



The Middler

NEWSLETTER of the SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS
CONNECTICUT, U.S.A.

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Fall 2006

TRIENNIAL MEETING REPORT

SMFSD convenes in ancestral hometown for immersion in genealogy & local history

By R.W. Bacon

Editor, *The Middler*

Middletown cousins, genealogists, and local history enthusiasts from across the U.S. gathered in their ancestral hometown Aug. 18-20, 2006 for the Triennial Meeting of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants.

From meeting headquarters at the Marriott Residence Inn in Rocky Hill, Conn., attendees from as far away as California and Washington and as nearby as central Connecticut embraced a jam-packed weekend of genealogy and history activities. The event, planned mostly long-distance by SMFSD officers, included two days of "research biathlons," one business meeting, an after-dinner guest speaker, an all-day museum visit, and after-hours opportunities for networking, comparing notes, and just-plain-socializing.

Friday, Aug. 18. With some attendees arriving on Thursday evening, registration and greeting began at 10 a.m. at the hotel. At 11 a.m. the group proceeded to Godfrey



Godfrey Memorial Library – our first destination on Friday, Aug. 18. (Photo by R.W. Bacon)

Memorial Library (SMFSD's nominal headquarters and repository of records) for a community open house, a research period – guided by the helpful staff, and lunch. Library Director Richard Black gave a brief presentation on current projects at the nationally-known genealogy

library, including the initiative to digitize its unique holdings such as its collection of family bible records.

SMFSD's Godfrey Library activities, including the lunch for members and library staff, was arranged by Tom Smith, who lives in Connecticut

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First settler descendant attempts to walk in the footsteps of ancestors

By R.W. Bacon

Editor, *The Middler*

The pursuit and discovery of context always enhances the understanding of our ancestors' lives. For your editor, this pursuit of context has included visiting ancestral homes and exploring the local geography.

In my quest for context, I have been lucky. The 1705 brick house

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"Hey! That's not Ggggg-Grandpa's house!"
Main Street, Middletown. (Photo by R.W. Bacon)



Middletown's Russell Library – our second research destination on Friday, Aug. 18.

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and is a member of the Godfrey Library board of trustees.

In the early afternoon most attendees visited the local history room at Russell Library, the public library in Middletown – the second leg of this day's research library biathlon. Librarian Denise Russo, herself an essential guide to the collection, gave an overview of the



Pictured in the SMFSD group photo outside Godfrey Memorial Library are (l. to r.) Mike Cornwell, Library Director Richard Black, Tom Smith, Gale Cornwell, Donald Salm, Sandra Dudley, Al Dudley, Barbara Stenberg, Sandra Salm, Margery Piersen, Suzanne Welles, Donald Brock, and Candace Bryan. Not present at photo time were Claire Burnett, Janet Rathburn, Karen Dziok, and Lyn Brock. (Photo by R.W. Bacon)



The Connecticut State Library at the Supreme Court Bldg. in Hartford – our first research destination on Saturday, Aug. 19.

holdings, which in addition to books and publications on local history, includes maps, a clippings & ephemera file, and the work of local historians of the past. Russell Library also has Middletown newspapers, early property records, and early vital records on microfilm – with a reader connected to a laser printer for efficient copying.

Don & Lyn Brock – who in this member's view merit elevation to "Hospitality Chair Hall of Fame" status, hosted a late afternoon social at the hotel before the group departed for dinner at the Town Line Restaurant in Rocky Hill.

Saturday, Aug. 19. With two research destinations scheduled in Hartford, Conn., the day began with an early business meeting at Godfrey

Library. Brief reports were given on membership and finances. Discussion centered on boosting membership and enhancing the web site (see separate article on page 9). Founder Gale Cornwell raised the topic of securing official designation of Founders Rock (located at the entrance to Riverside Cemetery in Middletown) as a protected commemorative site. Elections were held for three offices. Commander Barbara Stenberg and Registrar Donald Brock were re-elected. Margery Piersen was elected as Secretary.

The day's first research destination was the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, about 15 miles north of Middletown. Aside from its vast state and local history holdings, a major attraction for genealogists at this

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The Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, Conn. – our second research destination on Saturday, Aug. 19. (Photo by R.W. Bacon)



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SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN
FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS
1650-1700 – Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.

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Please send articles, letters, news items,
and corrections to:

The Middler
c/o R.W. Bacon, Editor
P. O. Box 489
Newburyport, MA 01950
(E-mail: rwbacon@comcast.net)

— SMFSD OFFICERS —

Commander Barbara Stenberg
Deputy Commander . . . Suzanne Welles
Secretary Margery Piersen
Treasurer Albert C. Dudley
Registrar Donald Brock
Historian Thomas Smith

Scenes from the SMFSD Triennial Meeting Aug. 18-20, 2006



Photo by Barb Stenberg



Photo by Suzanne Welles



Photo by Barb Stenberg

At registration are (top left, l. to r.) SMFSD's closest cousins, Suzanne Welles & Donald Brock, with Tom Smith. At the top right are (l. to r.) Al Dudley, Candace Bryan, & Sandy Dudley. At left are (l. to r.) Sandra Salm, Donald Salm, & Karen Dziok. At right is Claire Burnett, who traveled to Middletown from Kent, Washington.



