



*Copyright © 2025 Flagon & Trencher.*

*Provided for research purposes.*

*All rights reserved.*

*Proper citation for this document  
is as follows:*

*Flagon & Trencher: Taverner and Innkeeper  
Biographies (2025), at  
[www.FlagonAndTrencher.org](http://www.FlagonAndTrencher.org), all rights reserved.*

Tavern Keeper, Plymouth, Mass., 1638-1698

James Cole, Sr. was born in 1600 in Highgate, a suburb of London, in 1600; died at Plymouth, Mass., after 1688. He married in 1624 Mary Lobel of London, daughter of Dr. Mathieu Lobel, granddaughter of Jean de Lobel, a physician and botanist for whom the plant, Lobelia, was named. Mary Cole died after 1660 at Plymouth.

James Cole was of Saco in 1632 and in Plymouth, Mass. the following year. He is believed to have had the first public house in Plymouth when he opened an ordinary on Cole's Hill, just above Plymouth Rock. Later he removed his casks and bottles to more ample quarters in Winslow's house, formerly Brewster's, conveniently situated in the very center of town at the corner of the main street and the highway. It is a tradition that the early Pilgrims buried their dead at night on Cole's Hill, leveling off the graves and planting them with corn, to hide their great losses from the Indians.

"One, John Sprague", spent hours in the stocks for "highly misdemeaning himself in the house of James Cole of Plymouth, near unto or on the evening before the Sabbath Day, in drinking, gameing and uncivill reveilling, to the dishonor of God and the offence of the govment, by his gameing and bringing of his mare uncivilly into the parlour of James Cole aforesaid."

The inn was kept by James Cole from 1638 to 1660. He was then "very aged". His son James kept the inn until 1698. The original site of the tavern, commanding a view of the harbor, was chosen by Edward Winslow for his mansion built "in a style of elegance far superior to any previously erected in the Old Colony", a house which was still standing in 1945 on Cole's Hill.

- Louise Chamberlain  
72-07

#### REFERENCES

Chesterfield Vital Records  
Saints and Strangers, by George F. Willison  
Genealogical Dictionary of New England, by James Savage