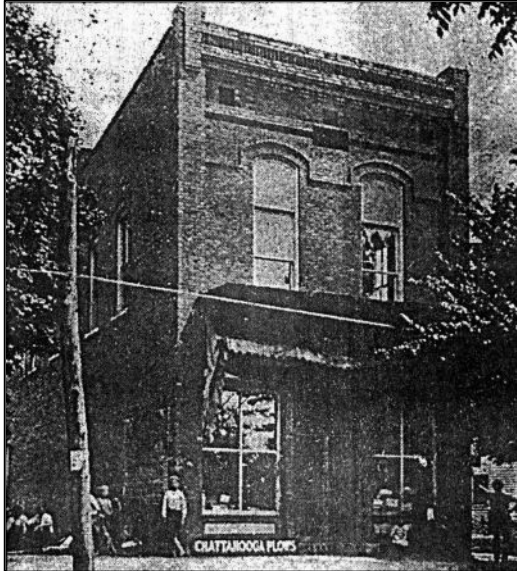


CATES FOUGHT IN CIVIL WAR;
1 SON MURDERED AS SHERIFF

By John Wilson

Chattanooga, TN newspaper (date unknown)

When the Civil War broke out, Elijah Cate was an ardent secessionist. His two youngest sons followed their father's persuasion, but four other sons went with the Union. One of the latter sons was a Hamilton County sheriff who was gunned down in 1882.



The Cates trace back to Orange County, NC. Then they were in Jefferson County, TN at an early date. Joseph Cate was born in 1756 in Orange County, and he died there in 1789 after serving in the Revolution. His wife was Anne.

Their son, Charles, was born in 1776, and he married Lucy Lawrence in 1796. They were at Jefferson County until 1821 when they moved to McMinn County, which had just been opened to white settlement. Charles Cate, who established a plantation near Niota, died in 1824.

(Pictured: Cate Store: Peter Cate sold Chattanooga Plows at his general store at Ooltewah).

His children were Sarah, Martha, Lucy, Amos, James, Thomas, Rachel, William and Delana.

Another son, Elijah, was born in 1801 and married Nellie Davis at Jefferson County in 1821. She was the daughter of Nicholas and Mary Hayes Davis. Nicholas Davis also was in the Revolution.

Elijah and Nellie Cate made their way to McMinn County's Mouse Creek Valley in 1823 after receiving a 640-acre grant near the old post road that ran between Athens and Knoxville. Elijah Cate was a large slaveowner and planter and traded over an extensive area. A sturdy plantation home was begun in 1823 at his Big Spring farm and completed four years later using bricks fired on the place. Its elaborate interior woodwork was carved by a master craftsman. A log church and a log schoolhouse also were built on the Elijah Cate place.

The Elijah Cate children were Alfred M., Mary, George O., William T., Thomas L., Sarah, Harriet, Alexander, John C. and Martha.

Alfred M. Cate married Louisa J. Walker at Monroe County in 1823, and they made their way near Ooltewah. They were joined by William T. Cate and by George O. Cate, who married Cordelia Shirley, daughter of Thomas Shirley. Cordelia died in 1850, and he took Mary D. Allison as his second wife.

Alfred M. Cate, who had five slaves prior to the war, was a member of the Peace Convention at Knoxville in 1861. He later joined Company G of the Union's 6th Infantry and was placed on detached service. He was promoted to an important commissary position and also given a post as captain, but he was placed under arrest and sent to Chattanooga when questions were raised about some purchases. He was later cleared of these charges and released. William T. Cate also was a strong Unionist who fought on the Northern side.

After the war, Alfred M. Cate went into the state Legislature as a Republican. He served from 1865-1869. He died in 1871. His children included David W., Lucinda E. who married T. T. Wilson, Mollie J. who married Benjamin R. Lawrence, Laura M. who married Jacob Monroe Ragon, T. R. and Louisa J.

