

History of Deacon Thomas Adgate

Deacon Thomas Adgate was born about 1620 in England. Thomas married his first wife in England. She died in 1657 and was buried in the Old Cemetery at Saybrook, Connecticut.

Thomas Adgate was an early settler of Saybrook, Connecticut. He was one of the seven 'pillars' of the church chosen when the first church there was organized by Reverend James Fitch in 1646.

He moved to the new plantation of Norwich in 1660 with Reverend Fitch and other members of the congregation. He was appointed Deacon in the first church of Norwich as well, serving as long as his health permitted, a total of at least fifty years in this office. His son Thomas was also a Deacon, serving for forty-two years as such.

He was active in other affairs of Norwich as well. He was chosen, with Thomas Tracy and Francis Griswold, to serve as Commissioner in 1662, a court established for trying cases of 40 shillings or less. He also was chosen to serve as Townsman in the years 1674, 1676, 1679, 1680, 1682 and 1684.

He was a legatee in the will of Joshua, third son of the Mohegan sachem Uncas, which bequeathed to sixteen 'gentlemen' (twelve from Norwich and four from surrounding communities) shares consisting of 1,000 acres. Each legatee received at least one share. Soon after approval of the will in May of 1678, his stepson Richard Bushnell, together with Thomas Leffingwell, Jr. and Simon Huntington, laid out the lines and boundaries of the tract. It was from this generous gift the new plantation of Windham was formed.

By 1671 the original meeting house on the green, where religious services of Norwich were held, became too small for the growing congregation. Plans were made for the building of a new meeting house which was completed in 1676. It was built on the hill where it could also be used as a lookout in times of danger.

The Reverend James Fitch retired in 1696 and a parsonage was purchased for the new minister. It was the home of Samuel Huntington, built by Captain James Fitch. A portion of this lot, purchased in 1701, was set aside for use as a cemetery. The gravestone of Thomas Adgate is one of the oldest to be found in this old cemetery. It was inscribed as follows:

HERE LIES
THE BODY of
DEACON THOMAS
ADGET WHO
DIED JVLY 1707
IN ye 87th YEAR
of his age

He left a will dated 22 May 1704.