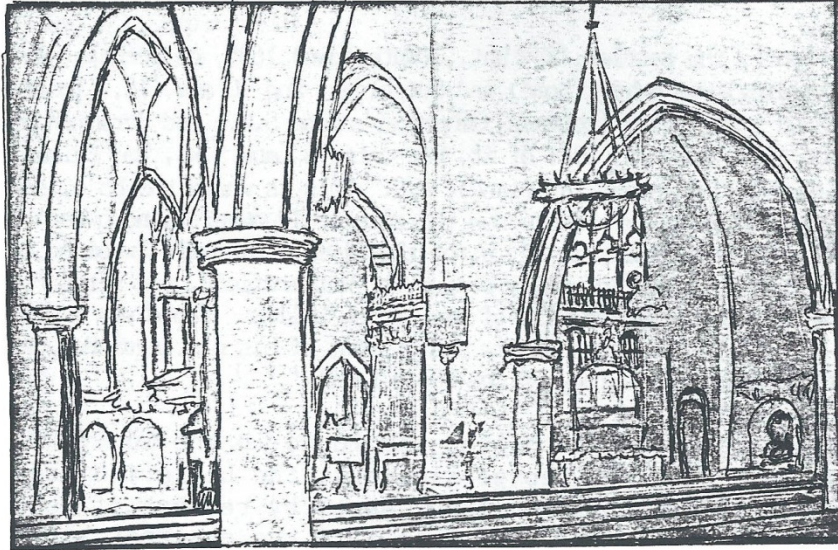
If the historians are correct about Nathaniel's death in 1644, aged 51 years, Nathaniel was either 15 or 16 years of age in 1608 and was born in England about 1593. Eight years of service in this apprenticeship in Colchester, England, brings him to 1616 when he would have been 24 years old. His marriage to Elizabeth Deming must have taken place as early as 1615. The date of the birth of their eldest child, Elizabeth, is given as about 1617. In the report given by Judge Nathaniel Foote, he stated:

"I have secured satisfactory evidence that he (Nathaniel) did reside in Colchester in the County of Essex before coming to this country, and that he was the son of Robert Foote, of Shalford, in the same County, and first cousin of Sir Thomas Foote who was Lord Mayor of London in 1649-50. I visited Colchester in July, 1914, and with the assistance of Mr. George Rickword, F. R. His. Soc., Librarian and Secretary of the Public Library of Colchester, an experienced genealogist; I found the record in St. James' Parish Church Colchester, of the baptism of Nathaniel Foote's two eldest children as follows:

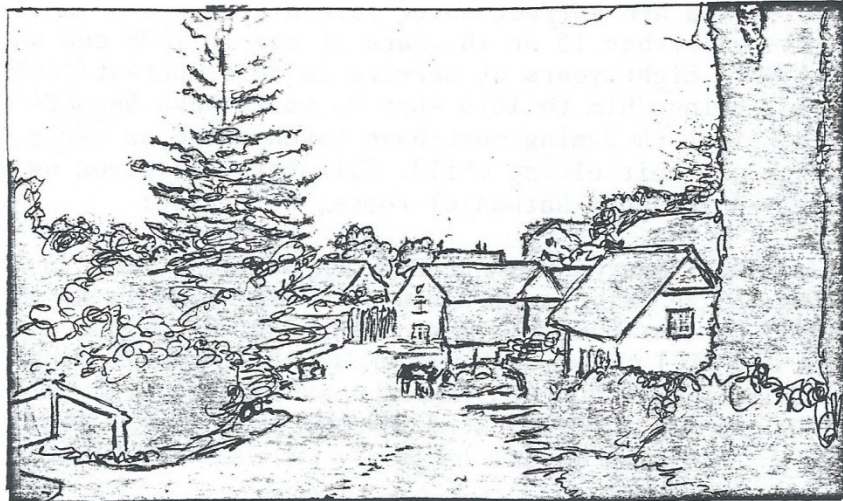
January 14, 1617, Elizabeth Foot ye daughter of Nathaniel Foote and Elizabeth his wife.

March 5, 1619, Nathaniel Foot ye sonne of Nathaniel and Elizabeth.

(By our present reckoning these dates would be 1618 and 1620, respectively.)" ³



CLOISTER OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH, COLCHESTER, ENGLAND



VILLAGE STREET, SHALFORD, ENGLAND

Goodwin, in his 1849 writing, states that all of Nathaniel and Elizabeth's seven children were born in England except, perhaps, the youngest, who was Rebecca, born about 1634, as Nathaniel, the settler, took the oath of freeman in America in 1633. Since no record of the other children's baptisms could be found in Colchester records, would indicate that the family left before the birth of their third child, Mary, in 1623. What happened from 1623 to 1630 is purely speculative. We do not know from what part of England the Footes emigrated or in what year he and his family arrived in this country, but we can be sure it was between the years 1623 and 1630. Judge Foote, of Rochester, N. Y., expressed the probability that Nathaniel continued in the grocery business in England. From the review of his father, Robert of Shalford and also of John, his father's brother, a grocer in London, it might well be assumed that he was in London engaged in work with his Uncle John. If this is true, Nathaniel and Elizabeth probably left England with their family from London.⁴

