



The Middler

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

Vol. 7, No. 2

Fall 2007

ESSENTIAL RESEARCH DESTINATIONS

A repository of riches awaits the researcher at Russell Library & 'The Middletown Room'

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

Compared to most other locales, Middletown offers an embarrassment of riches for genealogy research. Located within a tight radius are Godfrey Memorial Library, Russell Library, Olin Library of Wesleyan University, and the Middlesex County Historical Society. Each is an essential destination. Russell Library stands out as a one-stop resource because it has a broad local history, genealogy, and vital records collection all in one place.

In addition to the local history collection in the Middletown Room, the city's public library has among its holdings the town's early vital records, land records, and newspapers on microfilm. Visit the library web site at www.russelllibrary.org.

Denise Mackey-Russo, Middletown Room reference librarian since 1989, discussed the library's resources and services in an e-mail interview:

continued on page 10

At right is a c. 1900 photo of Middletown's Russell Library. In 1875 Frances Russell established the library in memory of her husband, Samuel Russell. The building was originally built in 1834 for use as an Episcopal Church. Over the years, a new wing was constructed and additional buildings acquired to expand the library complex.

(Collection of R.W. Bacon)



A message from the Commander ...

Dear Members:

I extend greetings to all of you. Don't you like the look of our *Middler* newsletter? Our editor is doing such a fine job and I think putting us on the genealogical map, so to speak. We have gained a number of new members this year and they are a real asset to the organization. Our most recent member is more closely related to myself than anyone so far, so it was fun to get her information.

Our 2009 gathering is already on my mind. It seems far away, but I have discovered that time fleets by much more quickly the older I get!

So prepare yourselves for the next meeting in or near Middletown, or at least in the Northeast. If you have a desire for a particular location in that general area we would like to hear it. We are always anxious to make the

meetings meaningful and educational, so we welcome your suggestions.

The society is slowly gaining strength, but even more rapidly gaining quality. We are excited to see the possibilities and hope you will share the excitement at our next triennial meeting. Let us hear from you. We want to know what you think.

Barbara Stenberg
Commander, SMFSD
E-mail: azsmfsd@cox.net

~ DUES are DUE! ~

Annual Membership dues (\$15) are due November 1, 2007. Please send payment to:

Thomas Smith
SMFSD Treasurer
P. O. Box 194
Clinton, CT 06413

Thank you! (*Did you know dues have not increased since our founding in 2000?*)

In this issue . . .

Russell Memorial Library	1
From the Commander	1
Member Notes & SMFSD News	2
SMFSD Web Site Report	2
Middletown & 'The Log Cabin Myth'	3
Where They Went: Whitestown, N.Y.	4
Middletown Historian Jessie Alsop	6
Feature Graphic: Jessie Alsop Map #1	7
DNA Analysis & Middletown Genealogy	8
Book Review: <i>Saxons, Vikings, & Celts</i>	9
Membership Information	11



SMFSD NEWS

Researchers regularly report to SMFSD on their progress

In the past several months, both SMFSD members and non-members have reported to *The Middler* their genealogical breakthroughs on Middletown first settler families.

SMFSD founder **Gale Cornwell** reported that DNA analysis has clarified that the original spelling of the Cornwell surname was "Cornell." (Details are in "DNA analysis, first settler descendants, and the New England DNA Project" on page 8.)

Hal Whitmore, a non-member still assembling data for membership,

reported that DNA analysis has determined that Thomas Wetmore and Francis Whitmore were not closely related. (Details on page 8.)

Dana Bacon Majernik, a non-member descendant of Nathaniel Bacon, reported findings in England that further establish the identity of our first settler Nathaniel's parents: Nathaniel Bacon (brother of Andrew Bacon of Hartford) and Elizabeth (unknown surname). Dana plans to write an article on the subject based on her seven years of research.

SMFSD member **Donald Sage** saw his article on western migration, "The Great Lakes Water Highway," published in the July/August issue of *Everton's Genealogical Helper*.

New members. We extend a sincere welcome our new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Charles Vahn Abrahamzon**, AM-255, Hendersonville, Tenn. (1st settler **Andrew Warner**); **Olive E. Fitch Vinzant**, AM-256, Moline, Ill. (1st settlers **Nathaniel White & Thomas Wetmore**); **Louise J. Lacey Brown**, AM-257, Mesa, Ariz. (1st settler **John Wilcox**); **June A. Talbot Woodham**, AM-258, Wesley Chapel, Fla. (1st settler **John Kirby**); **Mark E. Donnelly**, AM-259, New York, N.Y. (1st settler **George Hubbard**); and **Judith R. Bridgman Rummler**, AM-260, Edina, Minn. & Bonita Springs, Fla. (1st settler **Nathaniel Bacon**). ■

WEB SITE REPORT

SMFSD web site draws new contacts

By now I hope all SMFSD members have had the opportunity to explore the riches of our new web site that went online May 1, 2007. If not, visit <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ctsmfSD/Index.html>, and as a Middletown first settler descendant, you are bound to find something of interest.

In the months since, there is the following to report:

- An independent researcher posted a positive note and link to our site on the Connecticut History discussion board. H-Connecticut serves as a communications center and forum for the state's history and heritage communities, and is moderated by Walter Woodward, the state historian. (See <http://www.h-net.org/~ctlist/>)

- Among e-mails received was a congratulatory note from Harold Walden, the webmaster of the Rootsweb sites for Middlesex County and Middletown, Conn.

- Hal Whitmore of the New England DNA Study page requested permission to add links to our SMFSD web site. (see article & links on pg. 8.)

- Our always-helpful contacts at Wesleyan University, the Middlesex

County Historical Society, Russell Library, and Godfrey Library continue to apprise their visitors of the SMFSD and the new web site.