Photo by Suzanne Welles



Photo by Suzanne Welles



Photo by Suzanne Welles



Photo by R.W. Bacon

Arriving at the open house & luncheon at Godfrey Library is the headless T-shirt man (above center), gesticulating by the AGB Index. Above left is library director Richard Black, speaking at his improvised podium of Godfrey glassware, which he generously distributed to attendees. Directly above are SMFSD officers: (l. to r.) Tom Smith (Historian), Barb Stenberg (Commander), Don Brock (Registrar), & Suzanne Welles (Vice Commander). Below left, Nicholas Bellantoni, Conn. State Archaeologist, was the featured speaker Saturday evening. After hours, Reg Bacon & Suzanne Welles (below) inspect genealogy charts. At right are SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell with grandson Mike Cornwell.



Photo by R.W. Bacon



Photo by Barb Stenberg

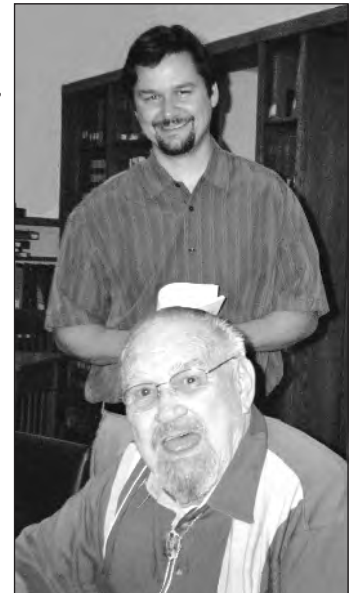


Photo by Suzanne Welles

Triennial Meeting report . . . *continued from page 2*

library is the card file of the Barbour Collection of Vital Records. The library also has the largest collection of Connecticut newspapers on microfilm.

When the Connecticut State Library closed at 2 p.m., the SMFSD group moved a few miles away to the research library of the Connecticut Historical Society. (A few attendees may have even sacrificed a few minutes for lunch.) This library has a large collection of published genealogies, city directories on microfilm, and local history materials. But it also is rich in original documents: librarian Judy Johnson and a helpful staff retrieved from the archives Middletown records going back to the 1670s, Revolutionary War resolutions, and account books of a 19th-century Middletown sea captain.

Upon completion of the second “research biathlon,” attendees were especially appreciative of Don & Lyn Brock’s late afternoon Wine & Cheese Social. While there we learned that some remarkably organized individuals had managed during the day to squeeze in an optional trip or two to a cemetery or ancestral property.

Dinner in a private function room at Chuck’s Steak House was followed by our guest speaker Nicholas Bellantoni, Ph.D., of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History. He described his role as the Connecticut State Archaeologist, and talked about the Native American presence in central Connecticut in the 1600s. (Arrangements for our guest speaker were made by Tom Smith.)

Back at the hotel, members gathered at Don & Lyn Brock’s “Hospitality Central” for more comparing of notes and genealogy research experiences.

Sunday, Aug. 20. After two days of indoor library research, Sunday was the day to be outside and absorb some historical context via all the senses at Sturbridge Village, a living history museum about 50 miles

north of Middletown in Sturbridge, Mass. The 200-acre museum is an 1830s New England village comprised of both original period buildings and recreated structures. Throughout the village, craftsmen demonstrated their specialties using period tools and materials.

On the way back to our headquarters hotel in Rocky Hill, attendees met for Sunday evening dinner at the Traveler Restaurant in Union, Conn. just off Rte. 84 on the Massachusetts state line. This restaurant has been a highway landmark for years thanks to its gigantic “FOOD-BOOKS” sign. Their policy? Have dinner and take home three free books. Granted, most of the books are like the castoff volumes carted off to the landfill at the close of your library book sale, but there are always a few special interest gems to be found – and the SMFSD group found them.

Back at the hotel we said our farewells, since many travelers had to prepare for a very early Monday morning departure. Punctuating the weekend with a final exclamation point was yet another gathering at Don & Lyn Brock’s, where the genealogy binders kept snapping and the fan charts kept flying.

In weeks after the meeting, some feedback was received that indicated our activity schedule was so tightly packed that some eager researchers were not only stimulated – but exhausted as well. Since we meet only once every three years, we have plenty of time to fine-tune the program for the next meeting.

For those who could not attend this year, we welcome you to join us at the next Triennial Meeting in Middletown scheduled for August 21-23, 2009. Mark your calendars! ■

SMFSD visits Sturbridge Village



Photo by Suzanne Welles



Photo by R.W. Bacon



Photo by Suzanne Welles

At Sturbridge Village, demonstrations were spread across the 200-acre museum. Above, Don & Lyn Brock watch an interpreter make a broom. At left Don & Lyn step behind a plywood cutout to present the “photo-op” of the day. Below are Barb Stenberg & Reg Bacon. Below left, these pigs were offered SMFSD membership until it was determined they were from a different Bacon line.