It is nice to remember that Nathaniel spent several of his years in such a place as the beautiful town of Colchester, England. Those who visit the place come back with reports of the antiquity and beauty of the town and especially the impressive looks of Colchester Castle. It has been restored and stands like a sentinel connecting the present with the long ago past. Colchester claims to be the oldest recorded town in England. How interesting it would be to walk its streets and ponder the fact that Nathaniel Foote, the American settler, once trod the area and even passed through the portals and corridors of grand old Colchester Castle. (Map 1, #28)

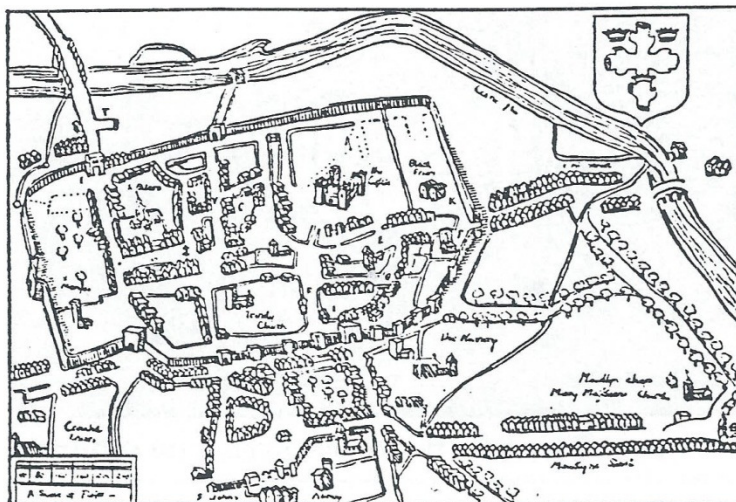
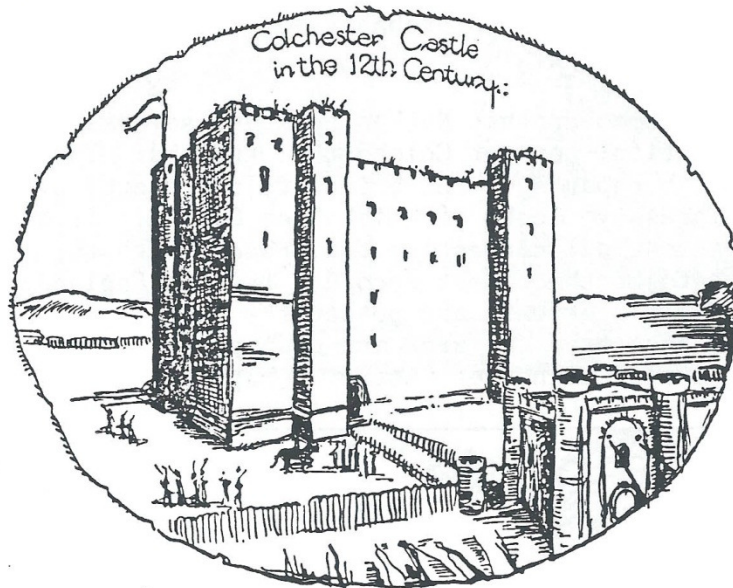


COLCHESTER CASTLE, COLCHESTER ENGLAND

The Castle at Colchester, a royal fortress, was built about 1080 by William the Conqueror. The original building comprised outworks, ramparts, a fortified gateway (presumably with drawbridge), and a ditch or moat, with

palisades. All that now remains consists of the ruined "Keep", of large proportions and great strength. This Keep is much larger than any existing Norman Keep, having an area of 17,000 feet, much larger than the area of the White Tower of London.

The walls of Colchester Castle (Keep) were originally more than twice their present height, and the towers at the corners were over 100 feet high. The two upper floors of the Keep have gone. They included a fine Chapel, beneath which was the Crypt, now used as the Colchester Museum. The castle was built largely of Roman material on the site of a large Roman building, presumed to have been the forum of the Roman town. These Roman remains are what are now called the vaults under the Castle. They have been cleared and can be inspected.



MAP OF COLCHESTER, 1610
SHOWING THE KEEP AND FORTIFIED OUTWORKS ON THE SOUTH SIDE,
ALSO THE TOWN WALL AND GATES OF THE TOWN

Alma Lewis James gives a brief concise statement of Nathaniel and Elizabeth in these words:

"Nathaniel Foote was born in 1593 in England. He came to Watertown, Massachusetts, 1630; was freeman 1634; settled in Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1636; was Deputy from 1641-1644. He married Elizabeth Deming, sister of John Deming of Wethersfield, Conn., in England, in 1615. He died in 1644." 5

"The first mention of Nathaniel's name in America is on the record of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1633, when he took the oath of freeman. Records in Watertown, Mass., show that he obtained possession of sixteen acres for a homestead and two acres of marsh land along the river. He was among those to whom the first distribution of land in Watertown was made." 6

Though the early settlers had left their homeland in England for a variety of reasons, once in the new world their first and all-important consideration was to establish homes. So, one after another, the little colonies were planted along the Atlantic seaboard, only a few newcomers were inclined to go any distance inland. They were the heralds of a long line of frontiersmen who were to push on over farther toward the west.