- Links to our site without permission appear at various directory sites, sometimes with sketchy information.

- In the weeks after the launch of the site, your editor posted notices to dozens of discussion boards and mailing lists related to central Connecticut genealogy/history and Middletown first settler surnames.

- After the site was live for a month, your editor conducted some experiments with the Google search engine. The purpose was to see what happens when the unsuspecting newbie researcher goes hunting on the Internet for information about Middletown ancestors. There were some interesting and surprisingly positive findings. Our high search rankings are the result of dumb luck, as there was no conscious effort to "optimize" our site for search engines.

In the next few weeks several new first settler profiles will be added. The goal is to eventually have a profile on the web site for each pre-1700 Middletown settler. As always, your editor welcomes your suggestions and "wish list" for both *The Middler* and the web site. Feel free to contact me at rwbacon@comcast.net. ■



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

Vol. 7, No. 2
Fall 2007

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Middletown's iconic 1853 meeting house art later became a symbol of 'the log cabin myth'

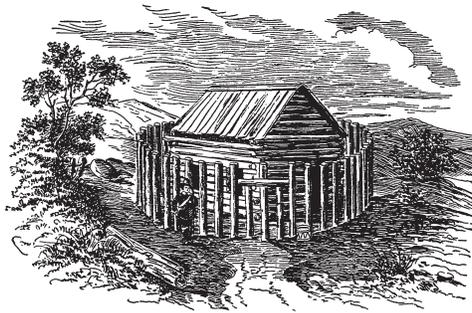
By R.W. Bacon
Editor, *The Middler*

In disciplined historical research, it is almost routine to make discoveries that run counter to long-held beliefs. While doing research for the SMFSD web site, your editor stumbled upon one such discovery concerning the widely-reprinted illustration of Middletown's first meeting house.

In the engraving by W. C. Butler that first appeared in the Rev. David D. Field's *Centennial Address* in 1853, the meeting house is shown as a log cabin surrounded by a palisade. Town records, however, indicate a more conventional construction, a fact noted in the text by Dr. Field himself.

Architectural historian Harold R. Shurtleff (1883-1938) used the illustration on the title page of his book, *The Log Cabin Myth: A Study of the Early Dwellings of the English Colonists in North America*, published in 1939. The book looks at the origins and evolution of log cabin symbolism, and refers to the *Centennial Address* illustration. (The author was a noted historian, the director of the Research Department at Colonial Williamsburg, and editor of *New England Quarterly*.)

"The earliest instance of a log-cabin illustration for a pioneer settlement that we have found appears in the Rev. David D. Field's *Centennial Address* on Middletown, Connecticut (1853). Dr. Field correctly paraphrased the town vote of February 2, 1652/3, on building a meeting house, the original



Above is the fanciful art by engraver W.C. Butler that was published in Field's *Centennial Address* in 1853.

of which, mentioning sill and plate, clearly indicates a framed structure," wrote Shurtleff. "But when he put this in the hands of an artist it came out as a nineteenth-century log cabin, surrounded by what appears to be a circle of hitching posts or a Druidical circle done in logs."

In a footnote, Shurtleff quotes the Town Votes and Proprietors' Records, Middletown, I, pg. 10: "It was agreed at a meeting at John Hall's house, to build a meeting house and to make it twenty foot square: and ten foot between sill and plat (*sic*): the height of it."

The phrase "between sill and plat(e)" proves that a frame construction was directed, wrote Shurtleff, who stated "the phrase is senseless for a log-wall building."

According to *Early American Architecture* by Hugh Morrison (1952), log cabin construction was introduced by new arrivals from Sweden to Delaware in 1638. In later decades German settlers in the Delaware Valley adopted the form. The Scotch-Irish, later arrivals in the 18th century, popularized the log cabin on the frontier from Maine to South Carolina. The term "log cabin" was first used in an Irish community in Virginia in 1770.

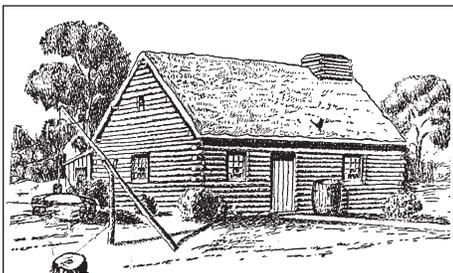
According to Shurtleff, the "log cabin myth" began as "a comedy of errors" with the 1840 presidential campaign, when Whig candidate William Henry Harrison was criticized as an unrefined sort who would be content with a log

cabin and a jug of hard cider. Harrison seized the opportunity to assert that he was the kind of American who would be proud to live in a log cabin, and his campaign adopted the theme in a big way, serving plenty of hard cider. The log cabin became a symbol of simplicity, ruggedness, and Americanism. (Harrison won the election over the champagne-sipping incumbent Martin Van Buren, but died of pneumonia one month after taking office.)

In 1841, a Whig author, the Rev. Alexander Young, published *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, and in an unsourced footnote stated that the settlers' houses "were probably log huts, thatched, and interstices filled with clay." The image of early settlers in log cabins took on a life of its own, and was referred to in speeches and illustrated in textbooks. This log cabin myth is still widely held today.

Apparently the planners of the Middletown Tercentenary in 1950 never got around to reading *The Log Cabin Myth* ... or the Town Records. The "Tercentenary Cabin" was built at Main & Washington Sts. as celebration headquarters. According to an article in the Middletown Press, March 12, 1950: "The Tercentenary Cabin will be as nearly as possible a replica of the structure that settlers of Middletown caused to be erected by a vote of community leaders on February 10, 1652."

W. C. Butler's artistic license of 1853 was an instance of not letting the facts get in the way of a good story – a myth that became an enduring one. ■



This artist's conception of the Middletown Tercentenary Cabin appeared in the Middletown Press on March 12, 1950.