Photo by Margery Piersen

More insights from Hannah McKinney's research: 'Who Counts in the Community?'

By R.W. Bacon
Editor, *The Middler*

The Spring 2006 issue of *The Middler* featured an article about the book *The Development of Local Public Services 1650-1860: Lessons from Middletown, Connecticut*, and an interview with its author, Hannah J. McKinney, Ph.D., an economics professor and current mayor of Kalamazoo, Michigan. In this scholarly volume, published in 1995, the author used Middletown as a case study, analyzing the provision of public services over a 200-year period.

In one illuminating chapter entitled, "Who Counts in the Community," McKinney sorts Middletown's early settlers into six distinct political groups that evolved and changed over time. Since this categorization provides insight into Middletown's early decades, the subject is worthy of this separate article. What follows is a paraphrasing of McKinney's research and observations from this chapter, up to the late 1700s. Those interested in the sources of McKinney's research are encouraged to consult the book's thorough notes and bibliography.

With a premise derived from years of research and analysis of primary source records, McKinney introduces the categories of citizen groups early in Chapter 3. "In the early 1600s, people were sorted into six distinct political groups with attendant rights and responsibilities," she writes.

The categories:

(1) Legal Inhabitants, i.e. all people born or voted into town. All other groups were a subset.

(2) Taxpayers, i.e. legal inhabitants who owned taxable wealth in land or male labor. The criteria changed over time.

(3) Voters in town meetings, i.e. all white male inhabitants.

(4) Freemen, a more elite group of voters chosen by the General

In one illuminating chapter, McKinney sorts Middletown's early settlers into six distinct political groups that evolved and changed over time.

Court. These were the only Middletown men who could choose the town's representatives to the lower house. All town meeting voters could make local policy, but only Freemen could make high-level policy.

(5) Proprietors, i.e. owners of the original land grants, or descendants, "the most potentially elite group," according to McKinney. These were the only individuals entitled to shares of the common or undivided land. The title to land was held in common until it could be cleared or farmed.

(6) Church members. In 1667, one-third of white males in Middletown were church members.

McKinney writes that in the first 20 years of the settlement, all aspects of life were regulated. There was little distinction between public and private life. She notes that even though settlers were of unequal wealth, they shared the rewards of inhabiting the town and in fact were treated as proprietors. Some could pay taxes in cash, and most paid some form of taxes in labor. Because so much uncleared land existed, in the earliest years of the settlement membership in the proprietor class was not monitored. Settlers who served roles in the community were rewarded by land grants, and almost all new settlers were given grants.

In the late 1600s, few services were needed. Men had four basic civic duties: (1) attending church, (2) supporting the minister through the ecclesiastical tax, (3) paying school

taxes, and (4) paying labor taxes for military and highway services.

"Town governance worked well enough, but not perfectly," writes McKinney. "Men neglected to attend town meetings; to clear common highways according to General Court standards; and to provide for public education. But the town survived."

In the early years of the settlement the main policy issue was the distribution of land. "Those with more land received more land. At the same time, those who got more were expected to do more for the community than others. They were the town officers and service providers who donated time, goods, and services for the use of the town. In return, they received more from the town's stock of common resources," McKinney explains. "In the years directly after settlement, the town meeting occasionally chose special committees to carry out various policies. Those on the committees tended to be the wealthier taxpayers and freemen. Even so, only 38% of the freemen served on a town committee before 1676." (The author's notes indicate that 16 of 54 men with taxable wealth in 1690 served on a special town committee. Those who served had estates valued at 126 pounds, on average, versus 73 pounds for those who did not serve.)

In the 1670s, when the common land was almost gone, the system of reward-and-responsibility began to falter. Questions arose over definitions of proprietor and inhabitant. This was complicated by the fact that some early settlers had left, and their grants were given to new arrivals.

The town meeting could not resolve the issue, and it requested that the General Court appoint arbitrators. After *two years* it was decided that any legal voters in town affairs were legal inhabitants. Then,

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With a new director in place soon, Middletown's historical society emerges from holding pattern

Editor's Note: On the day after the SMFSD Triennial Meeting weekend in August, your editor stopped at the Middlesex County Historical Society to take photos of the Mansfield House headquarters to have on file. (Readers may be aware that the museum has been nominally closed since the retirement of longtime director Dione Longley in February 2006.) It was my good fortune to find the gate and door unlocked and meet William Ryczek, president of the museum's board of directors, as well as interim director Susan Allison. What follows is the text of an e-mail interview about the future of the Middlesex County Historical Society. Since the archives hold valuable local

and family history information not available elsewhere, in the future *The Middler* will keep SMFSD members up-to-date. At press time, the announcement of a new director was imminent.

The Middler: It's clear that in Di Longley's 20-year tenure as director of the Middlesex County Historical Society, she made a great and lasting impact through her exhibitions, the creation of the Middletown Heritage Trail, the African-American history curriculum in the schools, and her themed walking tours. What do you believe will be the most long-lasting impact of her tenure?