Yet there was a certain amount of moving about within the eastern ribbon of settlement. Roger Williams, for instance, was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, because he disagreed with the all-powerful religious authorities. As a result, he and his followers established the Rhode Island colony. Other groups were lured from Massachusetts to settle in the Connecticut River valleys, notably, one led by the Reverend Thomas Hooker, in 1636, of whom later mention will be made.

Nathaniel and Elizabeth must have arrived with the first big group of planters to settle Watertown in 1630. Grain was scarce and high priced in England and food was also scarce in the town until the harvest of 1631.

"Many were in great straits for want of provisions and lived on fish, clams and oysters. 'And let no man make a jest at pumpkins', says Johnson, 'for with this fruit the Lord was pleased to feed his people to their good content till corn and cattle were increased'. The Indians were also short because they had traded off all their corn, and the Puritan goodwife would often find a great naked savage by her fireside watching her stir the scanty corn-meal in the iron kettle over the fire, and muttering over and over the three English words which were all he knew: 'Much hungry belly'.

"The poorer people lived the first winter in huts built like an Indian wigwam; the more provident had log cabins with chimneys of logs daubed with clay. Fires were frequent.

"After the first winter an extraordinary boom began. As the wolves were killed, cattle multiplied and herdsman guarded them in fenced-in common enclosures. In 1633, there was a great rejoicing over the discovery that English grain could be grown here, and soon English plows and hoes were brought over so that one man could take care of a much larger acreage than by the old Indian methods used before. In the next ten years, twenty thousand people came to Massachusetts Bay... (See Map #2)

"...This tremendous immigration soon turned the faces of all the colonists westward." 7

As the coastal areas became thickly populated, the settlers of Watertown saw many new immigrants who were looking for land and the town became a temporary stopping place for thousands preparing to rush on, taking with them, indeed, many of the more adventurous among the first settlers. These earlier settlers of Watertown were able to sell land to the later comers and found with them a ready market for all they could raise. By this means groups of people were lured from Massachusetts to settle in the Connecticut River Valley, where there was much richer farm land than could be had in the Bay Colony or even in other areas along the coast of Massachusetts.

"The first recorded exploring trip was made by Governor Winthrop and his friends up the Charles River in January, 1632. They named the first brook Beaver Brook...When the time came to divide this land beyond Beaver Brook, only the land in the northern half was considered desirable for farming...North Waltham and Weston became new settlements. Modern names, not known at that time, are used to make the areas clear to modern readers, though, of course, all the territories continued to exist as the western precinct of Watertown for a hundred years.

"John Oldham was in the forefront of all this westward migration. In September, 1633, with the others, he went overland to the Connecticut River to trade. He accounted the distance to be about one hundred and sixty miles. 'The sachem used them kindly and gave them some beaver furs. They brought of the hemp, which grows there in great abundance and is much better than the English. He brought back some black lead whereof the Indians told him there was a whole rock. He lodged at Indian towns all the way.' " 8

Mr. Hooker and his congregation soon planned to move from Watertown to Connecticut, but were persuaded to delay in Cambridge until 1636. In the meantime, Oldham had arrived at the Pyquag Meadow, situated off the banks of the Connecticut River, and had named it Watertown, a name changed in 1637 to Wethersfield. A Plymouth colony under Jonathan Brewster, Oldham's brother-in-law, went there in 1633, and in 1636, Brewster tried to get word to Oldham, who was off on a trading voyage, that the Pequot Indians intended to rise against the English. On the twentieth of July, 1636, Oldham's pinnace was seen drifting near Block Island with the deck swarming with savages. Oldham's body was found under an old seine (fishing net), his head cleft; the victim of treachery. Oldham's name does not deserve oblivion. He was the first of that race of pioneers which opened up the West, although it is hard to realize that the Connecticut River was then the West, and Watertown the outpost of civilization.

It is thought that Nathaniel and his family left Watertown between 1635 and 1636 when many others from that same area made the long and toilsome journey through the wilderness into the interior country that became Wethersfield, Connecticut. It is certain he was included in Wethersfield's original distribution of land in 1640, and it is thought that Nathaniel and his family as well as a younger man, Josiah Churchill, (see 2-1) traveled with the Rev. Hooker's congregation.

By this time, the settlement of Watertown was so sadly crowded and cattle so much increased that when the Court order, that had delayed migration, was passed by the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony, granting liberty for people to remove themselves to any place they thought to choose,

provided they continue under the Government of the Bay Colony, it became the inducement that was needed to stir the enthusiasm of courageous colonists.