Above is a postcard view of the cabin as built for the Tercentenary. (Collection of R. W. Bacon)

EXODUS FROM MIDDLETOWN: WHERE THEY WENT

Middletown pioneers followed Hugh White to the ‘Mother of Towns’ – Whitestown, N.Y.

Editor’s note: *The Middler* of Spring 2006 included an article on Rowley, Mass., where several Middletown first settlers resided before removing to Connecticut. The intention was to research similar articles under the category of “Where They Came From.” Perhaps even more significant to genealogy researchers, however, is the category of “Where They Went.” Therefore, this and future issues will explore the places where Middletown residents removed to in the years after the Revolutionary War. The first article in the series is about Whitestown, N.Y.

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

The exodus from Middletown after the Revolutionary War was put into perspective in an informative 1981 article by Peter D. Hall entitled “Middletown: Streets, Commerce, and People.” (The 40-page booklet was prepared as part of the Wesleyan University *Sesquicentennial Papers* series.) Hall, a descendant of Middletown first settlers who today is a professor at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, summarized Middletown’s growth from a nucleus of about 30 families in 1650 to a bustling, prosperous city a little over 100 years later. But the prosperity and increased population brought new problems. Poverty was rampant, and drunkenness and street fighting were common.

“The economic revolution that had transformed Middletown from a sleepy farming village to a busy international port had overturned the whole order of society and values,” wrote Hall. “The old landed families that had always led town affairs ... were being pushed out by newcomers whose wealth was based in trade. The ownership of a farm, which had once been the goal towards which nearly all young men aspired,

was becoming less and less possible as land became scarcer and farming itself less profitable.”

By the late 18th century the region’s environment was in a precarious state, with woodlands depleted, pastures ruined by sheep, and fish gone from the rivers. Epidemic diseases were rampant. “Once a pleasant place to live, Middletown became a place to leave,” wrote Hall. “And thousands did, moving westward to New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, beginning in the 1780s.”

Hugh White & Whitestown

One of the first waves of discontented Middletown residents to depart for points west headed to upstate New York near what is today Whitesboro, near the city of Utica.

In 1784, Hugh White (1733-1812), a great-grandson of Middletown first settler Nathaniel White, and a veteran of both the French-and-Indian War and Revolutionary War, joined with four others to purchase the 6,000-acre Sadaqueda Patent. This was an area of

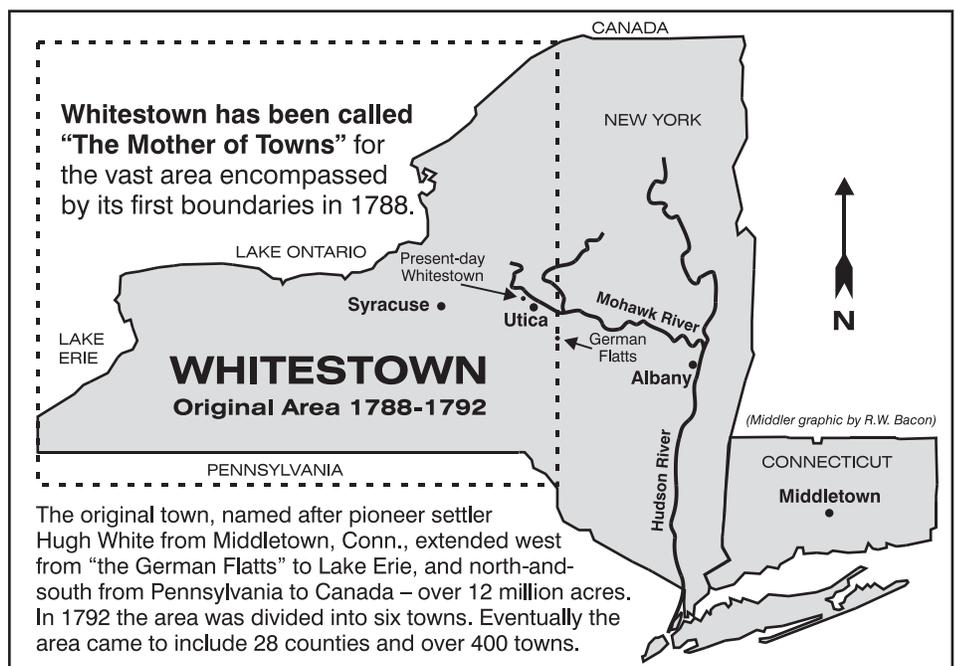
abandoned farms they had traversed during their war service in central New York.

The partners agreed to meet and survey the new purchase, and in early May 1784 White departed from Middletown with four sons, a daughter, and daughter-in-law. While some of the party traveled by water (Connecticut River, Long Island Sound, and up the Hudson River to Albany), two yokes of oxen were driven overland, though accounts differ by whom.

Meeting in Albany, they purchased a flat-bottom boat they could propel by poles up the Mohawk River. Some of their party drove the livestock, keeping pace along the riverbank.

When they reached an abandoned field near what is now Herkimer, N.Y., they planted corn, then proceeded to the mouth of the Sauquoit Creek, disembarking on June 5, 1784, where they built a bark shanty as a temporary shelter. Upon division of the patent among his partners (Ziphaniah Platt, Ezra L’Hommedieu, Melancthon

continued on page 5



Hugh White & Whitestown

continued from page 4

Smith, and Gen. William Floyd) that summer, Hugh White became the owner of 1500 acres. That fall, White and his sons returned to the field they planted and reaped a bountiful harvest.