William Ryczek: I believe that Di Longley's legacy to the Middlesex County Historical Society will be the way in which she humanized history and made it interesting to those who would not consider themselves hard core local history experts. Her walking tours, especially the "Scandals" series, are shining examples of her talent in that regard. I am delighted to say that I expect Di will be active with the society in the future, and have spoken to her about some potential projects.

The Middler: With Di Longley's departure, the historical society board – and its president – are faced with the challenge of a new director search. As board president, can you give me some personal background?

W.R.: I have served on the board for approximately 10 years, and was appointed president this past April. I first became involved with the society after publishing three books on sports history, one of which covered, among other subjects, the Middletown Mansfields baseball team of 1872. I played on the Mansfield vintage baseball team for seven years before injury and old age drove me to less taxing leisure pursuits. My interest in history is

broad, and includes modern American and European topics as well as the history of sports.

The Middler: What is the makeup of the board of directors, in terms of length of service and background? What are the board's goals for the next few years?

W.R.: Our board consists of those who have served for a very long time (10+ years) and a number who have joined within the past two years. Each comprises about half the total. We have very few board members with tenures of 3-10 years. We have tried to recruit people with diverse backgrounds, and have academics, professionals, small business owners, non-profit employees and retirees. We are very excited to have recently added history and economics professors from Wesleyan University. The board's immediate goal is to hire a skilled director. Once we have completed that task, we will focus on expanding our Civil War exhibit, strengthening our finances, making some improvements to the building, and possibly putting out one or more publications on local history.

The Middler: What has been the response to the director search thus far? Assuming a new director is in place in the near future, does the board have specific programs for the director to implement, or will the direction be dictated by the strengths of the new director?

W.R.: We have narrowed our search to three candidates, and will conduct interviews during the second half of September. We hope to complete the hiring process by mid-October. The future plans will be a combination of board and director initiatives.

The Middler: Since last winter the historical society's web site has indicated that the museum is closed. Can researchers still make appointments? Assuming the museum



The General Mansfield House at 151 Main St., Middletown, is the headquarters of the Middlesex County Historical Society. According to the historical society web site, the house was built c. 1810 for local merchant Samuel Mather, but was later occupied by General Joseph King Fenno Mansfield (1803-1862), who died at the Battle of Antietam. In the late 1950s the brick Federalist structure was slated for demolition to make way for a parking lot when the historical society purchased the property from Mansfield's descendants. (Photo by R.W. Bacon)

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Museum emerges . . .

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resumes a regular schedule, can you briefly detail the library/archive holdings that make the collection unique, and of particular interest to family history researchers? How does one schedule research, and what are the "ground rules" and costs?

W.R.: Research appointments can be made by phone or e-mail (860-346-0746; middlesexhistory@wesleyan.edu). Our collection includes city directories, books about local families and institutions, and a great deal of genealogical information. I suggest that anyone desiring specific information contact our office. We charge an hourly fee for research by the staff, and ask non-members who make copies to make a donation to the society.

The Middler: I noticed during my brief visit that the interior of the house appears to be undergoing major work in the exhibition areas. What changes will visitors see when the doors open once again?

W.R.: The most recent exhibit, "Hundreds of Foolish Women," a history of fashion, has been dismantled, and we have no concrete plans for another major exhibit at this time. We expect to expand the Civil War area from one to two rooms. Other plans are on hold pending the selection of a new director.

The Middler: What is the historical society's current relationship with the local schools?

W.R.: Each year, the society holds the popular Sheedy History Contest, in which local third-graders compete for prizes by writing the story of an ancestor. In addition, the building is open for tour groups from schools.

The Middler: Who is responsible for the online exhibition, "Their Own Stories"? As a museum professional, in my view it is masterfully done, broad, inclusive, and well-designed (<http://www.middlesexhistory.org/localhistory.html#>). What feedback have you received about this exhibition?

W.R.: Di Longley was the driving force behind "Their Own Stories,"

which was a major exhibit at the Mansfield House. Many board members and others contributed a great deal of time and effort and a number of artifacts. Response was very positive, as the exhibit touched the lives of many local citizens in a very personal manner.

The Middler: During Di Longley's final year at the historical society, how were the programs such as the themed walking tours received?

W.R.: Walking tours are typically attended by 40-60 people, ranging from the core that attends virtually every society happening to the curious who wondered what delicious scandals might have occurred in old Middletown (and were their ancestors involved?).

The Middler: Many small cities in New England have seen population makeup change radically several times in the last century alone. In many cases, the newer residents regard the early history of the town as irrelevant to their lives. How would you evaluate Middletown's interest in local history?

The MCHS archives: What you might find

In my impromptu visit to the Middlesex County Historical Society, the most-welcoming Interim Director Susan Allison introduced me to the riches within the archives. In the inner sanctum were boxes marked with local family names. In the "Bacon" box we found:

- The military commission of my 6th great-grandfather, Joseph Bacon (1732-1785).
- The military commission of my 5th-great-grandfather, Isaac Bacon (1766-1856).
- The diary of Isaac Bacon, the sea captain, farmer, customs officer, selectman, & eccentric who was known to wear ten-cent pieces as vest buttons.