Some of Mr. Hooker's travelers who determined to set forth across Massachusetts and Connecticut to the Connecticut River were of a group called, "Adventurers" and among them were men who held privileges of land ownership because of personal wealth and status in England where the group was initially organized.

It was through the efforts of this prestigious group of "Adventurers" that the Bay Colony Court finally were persuaded to allow colonizing further westward. Among this group came Nathaniel Foote and his family.

The story of this family would not be complete without mention of the hardships that were encountered by the earliest people who traveled from Watertown, Massachusetts, to the beautiful and enticing areas along the Connecticut River. The Footes shared in all the dangers and privations of such a wilderness journey. Abram W. Foote, the aforementioned author, reminds us of our remoteness from such an experience as he says,

"...And how difficult it is for us, in our comfortable dwellings, or traversing with every means and appliance of comfort, the distance between Wethersfield and Boston, in less than half as many hours as they consumed in weeks, to realize the sufferings of that journey and of the first winter here! We can never be too thankful that courage and strength was meted out to them in proportion to their trials. For them, the trail of the Indian, too narrow for teams or herds, —for them the unbridged stream and morass, —for them, the steep hill, —for them, the dangers from wild beasts, or from savage men, —were not enough to cause them to turn back. It was not 'till winter had come down from the north to lock up the streams—'till the fire in their temporary lodgments could not keep out the biting cold, —'till famine stared them in the face, that they were driven again for food and shelter to the coast along the Sound; and when spring returned, they were on their way, with their thinned ranks recruited to commence anew the journey to their destination and the work of settlement." 9

That first winter on the south coast of Connecticut was one of trial and horror as strenuous efforts went into setting up hurried, and make-shift shelters. The weather of the coastal area was somewhat of a lesser severity and out of necessity they had to avoid the bitter cold of the more northerly snows until the spring and summer seasons would allow for the building of homes and seeding of crops in preparation for the many winters ahead.

This group had driven 160 head of cattle through dense forests and swamps and across streams, while carrying their household goods in packs on their backs or in wooden wheeled carts pulled by oxen. They found no roads, but only narrow trails worn by Indians, or by wild animals in search of salt licks.

As soon as the weather permitted, they traveled the miles between their coast retreat to Pyquag and the prolific valley on the Connecticut River that was to become their future home. Once at Pyquag, which later became known as Wethersfield, they faced the tasks of providing themselves with their immediate needs. Ranking first were the needs of food, shelter, and safety

against the most ferocious tribe of Indians in New England. They were soon to experience many autrocities that finally terminated in the Pequod War. This war was, in fact, the life struggle of the first colonists of Wethersfield. During the time of Nathaniel's habitation in that settlement, came the total extermination of the Pequot Indians, as a nation. In fact, Nathaniel's home, by order of the General Court, became a rendezvous for troops who made ready for transport on the river, during the progress of the Pequod War.¹⁰ (Map #22)

From the account given by Mr. Stile the Indian attack on Wethersfield, prior to the Pequod War, took place in April of 1637, and has been recorded in the story of Josiah and Elizabeth Churchill (2-1), who were the son-in-law and daughter of Nathaniel and Elizabeth.¹¹

"With all our sympathy for the sufferings of the early settlers which provoked the Pequod War, and with all our appreciation of the untold blessings which followed as the Commonwealth of Connecticut was established, we cannot but feel a throb of gratitude to those early founders."¹²

To found a Commonwealth under any circumstances has ever been counted among the great works of great men, but to found a colony in the wilderness, amid the trials of frost and famine, and with daily, hourly, constant apprehension of assault and butchery from the savage, is no common event in the world's history, and should be ever remembered by those who have enjoyed the fruits of those early endeavors for future protection and peace.

Knowing that the Foote family settled in Wethersfield in 1635-1636, we can be sure that they lived through the tragic experience of Wethersfield's Indian Massacre of 1637. Through the years, however, incidents of tragedy came to the Foote family as it did to many of the early settlers of Wethersfield.

A conspicuous feature in the history of the first generations of the Foote family, is the deaths, sufferings and captivities of its members, and with those connected with them by marriage, at the hands of the Indians. As told by Mary Walton Ferris as she compiled "Dawes-Gates Ancestral Lines" in 1931:

"This family, as a whole, had a large share in the tragedies of that early day for Philip Smith, husband of Rebecca Foote (dau. of Nathaniel), was announced to have been 'murdered with an hideous witchcraft'; among the members of the early generations, Nathaniel Foote (son of Nathaniel) had, (a), a daughter-in-law and two of her children taken captive by the Indians and another child killed; (b), a daughter and three of her children killed, while (c), her husband and two other children were made captives; and (d), two more of her children wounded; and Frances Foote (dau. of Nathaniel), lost two husbands by the Indians as well as one son-in-law killed and another, with four of his children, taken into captivity."¹³