The Hugh White family expedition that settled Whitestown: Hugh White, Sr. (1733-1812); Daniel Clark White (1759-1800) & his wife, Esther Paine (1760-1839); Joseph White (1761-1827); Hugh White, Jr. (1763-1827); Ansel White (1765-1858); and Aurelia White (1770-1846). They were later joined by: Lois (Marsh) White (Hugh White, Sr.'s 2nd wife, 1743-1829); Philo White (1767-1849); and Mary Stone White (1772-1839).

Hugh White returned to his hometown in Middletown Upper Houses in early 1785 to gather his wife and the rest of his family. He brought along samples of his crops, and the former Middletown selectman (1779-1783) encouraged friends and neighbors to join him at his new settlement. Ultimately 100 families joined him in what became known as Whitestown. Pioneer families included Amos Wetmore, Jonas Platt, George Doolittle, Thomas R. Gould, Reuben Wilcox, Arthur Breese, Enoch Story, Elisur Moseley, Caleb Douglas, William G. Tracey, and Gerrit G. Lansing. The 1790 census shows many Middletown family names.

A lecture by William Tracy in 1860 (*Historical Collection of New York*, p. 379) places Hugh White's adventure into perspective for later generations:

"The hardship and perils encountered by these early settlers can scarcely be conceived of by those who now visit the thickly peopled region. The whole country was in the wildness of nature. The nearest mill was at Palatine, forty miles distant. The hostility of the Indian tribes had hitherto rendered the settlement of that region impossible, and at the close of the War the whole central and western portions of the state were without civilized inhabitants. It was therefore necessary that the pioneer of the new settlement should conciliate the favor of



the Indians. On one occasion, an Indian chief demanded of Mr. White, as a test of his professed confidence, that he would permit him to take to his wigwam a little granddaughter, then playing about the house. The Chief promised to keep the child safely, and to bring her home again the next day. The child was entrusted to him; but it was not until the approach of night, when fears of treachery had almost overcome her mother, that she was returned, finely arrayed in Indian dress, with many ornaments. This incident is said to have contributed much toward establishing a lasting friendship between the new settlers and the neighboring Indians."

The above episode and other encounters with the region's native Americans are described in *Oneida County, New York: Our County and Its People*, by Daniel Wager. White's fair dealings led to his ceremonial adoption into the Oneida tribe. He received a portion of the tribe's annual catch of salmon for the remainder of his life.

On March 7, 1788, the Town of Whitestown in Montgomery County was created by an act of the legislature. The boundaries extended westward to Lake Erie, north to Canada, and south to Pennsylvania. This encompassed over half of New York State. (Whitestown later became known as the "Mother of Towns": From this 12 million acre expanse 28 counties and more than 400 towns were formed. By 1810 the population of this New York frontier grew from 200 families to almost 300,000 people.)

In the ensuing years after his settlement, Hugh White constructed a succession of homes, and eventually divided his lands into seven farms for his family. White was appointed as a

judge in both Herkimer and Oneida counties. He died April 16, 1812. His monument at Grand View Cemetery, Whitesboro, reads:

"Here sleep the mortal remains of Hugh White, who was born 5th February, 1733, at Middletown, in Connecticut, and died April 16th, 1812. In the year 1784, he removed to Sedaquate, now Whitesborough, where he was the first white inhabitant in the state of New York, west of the German settlements on the Mohawk. He was distinguished for energy, and decision of character, and may be justly regarded as a patriarch, who led the children of New England into the wilderness. As a magistrate, a citizen and a man, his character for truth and integrity was proverbial. this humble monument of veneration for his memory is reared and inscribed by the affectionate partner of his joys and his sorrows, May 15th, 1826."

Today the 27 square miles of Whitestown, just northwest of Utica, includes villages of Whitesboro, New York Mills, Oriskany, and Yorkville. ■

SOURCES

The above article was compiled and adapted from the following sources:

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- Rosenberry, Lois Kimball Mathews. *Expansion of New England: The Spread of New England Settlement and Institutions to the Mississippi River 1620-1865*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1909.
- Wager, Daniel E. *Our County and Its People, A Descriptive work on Oneida County, New York, Part I & II*. Boston, Mass.: The Boston History Company, 1896.
- White, Donald F. *Exploring 200 Years of Oneida County History*. Utica, N.Y.: Oneida County Historical Society, 1998.
- White, William H. "Centennial Address" published in *Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society at Utica, N.Y., 1881 - 1884*. Utica, N.Y.: Oneida County Historical Society & Ellis H. Roberts & Co., 1885.

Historian Jessie Alsop created first-settler maps by interpreting text of Middletown land records

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

If one conducts research at Russell Library's Middletown Room, sooner or later one will encounter – and then treasure – the work of Jessie Alsop.

A career bank employee with a lifelong interest in Middletown history and genealogy, Jessie Alsop (1875-1951) devoted her spare time, especially in retirement, to research, writing, documenting historic houses, and advocating for preservation.

Of particular interest to Middletown first settler descendants are the many landowner maps she drew based on the text of town records. The redrawn map on the facing page is one example. Future issues will feature her maps – redrawn for clarity – of the 1671 land divisions.

Jessie Margaret Alsop was born in 1875 in Staten Island, N.Y., where her father, Middletown-born Henry Wright Alsop (1849-1936), was in the shipping business. She was a great-granddaughter of Richard Alsop (1726-1776), the shipping magnate greatly responsible for growing Middletown into, for a time, the busiest port between Boston and New York.

Jessie Alsop and her five siblings grew up in Moorhead, Minnesota, where the family moved for business. Sometime between 1900-1905 she moved to Middletown to live with her aunt, Lucy Alsop, and began working at the Middlesex County National Bank. From 1916 until her retirement in 1934 she worked at Middletown National Bank. She was unmarried.