Needless to say, another visit to the MCHS is in order.

R.W. Bacon

W.R.: Interest in local history is generally limited, much to the amazement of those of us who find it fascinating, and Middletown is no exception. The walking tours and the Sheedy Contest have been excellent vehicles for broadening local interest.

The Middler: The SMFSD has comparatively few members from central Connecticut, although there must be many descendants of early Middletown families that still live in the region. Can you describe the typical researcher at the museum archives? Are most users local? What is the frequency of archives use?

W.R.: Interim Director Susan Allison estimates we have approximately two people per week doing research at the Mansfield House. The visitor total tends to be higher when Wesleyan classes are in session.

The Middler: What is your advice to a first-time out-of-town visitor to Middletown who wanted to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors?

W.R.: Perhaps the best way to imagine what life in Middletown was like centuries ago is to walk the Heritage Trail, marked by a number of plaques designed and erected by the society. A brochure is available from our office.

The Middler: Like many small cities, Middletown went through its urban renewal stage in the 1960s. While the "renewal" eliminated some particularly squalid conditions, at the same time many houses and buildings were lost that today would be deemed worthy of preservation. What is the preservation climate like today in Middletown?

W.R.: The preservation movement in Middletown is very active, spearheaded by The Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, located at 27 Washington Street. At the south end of Main Street, near the South Green, there are three restored historic homes that are currently used as professional office buildings. ■

(For membership details, visit the Middlesex County Historical Society at: www.middlesexhistory.org)

Walking in the footsteps of Middletown ancestors

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built by a Greenland, N.H. ancestor has been preserved by a family association. As a museum professional, I worked at the 1690 home of another ancestor in Newbury, Mass. The list of surviving family homes goes on: a 1640s house on Cape Cod; the 1840s farm in the mountains that was the setting of my grandfather's boyhood stories of rugged Vermont life. During and after the SMFSD meeting, I decided to try my luck "walking in the footsteps" of my many Middletown ancestors – and share my experience in *The Middler*.

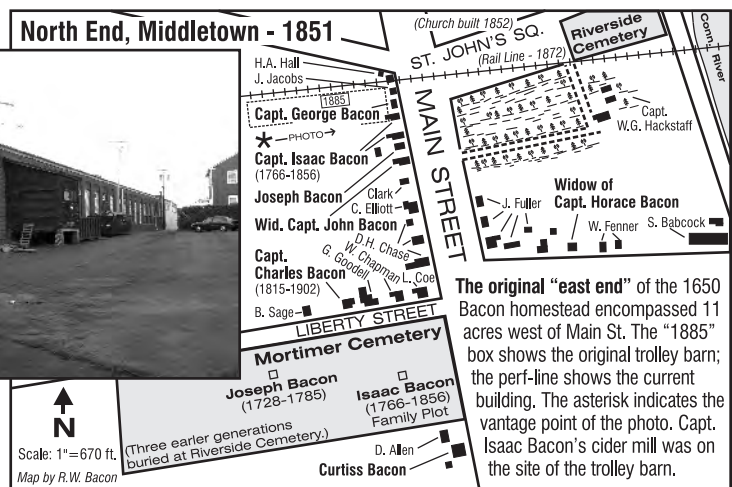
Although there is plenty of on-paper documentation on the Bacon family in Middletown, there is little tangible evidence of my ancestors today except in the cemeteries. The vast North End tract of first settler Nathaniel Bacon (1630-1705), and his acreage in the Newfield area, have undergone inevitable changes through the centuries. For example, the house lot of my 5-7th-great grandfathers is now occupied by an auto body shop (pg. 1).



This house was built by 6th-g-grandfather Joseph Bacon (1728-1785) about 1760, according to the 1935 *Old Houses of Connecticut* survey by Jessie Alsop. Three of Joseph's sons and many grandsons became shipmasters during the heyday of Middletown's maritime era. The house passed out of the Bacon family in 1902 and was torn down in 1970. Today the lot is covered with asphalt. (Photo with permission by R.W. Bacon, from the original publication at Russell Library, Middletown.)



"Hey, that's not Ggggg-Grandpa's cider mill!" (Photo by R. W. Bacon)



In many prior trips to Middletown I had already explored the cemeteries and neighborhoods. On this visit, however, I was armed with my latest research, fresh in my mind. With digital camera in hand, this time I would also retrace my steps from previous years. Here's what I found:

- Upon arrival in town, I located and photographed the home of ancestor Capt. Charles Bacon (1815-1902) on Liberty Street. His son, Frank A. Bacon (1849-1890), is my most recent Middletown ancestor, and grew up on Liberty Street before moving to New Britain in the 1870s. But just a few hours later while doing research at Russell Library, I learned that Capt. Charles' house burned down in the 1870s. I had found someone else's newer house built on the same lot later in the 19th century!

- Not to be denied, I did photograph Capt. Charles Bacon's last residence on Wall Street in South Farms, an 1875 Victorian.