Henry R. Stile introduced his readers to the history of Wethersfield with these words:

"The best epitomized statement which we have seen of these immigrations and of the relations existing between the three neighboring plantations of Windsor, Wethersfield and Hartford, on the Connecticut River, and their mother towns in Massachusetts, is

that presented in the 'Hartford Daily Courant' for July, 1899. This we take the liberty of using as an introduction to our history of Wethersfield: 'Our fathers fled from England to escape from the oppression of the prelates of the established church. They did not object to the union of church and state, because they inaugurated the same union here; but they did object to the civil power and tyranny exercised by the clergy of the Church of England. When they settled in the Massachusetts Bay, it was as churches with pastors; but, while they called the churches 'towns' as their civil distinction, they gave the pastors no civil power, ex officio, as was the case in England...

"The town in New England took the place of the parish in England and was based upon the church. Church members only could be made freeman. The church expenses were raised by rates levied upon householders. The meeting-house was the town hall, where ecclesiastical and civil officers were mingled in local legislation, with no definite line of distinction between them. The meeting-house was located upon the public common and a liberal amount of land was appropriated for its use, where 'horse sheds' and 'Sabbath day houses' were erected, and the train band had its parade ground. (Sabbath day houses were used by the families who came distances outside the town, too far to be able to come to church and return home the same day). Nearby the church was located the burying ground, also out of the public common. The minister of every church was presented with a gratuity of several acres of the public domain; and the church was given parsonage and land for its support. In Connecticut, church and state were not separated until the adoption of the Constitution of 1818." ¹⁴

Turning now to Vol. 2 of "The History of Ancient Wethersfield, Connecticut" Stile makes this statement:

"It is by no means certain that Mr. Foote, as some have asserted, was the first settler at Wethersfield, but it is probably true that he was one of the first ten men, known as "Adventurers", who absolutely were first settled here; and that he was the largest holder of so-called 'Adventurer's lands'. In the original lay-out of the town, 1640, he received a home-lot of ten acres, at South End of Broad Street, East side, and gradually became the owner of other pieces of land, partly in the Great Meadow, east of his home-lot, and amounting in all to over 400 acres. (See Map #22)

"In 1641-4, Nathaniel Foote represented the town of Wethersfield in the General Court, an evidence of the respect and confidence in which he seems to have been held by his fellow-townsmen." ¹⁵

Mary Walton Ferris reviews Nathaniel's life in the following words:

"Nathaniel Foote, born about 1593 in England, is believed to have been the son of Robert and Joan Foote, of Shalford, co. Essex, England. He married, about 1615, Elizabeth Deming, who was born about 1595, a sister of John Deming who became an early and prominent settler of Wethersfield, Connecticut. Nathaniel, with his wife and probably six children emigrated to New England where he became a freeman of Watertown, Massachusetts, on September 3, 1634, owned a homestead of sixteen acres and a two-acre marsh and was still a proprietor as late as 1642, but removed before that date to Wethersfield, Connecticut, probably with the first group of its settlers in 1634.

"In this new home he was the wealthiest man and the largest holder of the so-called

'Adventurers' lands.' He held a ten-acre home lot and gradually added various other tracts including the southern part of 'Pennywise Island.' In 1639 he laid out a road two rods wide which ran east from the Connecticut River 'to the Wilderness' through his '3 mile lot.' Farming was his occupation and, apparently, he established a good reputation as a stock raiser..." 16 (Map #22)

The cultivation of his land constituted Nathaniel's main business and, as told earlier, he established a good reputation as a stock raiser. During the time that troops were being mobilized to rid the countryside of its Indian struggles, he provisioned Captain John Mason's ninety men with sufficient pork for their maintenance.

Necessarily, the leading pursuit of New England in its early history was that of agriculture--when forests were to be felled, the soil broken up, the seeds of all that constitute the food of man, sown, and its great staples of commercial exchange supplied. The pure air, the rough exposure, the healthful toil, the constant call for thought and reflection, were the things favorable for bodily energy and vigor of mind.

'Nathaniel and Elizabeth did not belong to that class of men and women who fill a large part in the world's history who obtain power and influence, but to that more numerous and meritorious class, who, born to the great inheritance of labor, walk along the paths of common life, performing every duty that their circumstances demand. To such, society owes its peace, stability and progress, and yet history takes no note of such, and hence 'The world knows nothing of its greatest men'...

