

Choate/Choat/Chotte/Chote/Choak/ Chotle/Chute/Shoat

CHOATE NAME ORIGIN

Whether the Choate name and its many spelling variations is Norman, Saxon, Dutch, French or... its origin is unknown. What is known is that the first two Choate immigrants to the English colonies in America were from England and variations of this surname appear in the English records as early as 1530. Numerous old spellings of the Choate name are encountered and are correct. For example - Choat/Chotte/Chote/Choak/Chotle can be found on documents related to the first Southern Choate, Christopher Choate [b.1642] who immigrated in 1676 to Maryland. It should be remembered that most people in the early colonial days were illiterate, could not recognize their written name, and relied on those responsible for writing documents to spell their names based on the pronunciation or sound (i.e., the spoken name) and not on knowledge of the actual accepted spelling¹.

There are two main theories on the origin of the Choates in England. Both theories need significant further research.

The first and widely accepted theory is from E. O. Jameson work *Choates in America; 1643-1896*². Jameson introduction, which is copied below, proposes that the Choates were Huguenots who immigrated from France to Holland where the name vanChoate is still encountered around Antwerp and then immigrated to England where the van was dropped from the name. The English colonies in America were a known place for religious freedom and many Huguenots immigrated to the colonies. (e.g., Daniel Boone was a Huguenot).

The second theory is that Choate is English and a derivative from the Old or Middle English word for a place, occupation, or characteristic. Surnames were not common until 1300s. Many early name origins included a person's:

- a.) place as part of their name (toponymic - e.g., Leonardo de Vinci) - In other words Christopher Shute would be short for Christopher of Shute, Axminster, England (where today there is a Choate House in town) or maybe Christopher of Chute, Wilshire, England. The word chute is Old English for the forest at Wilshire;
- b.) occupation (e.g., John Miller) - Shutt is a Middle English occupational name for an archer, shooter or hunter. It evolved into a number of surnames including Schute, Shoat, Shote, Choat, Choate, Chote, Choot...In other words Christopher Schute could be describing Christopher the hunter: or
- c.) characteristic (John Brown i.e., the John with brown hair) - a shoat is a young weaned pig, in Middle English it could also refer to a fat or chubby person. Hence, Christopher Shoat may have been a weighty person.

Text from E. O. Jameson introduction to Choates in America; 1643-1896 published in 1896:

"When Philip II of Spain, in the year 1567, with a few strokes of his pen, doomed to death eighty thousand inhabitants of the Netherlands, how little he knew what he was doing. He did not foresee the results of this act of cruelty. He did not dream that the Duke of Alva's bloody work would sow the seeds of liberty on the eastern shores of England, and from thence, within a century, they would be scattered beyond the wide Atlantic.

These Hollanders, escaping the relentless grasp of the Inquisition, were liberty loving and industrious. They fled their lowland homes, across the waves, to make other homes, and under their persevering culture thens of Eastern England became as gardens. And it is publicly claimed that nearly all the political institutions which are the glory of America came by them through England out of Holland.

While the early origin of the Choates is in obscurity, and while it is quite possible that at a still earlier period they were immigrants to Holland from France, yet it is highly probable that they crossed over from the Netherlands into the easterly parts of Britain with some of the numerous migrations of the sixteenth century, and were perhaps among those refugees who fled the Inquisition of the bloody court of Alva.

In their lowland homes, in the province of Brabant, they were known by the name of Van Choate, but it is thought that on account of English prejudice against Dutch immigrants, they were constrained on their arrival in the new country to drop the Van from their name, and thus obliterate at once a conspicuous symbol of their obnoxious origin, and henceforth in England and in America they have been known by the simple name of Choate. But to this day in and about Antwerp, and wherever in Holland they are found, the name is still Van Choate.

Their first settlement in England was doubtless near the boundary between Essex and Suffolk counties, in which region there are still resident many of the name. There is little doubt that from this part of England the immigrant John Choate came to this country about 1643, settled in Chebacco, Ipswich, in the Province of Massachusetts, and became the great ancestor of

The Choates in America.