- First settler Nathaniel Bacon and generations of his descendants owned expansive acreage extending west from Main Street at St. John's Square. Even as the area became urbanized, the family was numerous in the area, on smaller lots, well into the 20th century. The homes of many of these distant cousins remain, but the homestead of earlier generations – the orchards, cider mill, farm fields, and structures noted in on-paper documentation – is under tons of asphalt, railroad tracks, a dilapidated

former bus station, the original trolley barn, an auto body shop, a muffler shop, restaurants, and office buildings. This is not a negative appraisal, but simply an observation that change occurs more frequently in areas of higher population density and economic activity.

- First settler Nathaniel Bacon also owned farmland in the Newfield area that was divided by generations of descendants into dozens of farms, with some parcels retained by numerous distant Bacon cousins until recent years. While the 1699 farmhouse built by Nathaniel Bacon II (1674-1759) remains, some of the original property is now tract housing. 5th-great-grandfather Capt. Isaac Bacon (1766-1856) hosted plow matches at the Middlesex County Cattle Show on this land. (*Middlesex Gazette*, Oct. 21, 1821).

- The last search of the day was for two gravestones at Old Farm Hill Cemetery documented in Charles Hale's 1934 transcriptions. I may or may not have found graves of ancestors Oliver Clark (1740-1818) and Hannah (Post) Clark (1746-1805), but I took a picture of two worn, flat-as-a-pancake brownstone markers anyway.

For those wishing to try the same kind of exploration, Middletown certainly has the resources to begin such a quest. The city's Planning Department has on its web site a comprehensive list of all properties that could remotely be considered "historic," usually noting the date of

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MEMBER NOTES

A short message from the founder . . . and more

Editor's Note: Just 10 days after the Triennial Meeting, a letter arrived from SMFSD founder **Gale Cornwell**:

"Hi Cornwell Cousins:

I'm in my 80s now and just returned from attending our Triennial Meeting in Middletown Aug. 18-20 2006, possibly my last. I noted on review of the SMFSD roster that 23 members are descendants of our grandsire William Cornwell, Jr., a.k.a. "Sgt." So, I thought it would be nice for me to write you and include photos of the Founders Rock, et. al. See enclosed DVD. You can play this on your TV or computer and have photos made if you wish. Enjoy them!

I want to thank all of our officers and *you* for your support of the society. Unfortunately, I/we have not been able to prove the maiden name of William's wife, Mary. It remains a mystery but I am inclined to go with

Barbour now on CD

In September 2006 Genealogical Publishing Co. announced the release of "The Ricker Compilation," which includes the *entire Barbour Collection* of pre-1850 Connecticut vital records on one CD-Rom. For information, visit www.genealogical.com. For the review from Eastman's Genealogy Newsletter, visit http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2006/09/the_ricker_comp.html#more. ■

Walking in the footsteps . . . *continued from page 8*

construction and an associated family name (<http://www.middletownplanning.com/Divisions/Committees/DRPB/historicpropertieslist.html>). An oft-consulted resource at Russell Library's Middletown Room is the historic house survey of Middletown undertaken by local historian Jessie Alsop for the



Founders Rock, located at the entrance to Riverside Cemetery in Middletown.
(Photo courtesy of Gale Cornwell)

research by Coate/Dudick (*i.e.* Linda Coate – ed.) for the best summary of William and Mary (<http://ancestrees.com/pedigree/901.htm>).

The society is working to have Founders Rock listed by the National Register of Historic Places as a Commemorative Site and to place a marker on the Mystic Battlefield site where William fought in 1637.

Pro deo et patria.

Gale Cornwell, Founder"

Welcome New Members: New members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Karen Garrett Dziok**, AM-249, Barnveld, N.Y. (1st settler **George Hubbard**); **Candace L. Bryan**, AM-250, Willington, Conn. (1st settler **Richard Hall**); and **Ward C. White**, LM-251, Simi Valley, Calif. (1st settler **Nathaniel White**).

Correction: Due to an editorial oversight in the profile of first settler **John Kirby** that appeared in the spring issue of *The Middler*, the birthplace of John Kirby's wife was misrepresented. The correct birthplace: Bury, St. Edmonds, Suffolk County, England. Thanks to the eagle-eye of member **Mary Austin** for setting the record straight.

WPA in 1935. (In addition to descriptions, this valuable survey has snapshot photos mounted within the pages – and pencil notes recording the date of demolition during subsequent urban renewal.) The Middlesex County Historical Society holds a collection of early maps that are useful in locating property owners. To locate homes of later Middletown ancestors, the

Egbert "Egg" White follow up: "I am looking forward to your revelations regarding 'Egg' White and his descent from Snow White and one of her seven dwarfs," wrote member **Al Dudley** in response to a short humor item in the spring issue of *The Middler*. Upon further investigation, your editor was surprised to discover that there was indeed a prominent individual with this name: Col. Egbert White (1895-1976) was a career military journalist of high principle who made big news in 1944 when he was removed of his command for refusing to censor political content. His family traces back to Ohio and New York, so it is possible that this Egbert, at least, was a descendant of Middletown first settler Nathaniel White – and not Snow White. ■

SMFSD NEWS

SMFSD aims to enhance web site

At the SMFSD meeting on Aug. 19, 2006 members voted to enhance the organization's web site with a members-only area as a member benefit.