Upon her retirement and the death of her aunt, Jessie Alsop's new home became a preservation project. She supervised construction of the small home in Portland, Conn., and re-used materials from the Berkeley Divinity School, which was being dismantled.

Two major projects so valuable to researchers today are her surveys of historic homes in Middletown, one for

the Colonial Dames, and one for the WPA in the 1930s. The surveys trace deeds, note interior and exterior details, and include photographs.

"Miss Alsop's studies have thrown much light on the early years of Middletown and surrounding towns. She had always been interested in local history and genealogical research and upon her retirement from business, she devoted all her time to these pursuits," stated the Middletown Press obituary after her death on January 7, 1951.

She wrote many articles on local history for the Middletown Press, and in 1938 wrote a local history published in pamphlet form for the dedication of the Portland-Middletown bridge.

Perhaps her most ambitious work remains unpublished: a book on town/city history entitled *Middletown: Past, Present, and Future*. "The work has been completed for some time and is in the hands of a publisher," stated her obituary. "It was originally intended for publication at the time of the Tercentenary (1950), but complications have delayed its appearance."

"Miss Alsop's collection of historical information and research fills many notebooks and scrapbooks," continues the obituary. Russell Library holds a collection of her papers, but the search continues for her unpublished book.

Jessie M. Alsop is buried at Indian Hill Cemetery in Middletown. ■

Early Middletown settlers made sure to preserve records of land distribution

Along with her pencil-drawn maps, Jessie Alsop prepared interpretive text, including transcription of the town records. Unfortunately there are no dates or documentation on the copies held at Russell Library. The best guess is that the project was done sometime between 1930-1950. The following is her general introduction to her Middletown Land Record maps:

Land Records - General History

The importance of land records was early recognized in the history of Middletown, and the following extracts speak for themselves:

"At Town Meeting in Middletown December 27, 1731 by adjournment from December 20, 1731, the town by voat do order that the old town book be Transcribed in all the proper and needful parts thereof.

At the same meeting Joseph Rockwell, Sr., Jabez Hamlin, and William Rockwell were Chosen a Committee to transcribe said book (and to be).

Pursuant to the above act of the town the above named committee did

on ye ninth day of March, 1731-2 appear before me ye subscriber and had ye following oath administered to them viz:

You, J.B., J.H., and W.R., being chosen a Committee to Transcribe the old Town book You and each of you swear by the Name of the Living God that so farr as you Shall be improved therein and so far as you Shall think necessary to be Transcribed, you will do it faithfully and as near as you Can Verbatim and what you Don't think necessary to be transcribed you will take a Marginal account thereof Declaring what page they are in said Book and Deliver the same to the town. – John Hamlin, Just. Pac."

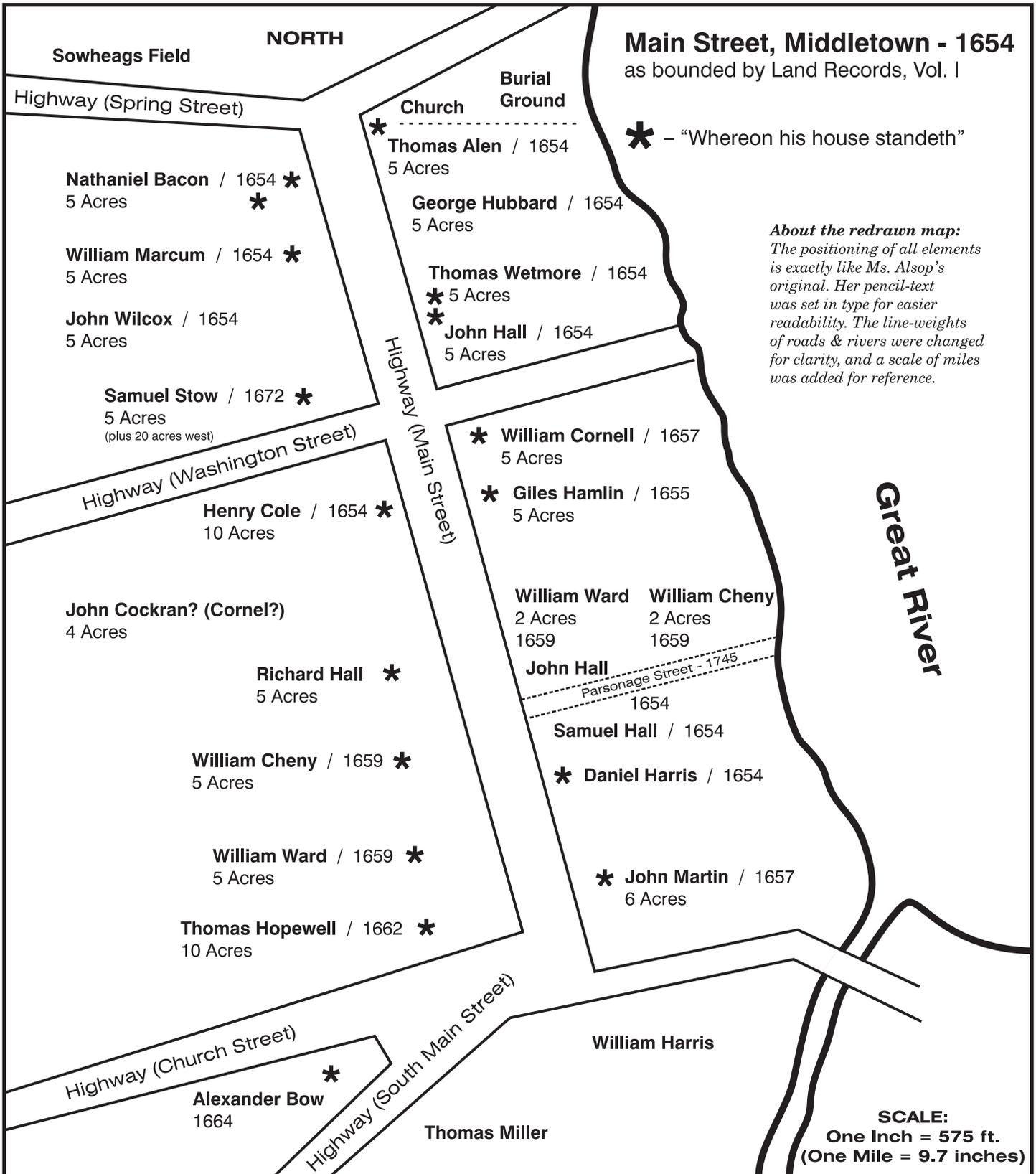
This old first book has been preserved by the process, but fortunately the transcription is legible, and the old records from this book are more easily accessible. (– Jessie Alsop)