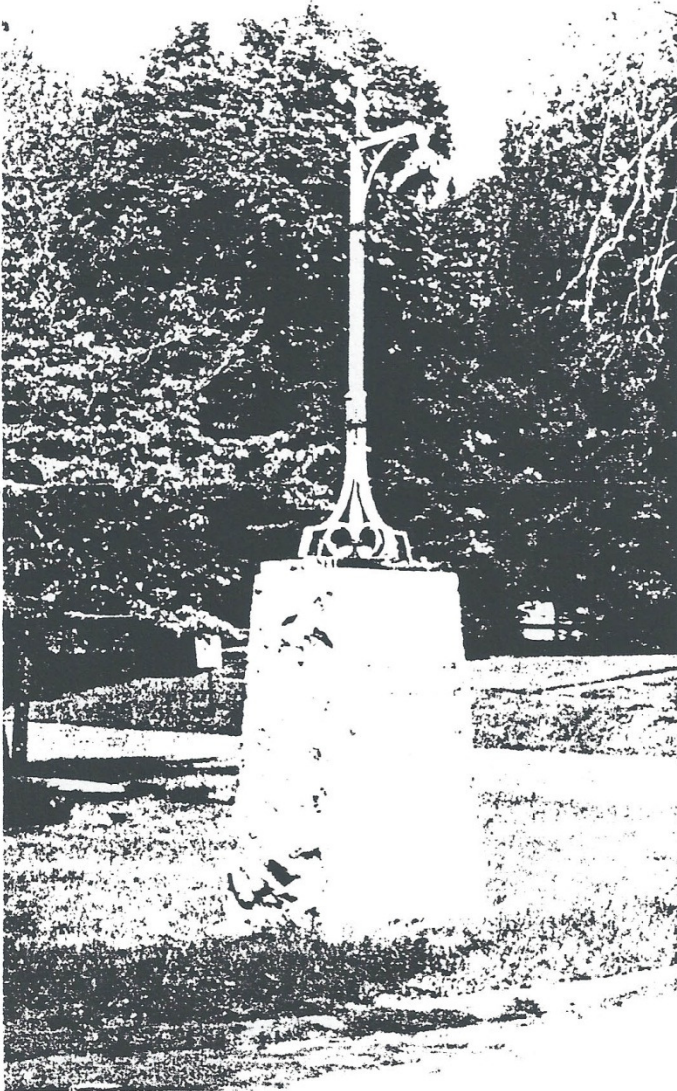
'Nathaniel Foote was, as stated by Abram W. Foote, 'an intelligent, pious and industrious farmer, and like all of the progressive class of people, he was from time to time summoned to the discharge of public trusts by his neighbors and townsmen.' " 17

During his short ten years of sojourn in Wethersfield, we find him and his wife and friends of Hartford and Windsor, Connecticut, laying the foundation of a Commonwealth. The year that Nathaniel was called to another term in the General Court, 1644, he died, aged 51 years, and was buried in the ancient burying grounds in the rear of the old church of Wethersfield.

While we know that the remains of Nathaniel, the settler, and many of his family to the ninth generation, rest in this old graveyard, yet it is a lamentable fact that there is not a stone there with the name of Foote on it, and we are not able to mark the location of the graves. He left, surviving, a widow, two sons and five daughters. The children of Nathaniel and Elizabeth were:

- "1. Elizabeth Foote. b. January 14, 1616-17; d. Sept. 8, 1700; m., 1638, Josiah Churchill (2-1)
2. Nathaniel, b. March 5, 1619-20; d. 1655; m., 1646, Elizabeth Smith, dau. Lt. Samuel
3. Mary Foote, b. abt. 1623; m. 1st, 1642, John Stoddard, who d. Dec. 1664; m. 2nd, 1674, John Goodrich, who d. April, 1680; m. 3rd, Lt. Thomas Tracy
4. Robert Foote, b. abt. 1627; d. 1681; m. Sarah Potter 1659
5. Frances Foote, b. 1629; m. 1st, 1648, John Dickenson, who d. 1676; m. 2nd, 1677, Francis Barnard
6. Sarah Foote, b. abt. 1632; d. 1673; m., 1652, Jeremiah Judson
7. Rebecca Foote, b. abt. 1634; d. April 6, 1701, in Hadley, Mass.; m. 1st, abt. 1657, Philip Smith (Samuel), who d. January 10, 1685; m. 2nd, October 2, 1688, Major Aaron Cook." 18

The old Foote homestead can be located today as it extends to what is now a public park called "The Green" at the foot of Broad Street in Wethersfield. The monument seen in the photo below marks the original property and home of Nathaniel and Elizabeth and commemorates the life of those immigrant ancestors and founders of Wethersfield, Connecticut. 19



Foote Monument, Wethersfield, Conn.