Plans envision a welcome page, history, brief first-settler biographies, links to useful web sites, and membership information. The members-only area will include detailed sketches, resources, news, and an archive of past *Middler* issues. *Middler* editor Reg Bacon volunteered to design the site and develop content. Suggestions are welcome: rwbacon@comcast.net.

Upon completion of content in the coming months, site launch will depend on implementation/hosting details. ■

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and the Beers Co. maps that indicate homeowners are helpful.

It is possible to walk in the footsteps of your ancestors in Middletown. Prepared with your research, maps, and on-paper context, you'll have what it takes to peel back the layers of local history – and marshal your informed imagination to fill in the blanks. ■

Feature Graphic #3: Middletown Views from 'Asylum Hill'

Asylum Hill (the former "Fort Hill") overlooks the bend of the Connecticut River just south of the city.

1840-1856. At right is an image of the 1856 lithograph included in a set of postcards issued by the D.A.R. for the 1935 Connecticut Tercentenary. The postcard was entitled "Middletown about 1840." (Collection of R.W. Bacon)



C. 1905. This view is from an undivided back (pre-1907) postcard, mailed in 1905, entitled "Bird's Eye View of Middletown, Conn. and Connecticut River." The black-and-white postcard was published by American News Co., New York, Leipzig, & Berlin. (Collection of R.W. Bacon)

Unlike later postcards, this one does not refer to "Asylum Hill." The sprawling campus of the Connecticut Asylum for the Insane was established on this hill in 1868. As hospital services evolved, the name changed as well. The facility became Connecticut Valley Hospital in 1961.

August 21, 2006. After the SMFSD Triennial Meeting, your editor spent the next day walking in the footsteps of Middletown ancestors and collecting information for future issues of *The Middler*. The last destination of the day was the top of Asylum Hill to capture a photo from the same vantage point as the two views above. In comparing this photo to the 1856 view, it is a striking reminder of the degree to which the New England landscape was cleared of trees in past centuries. Even today the tree growth appears more dense than in the 1905 view.

(Photo by R.W. Bacon)



SMFSD Membership Information

If you descend from anyone on this list, we welcome you to join us

The following is a list of those individuals (and presumably spouses & families) said to have settled in Middletown, Conn. before 1700. The list is based on information from *The History of Middlesex County* (Henry Whittemore, Beers Co., 1884), which was in turn derived from the *List of Householders & Proprietors*, Middletown, March 22, 1670. (Names in boldface are the original 1650-54 settlers of Middletown listed on the SMFSD plaque at Godfrey Memorial Library.)

Josiah Adkins 1673	Samuel Cotton 1697	Edward Higby 1667	Daniel Pryor 1696	Samuel Stow 1651
Obadiah Allyn 1670	Samuel Doolittle . . . 1693	Thomas Hill 1678	Thomas Ranney . . . 1660	Thomas Stow 1669
Thomas Allen . . . 1650	George Durant 1663	Thomas Hopewell . . 1662	William Roberts . . . 1680	William Sumner . . . 1687
Nathaniel Bacon . 1650	Samuel Eggleston . . 1663	George Hubbard . 1650	Joseph Rockwell . . 1693	James Tappin 1662
William Briggs 1677	John Elton 1677	John Hulbert 1669	Alexander Rollo . . . 1697	Matthias Treat . . 1659
John Blake 1677	Thomas Ferman . . . 1679	Isaac Johnson 1670	Noadiah Russell . . . 1696	Edward Turner . . . 1665
William Blumfield 1650	Edward Foster 1670	Francis Jones 1672	David Sage 1662	John Ward 1664
John Boarn 1677	Jonathan Gilbert . . 1672	John Jordan 1678	John Savage . . . 1650	William Ward 1659
Alexander Bow 1660	John Gill 1676	John Kirby 1653	Arthur Scovill 1671	Andrew Warner . . . 1667
Nathaniel Brown . . . 1655	Richard Goodale . . . 1671	Isaac Lane 1664	Edward Shepard . . . 1687	Robert Warner 1655
Thomas Burk 1670	George Graves 1650?	Thomas Lewis 1687	Joseph Smith 1675	Robert Webster . . 1650
William Cheney 1655	John Hall 1650	William Lucas 1667	William Smith . . . 1650	Benjamin West 1698
Samuel Clark 1676	Richard Hall . . . 1650	Daniel Markham . . . 1677	William Southmayd . 1674	Thomas Wetmore 1650
Jasper Clements . . . 1670	Samuel Hall 1650	Anthony Martin . . . 1661	Comfort Starr 1673	Nathaniel White . 1650
Henry Cole 1650?	Giles Hamlin . . . 1650	John Martin 1650	James Stanclift . . . 1686	Francis Whitmore . . 1674
Nathaniel Collins . . . 1664	Benjamin Hands . . . 1678	Thomas Miller . . . 1650	Samuel Stocking . 1650	John Wilcox 1654
Samuel Collins 1665	Daniel Harris . . . 1653	John Payne 1676	John Stow 1667	James Wright 1690
William Cornwell 1650	William Harris . . . 1650	George Phillips 1680	Nathaniel Stow 1676	

Membership benefits . . .