Editor's note: The next entry concerns the division of undivided lands in 1670-1671, which, along with the maps, will be included in the next issue of *The Middler*.



Feature Graphic #5 – The Jessie Alsop Map of Main Street, Middletown, 1654

The map below is redrawn from a scanned copy of Jessie Alsop's pencil-drawn interpretation of the earliest Middletown land records. Over many years as an avid historian of Middletown, Ms. Alsop transcribed early land records and from the information in the text, drew her collection of maps. Photocopies of her maps are held at the Middletown Room of Russell Library. Future issues of *The Middler* will feature her maps of later land grants in other sections of Middletown. (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2007.)



As the future of genealogy, DNA study requires participation – and patience – from descendants

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

Avid genealogists of the present – ramped up like kids turned loose in a candy store – can gorge on more conventional historical records than ever before. Even so, most will acknowledge, when taking the long view, that DNA analysis represents the future of genealogical studies.

DNA analysis – the study of our individual genetic “fingerprints” – will ultimately enable genealogists to use hard science to corroborate – or invalidate – our records-based research.

A look at the future through rose-colored glasses envisions the genealogist using massive banks of DNA information, organized by surname or region, to successfully separate fact from myth, extract the truth from fuzzy family folklore, and confirm relationships even when no written records ever existed.

The basic principle of DNA testing for genealogy is that the Y chromosome is transmitted from father to son, therefore testing is able to connect direct male lines. Locations tested on the Y chromosome are called “markers,” and testing notes the random changes, or mutations, that occur through the generations on these markers. Males can choose to have their DNA tested for 12, 25, 37, or 67 markers. The resulting “DNA signature” can then be compared to that of other males with the same surname to determine whether there is a common ancestor in the recent or distant past.

It is important to realize, however, that while the science exists today for the DNA analysis needed to make genealogical conclusions within surname groups, those conclusions are dependent on a database of individuals who have submitted their data for testing and comparison. While interest in individual DNA testing is growing rapidly, at present the number of samples collected for comparison is rela-

tively small, and for many surnames, insignificant or nonexistent.

This realization has led many who are interested in the future of genealogical studies to order a test kit and submit their DNA information, even though there may be little significant new genealogical knowledge to be gained for decades, until the database for their surname grows to have hundreds or thousands of samples.

The subject of DNA analysis for genealogical research has been covered in great detail elsewhere by general interest magazines, genealogy publications, and Internet sites. Therefore *The Middler* presents the following sources for further information:

- International Society of Genetic Genealogy (<http://www.isogg.org/>). This site offers a good introduction,

and includes a bibliography and many links to other informative sites.

- The Genetic Genealogist (<http://www.thegeneticgenealogist.com>). This blog by Blaine Bettinger, Ph.D. is by a biochemist with an interest in genealogy. Especially informative: “10 DNA Testing Myths Busted.”

- DNA 101; Blair Genealogy DNA Project site (<http://blairgenealogy.com/dna/dna101.html>). This page offers a comprehensive overview of DNA analysis for genealogy.

- Family Tree Genealogy’s “Introduction to DNA Testing as a Tool in Genealogy” (<http://dgmweb.net/genealogy/DNA/DNA-Introduction.shtml>).

From the above sources readers will discover links to hundreds of web sites, news articles, and vendors for DNA test kits and services. ■

DNA analysis, first-settler descendants, and the New England DNA Project

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

The use of DNA analysis in genealogy has resulted in recent breakthroughs for at least two Middletown first settler families.

SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell, a descendant of William Cornwell, reports by letter that the Cornwell DNA Surname Project acquired test data on two more individuals that point to a common ancestor in Fairsted Manor, Terling, Essex, England. According to Gale, this resulted in a clarification of the spelling of the surname, since one individual is a descendant of Thomas Cornell (a nephew through a half-brother of William of Middletown), who settled in Rhode Island about 1938. “This has been a great turn of events confirming my research,” wrote Gale. “I guess we understand now why William at age 64-plus signed his will as ‘William Cornell’ and not ‘Cornwell!’”

Hal Whitmore of Wilmington, Delaware, a descendant of first settler Thomas Wetmore, reports (via e-mail 8/17/2007) that DNA testing of the Whitmore/Wetmore DNA Surname Project has ruled out that first settler Thomas Wetmore of Middletown and Francis Whitmore of Cambridge were related within recent times, and certainly not brothers or close cousins.