The monument, bearing a guide light, was erected in 1908 at the south end junction of the highway on Broad Street. The inscription on the Foote monument reads:

NATHANIEL FOOTE
THE SETTLER
BORN IN ENGLAND 1593
DIED IN WETHERSFIELD 1644
ERECTED BY THE
FOOTE FAMILY ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA
ON THE ORIGINAL HOME LOT
SEPTEMBER 17,
1908

It bears the following caption also: "In 1908 the Foote Family Association erected the monument burying beneath it a lead box. In the Old Academy Museum is the record of its interesting contents -

- John C. Willard"

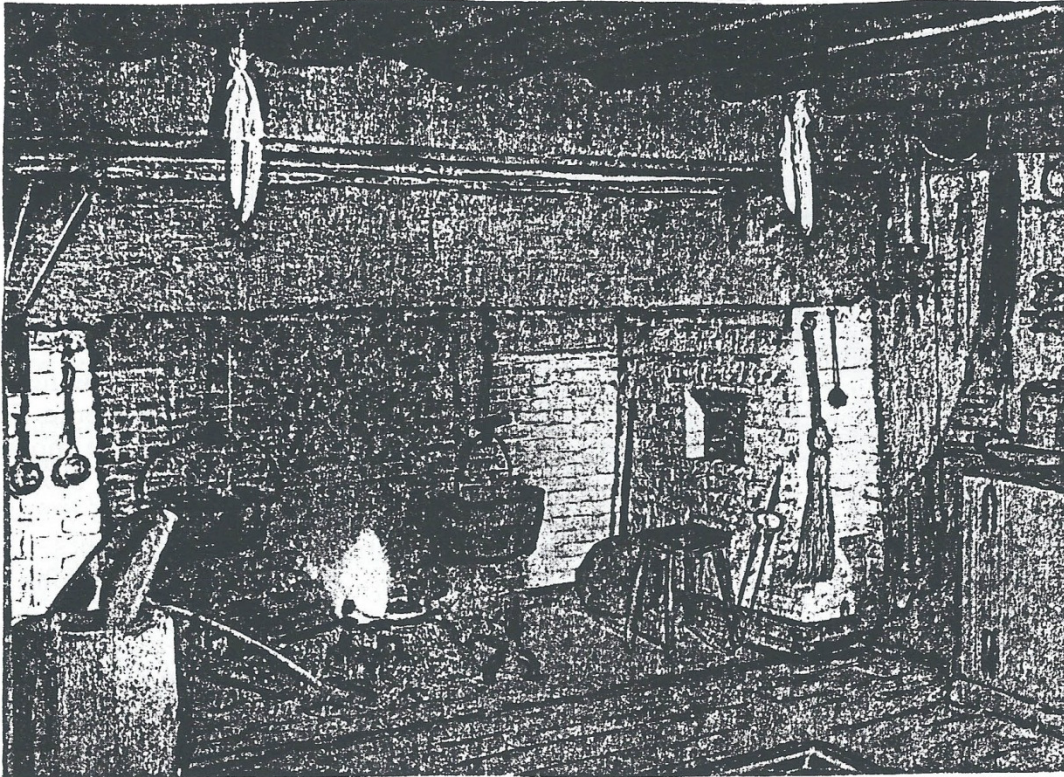
At its 1907 meeting Judge Nathaniel Foote of Rochester, New York was elected president of the Foote Family Association. Other officers were Judge Abram W. Foote of Middlebury, Vermont, and Nathaniel Foote, M. D. of Brooklyn, New York.

Upon the writer's request, Douglas Alves, Jr., of the Old Academy Museum and member of the Wethersfield Historical Society, was kind enough to provide the above photo and script.

At the north end of the Green is a granite boulder erected by The Wethersfield Historical Society, June 8, 1934. Nathaniel's name is listed among nine others. The inscription, in addition to the listing, follows:

TO THE MEMORY OF TEN ADVENTURERS FROM WATERTOWN,
MASSACHUSETTS WHO SETTLED WITHERSFIELD IN 1634

The Foote home has long since given way to the improvement of the Park area, but pictured here we see a typical New England kitchen, the type occupied by the more opulent citizens of the day.



"An inventory of his estate was taken November 20, 1644, and showed him to have been well supplied with the comforts of that day by a valuation of over 395 pounds in personal property beside his land, and other possessions which furnished a total of more than 800 pounds—an unusual large estate for that time. He had more than 3 pounds invested in goats and, with but one exception, no one else in this colony is shown to have had them so early. His hogs were appraised at 66 pounds, which was more than double the value of his horses.

"The widow was given a large portion of the estate and was made sole administratrix. The eldest son received a double share and Robert inherited property to the value of 74 pounds. Provision was made for the married daughters and an interesting proviso specified that the three younger children should have 74 pounds each 'p'vided it is lefte at the dispose of their mother to detracte from any of them if shee see just cause, 5 pounds of the portion here set downe, and to adde yt to such of the other as best desearue yt.'

"Shortly after the assumption of administration by the widow Elizabeth, Robert Bedle committed several thefts in the neighborhood, including one 'Fro wydowe Foote, of Rye, iiiij bush' and was sentensed 'to restore double for the seuerall thefts acknowledged by him, and to be seuerely whipped and branded in the hand vppo Wensday next'. Some might say that such instances of crime deterrence could well be recommended to present day dispensers of justice.