When you join the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, you will receive:

- Two issues per year of *The Middler*, the SMFSD newsletter full of information useful for research about Middletown's first settler families and local history.
- The annual membership roster enabling you to network with Middletown "cousins" across the country who are interested in Middletown genealogy research.
- The opportunity to attend SMFSD meetings (every three years) in Middletown that include genealogy research, cemetery tours, library/museum visits, member networking, and social events.
- The opportunity to participate in the organization, suggest/plan meeting activities, and vote on SMFSD business.

Membership is a simple 1-2-3 procedure . . .

If you are a descendant of anyone on the above list, and would like to join SMFSD, here is the simple 1-2-3 procedure:

(1) Send an outline/worksheet of your lineage to the Registrar. The applicant shall do their own genealogical research, and the resulting lineage should be accompanied by copies of reference material by generation. The Society seeks to verify submitted information, but does not research family lines.

(2) Send a check payable to the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants (1650-1700) for the non-refundable \$10.00 application handling fee.

(3) The application is then reviewed by the Society for approval. Documentation need be furnished only through the line of descent from the 1650-1700 founder. If needed, guidelines will be sent that help document descent by generation. (The Society will return an application if more documentation is needed. It is the applicant's responsibility to do any additional research, and to complete any gaps in the records.) When approved, the new member can choose to pay annual or lifetime dues:

(A) Annual dues from November 1 to October 31 are \$15.00 (in addition to the initial \$10.00 handling fee).

(B) A new member may elect to pay lifetime dues (instead of annual dues) based on age: Age 0-50, \$300; Age 51-70, \$200; Age 70+, \$100. Life Members receive a certificate suitable for framing.

Please send membership inquiries and/or lineage information to: Donald H. Brock, Registrar, Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 10 Windy Hill Road, Glen Arm, MD 21057.

More insights from Hannah McKinney

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proprietors were all current inhabitants. The rest of the undivided land, except nine square miles to be held in common in perpetuity, was to be divided by tax list among proprietors, one division in 1671, the last in 1715.

"It might seem the only remaining question concerning inhabitants and proprietors was how to divide the land equitably," writes McKinney. "However, newcomers kept coming to town, and control of the resources on the nine-mile square common was the major focus of community dispute for the next 30 years. This issue pitted legal inhabitants against the proprietors. In the past, selectmen acted for both groups; but the proprietors met separately. When the selectmen tried to regulate usage of the commons by fencing it, the proprietors sued the selectmen for trespass. The General Court found for the town instead of the proprietors. The controversy continued until misuse and encroachments decreased the value of the commons and it was no longer a resource worth fighting over."

Until 1679, white male inhabitants and voters were the same. But by then, children of first settlers were grown. The population was 286, yet

just 54 males owned land. Many males lived in their father's household, and could expect to be landowners in the future. But some were laborers who could not expect land grants. "Poor males were quickly excluded from the political community by a suffrage requirement of property holdings of at least 50 shillings," explains McKinney. "By the 1700s, both suffrage and settlement restrictions were used in Middletown and other Connecticut communities to try to ensure that those people who voted for local goods also paid the taxes for them."

As the town grew, there were increased demands for services, but how policy was decided changed. By 1720 the number of town meetings decreased, as subgroups met to decide on issues that used to be decided by the entire town. The number of town officers increased with decentralization, with more selectmen, fence viewers, and tax collectors, etc.

By this time, proprietors no longer had distinctive rights or responsibilities. In addition, church membership lost some of its status when dissenting denominations were established. A century after the first settlement, there was little distinction between freemen and voters. Any voter who lived in the town more than a few months would become a freeman.

In 1770, 890 men owned property

in the town, which in its outlying areas of rural "societies," was not much different than a century before. But the central district had evolved into a city. In the decade after the Revolutionary War there was a tug-of-war over town services and funds, city merchants vs. farmers. City leaders chose to pursue a city charter to solve the problem, separating the city from the town administration. From this point on the city was just another "interest group" in town-wide affairs.

McKinney continues in this chapter to (1) chart the levels of participation by citizens; (2) explain how party politics polarized the town in the first half 19th century: the wealthy vs. the "common man;" and (3) describe the changes in distribution of wealth in mid-19th century.

This one chapter aids in understanding how the town "worked," from its settlement through the years of growing pains, and describes how all the component classes fit together – the people in the community who made it work from the beginning. ■

The Development of Local Public Services 1650-1860: Lessons from Middletown, Connecticut can be found in select libraries, or can be ordered (\$59.95) from Greenwood Press (www.greenwood.com), P. O. Box 6926, Portsmouth, NH 03802; 800-225-5800.