Another son, Alfred M. Cate Jr., was superintendent for the construction of the Read House. Later he was foreman of the Lookout Planing Mill. At Sweetwater, he married Darcas Montgomery. After her death, he married Fannie Starling, bookkeeper at the planning mill, but she died a year later. His third wife was Mrs. Kuocer, and they resided in Highland Park. However, at the end of June in 1903, while his wife was away, he left on a train with Miss Bell Roehl of Knoxville. At one of the train stops, A. M. Cate Jr. shot himself. Among his effects on the train was a large diamond ring and two tickets to Sherman, TX.

George O. Cate helped oversee the Shirley farm at Ooltewah after it had been won back from the Mongers by the Shirleys in a lawsuit after the war. George Cate had owned eight slaves prior to the war. When a post office was established at Loyalty in 1866, he was named postmaster. The name was later changed to Snow Hill. George O. Cate was chairman of the first County Court of James County. He died in 1892 and was buried at the Ooltewah Cemetery. Mary D. Allison Cate died in 1890.

The oldest son, George O. Cate Jr., was by the first wife, and he received a share of the Shirley inheritance. Another son was Peter M. Cate, who was born in the midst of the Civil War. He was an official of the Ooltewah Board of Trade and operated a general store next to the Ooltewah Hotel. He married Emma Grace Green. Peter M. Cate died in 1926. His survivors included daughters Jacqueline and Nellie and Mrs. Ralph Jones of Morristown. He was buried at the Ooltewah Cemetery.

William T. Cate, who was born on the Elijah Cate plantation in 1830, made his way to Hamilton County and was justice of the peace. He became sheriff after popular Jack Springfield declined to run for a third term.

Sheriff Cate and Deputy John J. Conway started on September 14, 1882, to take several prisoners to Knoxville for a hearing before the Supreme County. One of these was the notorious John Taylor, a riverman who killed Capt. John W. Fletcher aboard the little steamboat *Tellico* on February 23, 1881.

The sheriff was warned to take extra men, but he said he had “not an enemy on earth.” At Sweetwater, the train was boarded by three men, including Bab and Andy Taylor, brothers of the convicted murderer. Deputy Conway was shot in the back, killing him instantly. A man in the front shot Sheriff Cate, then he was shot again as he tried to draw his pistol. He was shot several more times as he staggered to his feet and was shoved onto a platform outside, where he died.

The Taylor brothers made off with John Taylor and headed for their home area of Roane County. Sheriff Springfield went back into office with the sole aim of bringing the killers to justice, and parties of outraged Hamilton Countians set out on horseback and in wagons to search for the Taylors. John Taylor died in Missouri, and Sheriff Springfield had the body dug up so he could be satisfied it was him. When Bob Taylor was killed by a sheriff in another part of Missouri, his body was brought back to Chattanooga for public display in the portico of the county courthouse. Sheriff Cate’s widow, Alice, was living at 237 McCallie Ave., when she died in 1914.

Thomas L. Cate, brother of Alfred, George and William Cate, was a special agent for the federal government during the Civil War. He married Margaret Hall and moved to Bradley County. A business leader and prominent Republican, he was mayor of Cleveland and served in the Legislature. He died in 1907.

Augustus, “Gus” Cate, a son of William and Ann Cate of McMinn County, married Rosa Bell of Harrison. He was in the Union Army’s Company D of the 12th Tennessee Cavalry. Gus Cate moved to Cleveland and was publisher of the *Cleveland Banner*. He was also Cleveland postmaster and was in the Legislature. He died in 1910 and was buried at Fort Hill Cemetery.

The Elijah Cate plantation home still stands at Niota and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

CATES, JOSEPH

Service: NORTH CAROLINA – REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Rank: PATRIOTIC SERVICE

Birth: (CIRCA) 1756

Death: (ANTE) 8- -1794, ORANGE CO NORTH CAROLINA

Service Description:

- 1) REC'D PAY VOUCHER FOR SERVICES

*Read more John Wilson stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>