"Widow Elizabeth (Deming) Foote married secondly, about 1646, as his second wife, Thomas Welles, who was then a magistrate and later Governor of Connecticut Colony. She survived him and died July 28, 1683, aged about 88 years, leaving a Will dated March 28, 1678, which carried a codicil or memorandum dated August 16, 1682, and which was proved in August or September, 1683. The inventory showed a valuation of over 328 pounds and the Will itself assigned, among other bequests, certain land to Robert...Her recognized ability is shown by the facts that her first husband's estate was left solely to her administration, although her eldest son was twenty-four years old, and her second husband's Will contained a proviso whereby she might have the use of his entire estate while she remained a widow in order 'that she may keep the better hospitality.' " 20

A vivid picture of the stately Elizabeth (Deming) Foote, widow of Gov. Welles, is suggested by the following excerpt from Goodwin's History:

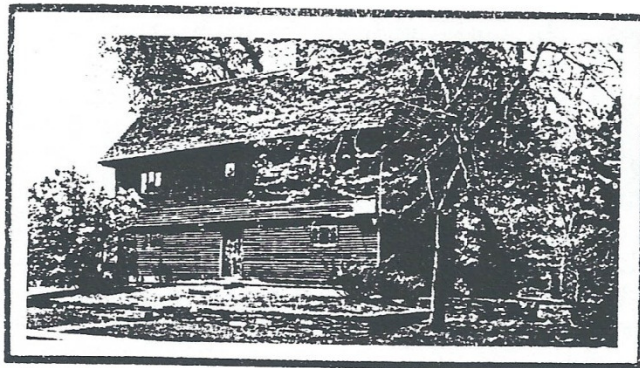
"The calls on the hospitality, not only of those who were wealthy, but of those families which had enjoyed the public honors of the Colony, were numerous, and most carefully responded to. To the Clergy, and to persons of official trust or on official business, traveling through the towns, the door of the Welles mansion was always open,—and the hand of charity was never closed to those whom misfortune or disease had made helpless." 21

Elizabeth outlived her first husband, Nathaniel, by 39 years, and her Governor husband by twenty-four years. We see her a woman of grace and humble dignity, devoting her time and means to the hospitality expected of the wife of the late Governor. It is the impression of the writer that she did the duties of a hostess not because it was expected, alone, but because she had learned, through her own trials and sacrifices to understand people and their needs. To feel the greatness of her soul one would need to have traversed with her the trek of the particular trials and sufferings to which she had been exposed. We look to Elizabeth (Deming) Foote Welles with reverent admiration not alone for her gracious manners in her hostess position as she welcomed many of note to the Governor's Mansion in Connecticut, but because she voluntarily placed an ocean and a wilderness between a homeland and herself, to face dangers, hardships and trials. Once here, she rose high in opportunities to help others; to welcome many who came from England for the faith they had in their religious beliefs, despairing in their efforts to acquire accommodations and to maintain themselves in a new country. Elizabeth was there to understand their desperation and to aid and comfort them in their pursuits.

As these brief biographical sketches unfold, one is struck by the indelible mark that each character has left on the period of time to which they belonged. It seems that with every step of investigation required in such a research, fragments of reverent history are uncovered to exalt our admiration for each person who played his or her part in policies of public interest and religious devotion. To catch the public spirit of the founders of new communities in early America is an ample reward for each bit of investigation, but more than that—to rescue the memory of personal virtues as they reveal themselves in each character study, becomes a real honor.

We can be sure from the fact that Nathaniel Foote was the wealthiest man and the largest holder of lands in the area, that his home was among the better ones built for the earliest settlers. Though Nathaniel and Elizabeth's home has long since given way to later edifices, it is commendable that many of the older homes of Wethersfield are being restored in remembrance of the past. All homes that were built during the settlement's infancy have disappeared. The oldest home still standing is shown below. Like a sentinel of the 17th century, it reminds us that the past is always reluctant to give up its claim to a place for the present.

*Built in 1692
Wethersfield, Connecticut*



A Registered National Historic Landmark

Any research into the past fails of its true import, unless the portrayal of the great virtues of those who were striving for a good life is evident, and the reader be warmed by the trials and mistakes of the participants and quickened by their example.

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| 1. #12 p. 270 | 12. #16, Introd. p. XXIV |
| 2. #17 Vol 2, p. 644 | 13. #115, p. 338 |
| 3. <i>ibid</i> | 14. #112, pp. 17-19 |
| 4. <i>ibid</i> , pp. 644-645 | 15. #113, p. 327 |
| 5. #15 p. 63 | 16. #115, ;. 337 |
| 6. #17 Vol. I, p. 17 | 17. #17. Bp;/ 1. ½/ 17 |
| 7. #144, p. 32-33 | 18. #115, pp. 338-340 |
| 8. <i>ibid</i> , pp. 33-34 | 19. #17, Vol. 1, p. 7 |
| 9. #17, p. 18 also Introd. VI, VII | 20. #115, pp. 338-339 |
| 10. #16, Introd. p. XXIV | 21. #16, Introd. p. X |
| 11. #112, Vol. 1, pp. 62-63 | |