Whitmore collaborated with others to initiate the New England DNA Project at <http://www.newenglanddna.org/>. The project is confined to 1620-1660, and is organized by town or settlement. The Middletown page is at <http://www.newenglanddna.org/CT/Middletown/Middletown.html>. This page has links to our SMFSD home page, our brief biographical sketches, the Middlesex County Historical Society, and Russell Library. The hope is that by taking a population study approach in addition to surname studies, useful information might be derived from existing data. ■

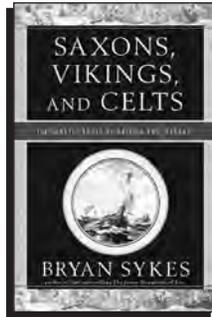


In Saxons, Vikings, & Celts, Bryan Sykes paints the 'big picture' of ancient British Isles origins

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

After 40 years as a journalist, historian, and now, museum professional, it has become second-nature to seek out the "big picture" perspective on every subject. Seeking the "big picture" of New England genealogy led me to *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts: The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland*. Its author, Dr. Bryan Sykes, professor of human genetics at Oxford University, proved to be an excellent interpreter of DNA research in his previous best-seller, *The Seven Daughters of Eve*. In *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts*, Dr. Sykes calls upon the findings of his six-year survey of over 10,000 volunteers to trace the genetic makeup of the British Isles.

The book first delves into the pre-history of the British Isles, including



Saxons, Vikings, and Celts: The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland, by Bryan Sykes. (W.W. Norton & Co., 2006, 306 pgs.; ISBN#: 0393062686) is available through your library or favorite bookseller.

geology, climate, and Stone Age migrations. Next Dr. Sykes explains his research methodology in easy-to-understand terms. After chapters on the history and genetic characteristics of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, the final chapters present the conclusions drawn from the data.

At first glance at the full title, the heart-rate quickens at the prospect of

a book casting new science-based light on history, and offering the possibility of some personally applicable findings. But the reader would do well to modify expectations. The bulk of the book amounts to a well-written overview of early British Isles history. The explanation of DNA analysis is gracefully expert, but the conclusions are sometimes simplistic. A deficiency especially noted by this writer is the absence of footnotes or bibliography.

After analyses of both the Y-chromosome DNA (paternal line) and the mitochondrial DNA (maternal line) from over 10,000 volunteers, Dr. Sykes concluded that there are five male and seven female genetic lineages that dominate both mainland Europe and the British Isles. While his study began as a search for differences, what Dr. Sykes found was that the European population has been essentially stable for tens of thousands of years. One surprising finding was that the origin of the dominant Celtic group throughout the British Isles was from the northern Iberian Peninsula (Spain), not central Europe as previously thought.

According to Dr. Sykes, apparently the dominant Celtic genetic heritage was modified by later groups (Saxons, Vikings), but only to a relatively small degree. Comparing maternal and paternal DNA distribution, Dr. Sykes found that maternal lines were generally more Celtic. His conclusion is that women were less mobile than men. The study reveals that there was no dramatic reconstitution of the population following the succession of invasions noted so well in history books.

This reviewer has long contended that the greatest potential for DNA in genealogy is in revealing through science that our human family is more closely-related than ever imagined. Dr. Sykes, in his research for *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts*, sets out convincing proof of this for our large British Isles extended family. ■

Existing DNA Surname Projects for 1650-1654 Middletown first settlers

The following is a list of genealogy DNA projects established for the surnames of Middletown first settlers 1650-1654, along with the number of already-tested participants in each. Keep in mind that participants are not necessarily descendants of Middletown first settlers, but may just share the common surname (ex.: Allen, Hall, Harris, Miller, Smith). The next issue of *The Middler* will include a much larger list of DNA projects for the 1654-1700 settlers.

Allan/Allen (145)	http://www.familytreedna.com/public/Allan/
Bacon (9)	http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/b/bacon/index.html
Blumfield	none
Cornwell (36)	http://www.familytreedna.com/public/cornwellandvariations/
Hall (123)	http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~nhatcher/hall/
Hamlin	none
Harris (244)	http://www.harrisdna.org/
Hubbard (41)	http://www.familytreedna.com/public/hubbard/
Kirby (22)	http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/k/kirby/
Martin (223)	http://www.small-stuff.com/MARTIN/DNA/
Miller (191)	http://www.familytreedna.com/public/Miller/
Savage (23)	http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/savage/
Smith (196)	http://www.smithconnections.com/index.cgi
Stocking	none
Stow (6)	http://worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/stowe/
Treat (14)	http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/t/trott/
Webster (13):	http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/w/webster/
Whitmore/Wetmore (27)	http://whitmore.dnafamilies.net/
White (158)	http://www.familytreedna.com/public/white/

Russell Library & the Middletown Room . . .

continued from page 1

The Middler: SMFSD members see Russell Library as a gold mine for research. But day-in-day out, who uses the Middletown Room, and what are the most common inquiries?

Denise Mackey-Russo: The majority of questions we get are from people who live in the community; however, the needs of users vary widely. College students use the Middletown Room to research local history topics, scout groups use microfilmed newspapers to research local events, and high school students use annual reports to research local government. Residents use house surveys to research their homes.

The most common inquiry is for obituaries. Every week we receive letters, e-mails, and telephone calls requesting obituaries. The second most common inquiry is for birth and marriage records, followed by questions regarding local companies and products made in Middletown.

The Middler: How frequently do you serve out-of-town/state visitors?

D. M.-R.: In the past, we frequently served out-of-town and out-of-state visitors; however, the number of on-site visitors is definitely declining. Although we still serve people from out-of-state, the Internet has changed the way we deliver information, especially for those who live too far away to travel to Middletown. Many basic genealogy or history questions can be answered quickly with the use of a scanner and e-mail. We also receive questions from people who live throughout the world.

The Middler: What are your suggestions for the first-time visitor – and for the experienced researcher?

D. M.-R.: Many visitors come to the library seeking information about their ancestors, but they don't know how to begin. The most important suggestion I can make is to study the basics of genealogy. Beginners willing to learn the fundamentals also learn the importance of organization, documen-

tation, and good research skills. I also suggest that the beginner use charts to record names and dates. The use of a chart makes it easier for librarians to focus on specific questions. The last suggestion is that the beginning researcher set aside ample time to delve into a project.