How early immigrants by the name of Choate may have appeared in England is uncertain. The following are among the earliest traces that we have on record. In the ancient parish records of Finchingfield, Essex County, on deposit in the Register Office, London, it is said there is mention of those by the name of Choate as church wardens as early as 1500 A. D.

A century later and onward the name appears with some degree of frequency in the parish and church records of Hundon, Clare, County of Suffolk, and of Finchingfield, Birdbrooke, and Groton in the County of Essex.

In the Parish Register the Vicar of Hundon, Rev. Arthur Hamp, by a search made in 1892, found the following :

"1589 Elizabeth Choate filia of John Choate bap : Mar : 29th"

"1685 William Choate of Clare and Mary Arriss, widow of Hundon were married ye 7th day of ffebruary."

"1776 Aug. 25 buried Robert son of John Choate."

The Rev. Mr. Hamp writes:" Many pages of our registers are unreadable, owing to damp in past years, and many pages have been cut out wholly or in part.

"The Choates for several generations were residents of this ancient parish. But there are no longer any living representatives of the name to be found here. They have all retired to the city of the dead..."

...

... The Register of the Parish Church in Finchingfield, which dates back to 1617, has among its earliest baptisms and burials the following, copied by William Coates, Parish Clerk in 1870:

1621 John Choate son of John and Susannah bap. May 15th.

1623 Annie Choat, daughter of Richard Choat Bap...Feb'y 9th.

1625 Edmund Choat, son of John Choat bap. June 2nd.

1632 John Choat son of Edward buried Nov.24th.

1637 Henry, son of Richard Choat, buried June 11th.

1654 Elizabeth, daughter of John Choat, buried Nov.24th.

1664 John Choat buried Jan.2nd.

1669 Robert Choat buried Aug.16th.

1702 Edmund Choat buried May 16th.

There are numerous burials of Choats since the above in Finchingfield."

The following addition information is from J.C Phillips work "*Choate Family of Baltimore*" compiled in 1979 (available under publications on the choatesofthesouth.org site).

... some interesting information about the English Choates is contained in a letter dated August 11, 1964 to Richard Choate, Walnut Ridge, Ark. by, Rev. Cautious A. Choate, D. D. pastor of the First Methodist Church of Stafford, Kansas, obtained while he was a student at Cambridge in 1930. Both Richard and Cautious Choate are descendants of Christopher 1-1 [1642] who left Maryland for Virginia about 1742. By letter dated March 27, 1930 Rev. Choate was informed by Rev. W. H. Bonsey, vicar at Groton, Boxforth, that the church register listed the following:

Elizabeth d. of Robert Choate	Bap. 21 Jan. 1626
John s. of Robert Choate	Bap. 6 June 1624
Mary d. of Robert Choate	Bap. 25 Sept. 1628
Elizabeth Choate buried	25 Aug. 1627
Lettice Choate	16 May 1666
Mary d. of Robert Choate buried	28 June 1633
Robert Choate "	18 August 1638
Sarah Choate "	12 Sept. 1638

While still in England he received letters from Rev. A. Bodwell Choate in one of which he states "Among my fathers papers we came across the following notes which may be of interest to you.

"In July 1665 John Choate and his wife of Stambowne were cited before the archdeacon at Braintree for having conventicles in his house when Henry Howers preached."

"1530 Forty-one persons, Wycliffites, were arrested at Bridbrook, Essex, among, them Isbel Choate, widow and her sons -John, William, Christopher, and Robert, her daughter Margaret and Katherine their maid, - also Thomas Choate and his wife."

¹ Spelling based on the spoken word can result in many variations. Even today if you say the name “Choate” to a stranger and ask them to spell it the result is an amazing number of spelling variations.

² *Choates in America; 1643-1896* by E. O. Jameson published in 1896 by Alfred Mudge & Son, Boston (available under publications on the choatesofthesouth.org site)

www.choatesofthesouth.org