A suggestion for the seasoned genealogist or out-of-town researcher is to peruse the Middletown Room pages on the library's web site before visiting. The web site is a great place to learn about the resources available in the Middletown Room, as well as the non-print materials. Contact information and an e-mail form are on our web site. It is always a good idea to call before you visit because the librarians can answer basic questions or provide more information about records and materials. During a visit, I suggest the experienced genealogist look at the finding aids at the Information Desk and in the Middletown Room.

The Middler: What are the major assets of Russell Library to the history/genealogy researcher?

D. M.-R.: The major asset is the breadth of the collection. Today, genealogists (and historians) want to go beyond the pedigree chart or family tree. They want to "flesh out" their family history to include the experiences of their ancestors. Traditional sources – census, probates, land records, vital records, naturalization records, and so on – are the building blocks of a genealogy, but these records only tell part of a family's

story. The breadth of the Middletown Room collection goes beyond traditional materials to include resources on the social history of Middlesex County. Fleshing out a family history includes the study of daily events, political, economic, and religious developments, common experiences, trends in immigration, development of neighborhoods, and world events. Our collection of Middletown newspapers dating from 1790 is one example of a resource that a genealogist can use to put data into context.

The other major asset is reference assistance. In addition to providing direction, locating materials, and assisting with resources and equipment, the librarians can also facilitate the interlibrary loan process for materials not in our collection.

The Middler: What is the "best kept secret" in the Middletown Room?

D. M.-R.: One of the "best-kept secrets" in the Middletown Room is *The Connecticut Historical Society Collection for Middlesex County* on microfilm. The collection contains 168 items relating to Middletown. Sermons, business directories, catalogs, church histories, manufacturer's catalogs, advertisements, price lists, and reports are among the many items in the collection. A finding aid provides a subject index as well as catalog entries.

The Middler: It is apparent you enjoy helping patrons tackle a genealogical or historical research challenge – a quality common to reference librarians. Can you tell us about the roots of your career interests?

D. M.-R.: After I graduated from Russell Sage College with a degree in sociology and psychology, I came to the conclusion that I rather enjoyed hunting for information in libraries. The field of librarianship seemed to be a career choice that would satisfy my love of books and research. I completed a master's degree in library science at Indiana University, worked as a children's librarian for several years, and then became a reference librarian. After a move from New York to Connecticut in 1989, I joined the

continued on page 12



Above is the main entrance to Russell Library in its present-day configuration.



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.
- Full member access to the SMFSD web site which includes first settler profiles, genealogy resources, local history articles, a custom-prepared annotated bibliography for Middletown research, and an archive of past *Middler* issues.
- The annual membership roster enabling you to network with Middletown "cousins" and researchers across the country.
- 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.



Russell Library ...

continued from page 10

reference department at Russell Library. I was given a choice between working on the local history and genealogy collection or government documents. The decision was an easy one. As a child, I was always bugging my parents and grandparents for information about my ancestors. So, with no formal training or background in genealogy except a burning desire to learn, and absolutely no previous knowledge about Middletown, I decided to immerse myself in the world of genealogy and the history of Middlesex County. I enjoy using reference skills and knowledge of genealogy and local history to help patrons uncover information about their ancestors and the town in which they lived.

The Middler: What is the most outlandish research question you have received?

D. M.-R.: Probably one of the most unusual or weird letters I received was an inquiry about a dwelling in the city. Requests for historical information about a residence are not unusual; however, the reason for this particular inquiry was strange. The writer wanted to know if anything "fishy" had ever gone on in the house. The writer also wanted to know if a cult had ever lived in the house, or if any homeowners had disappeared! I tried

to locate information, but discovered that the address does not exist. The letter was either hoax, or sent to the wrong library. Either way, it was the weirdest inquiry I have ever received.

The Middler: SMFSD members always want to be informed visitors, so can you tell us the "ground rules" for using the Middletown Room?

D. M.-R.: The Middletown Room is open during regular library hours. (Visit www.russelllibrary.org for hours.) Appointments are not necessary, but visitors are encouraged to call ahead, especially if they are from out-of-town and time is limited. Upon arrival, visitors are asked to register at the Information Desk to use the Middletown Room and present identification. Patrons are encouraged to handle materials carefully and use pencil only. Fragile materials marked with a red dot may not be copied. Laptops are permitted.

The Middler: Do you have any provision for conducting research for those who cannot get to the library?

D. M.-R.: Russell Library receives frequent requests for genealogical information from people who cannot visit. Requests may be directed to the Information Department by fax, telephone, mail, or e-mail. For questions that require 15 minutes or less to answer, the Information Department will search and copy obituaries and

articles from the local newspaper, if an index is available or dates are provided. They will copy historical information from an indexed source, check city directories, and search for people, events, or businesses in the ephemera and microfilm collections or books in the Middletown Room. The library does not charge a fee for inquiries, but there is a charge of 25-cents per page for copies. Although every attempt is made to assist the long-distance genealogist, librarians cannot answer questions that require extensive research.

The Middler: What future projects are on the agenda?

D. M.-R.: This year we look forward to organizing the newly-expanded map collection and producing finding aids. Binding, rebinding, and digitally reproducing fragile books, annual reports, and publications is another project for this year. These efforts will not only preserve the information, but will allow us to make these materials available to visitors. In the near future, we hope to start working on the photograph collection. The plan is to expand, inventory, and identify photographs, with the goal of making the collection available to the public. ■

Contact information: Denise Mackey-Russo, Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown CT 06457; (860) 347-2520; www.russelllibrary.org.

