



The Middler

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

Vol. 19, No. 1 *** Fall 2019

Godfrey Memorial Library Names New Director

Many of you have visited the Godfrey Memorial Library during one or more of the Society's Triennial meetings in Middletown. The library is the official repository of our member application files. Godfrey Memorial Library is pleased to announce that **Carol Ansel** has been appointed Library Director as of January 1, 2019. Carol has been the reference librarian at the library since July 2018. She has over 35 years of experience in various libraries in Connecticut and is a board member of the Connecticut Library Consortium. She holds a BA degree from Connecticut College and an MLIS degree from University of Rhode Island. In addition, she holds a certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University. **Laura Cowles Hobbs**, secretary of SMFSD, interviewed **Carol Ansel**, new director of Godfrey.

The Middler: What are the short-term goals for the library?

Carol: We are working with Al Fiacre and Wanda Dupuy redesigning the website giving it a "refreshing look". Be sure to visit us at www.godfrey.org. Other goals are restarting the blog that had been dormant, providing more consistent presence on social networking, and upgrading wireless access in the library. Meeting others in local and regional historical societies who are doing genealogy and studying local history is also a priority. Outside the building we are sprucing up the grounds.

The Middler: All those endeavors will keep people at the library busy for months to come. What long-term plans does the library have?

Carol: We will inventory our complete holdings and revitalize programming and host more events. Expanding collection of newer genealogical materials and switching to a more robust library catalog are also long-term priorities.

The Middler: Tell me about the benefits of premium membership with the Godfrey Memorial Library.

Carol: Premium membership provides access to local resources unique to Godfrey. The American Genealogical and Biographical Index (AGBI) can be useful to find New England ancestors. The complete run of the Boston transcript with the question and answer columns is available at the library. The Ed Laput cemetery collection contains photographs of 99% of Middlesex County gravestones. Local resources such as Middletown funeral home records are digitized on our website.

Godfrey Memorial Library Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday 9AM - 1PM * 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 9AM to 1PM

President's Message – October 2019

by Marge Piersen

We owe Kitty Ryan a huge thanks for stepping up to edit this issue of the Middler during a transition phase. Our first president Barb Stenberg published our newsletter from 2000 until 2005 when Reg Bacon began his fourteen-year tenure that lasted through 2018.

Warren Savage has enthusiastically accepted my appointment to serve as editor starting with our spring 2020 issue. Warren is a tech-savvy computer scientist who likes to write. He states, "I have done a lot of writing in my professional career, op eds, blogs, etc., so I'm not afraid of that."

While Reg assumed responsibility for almost all of the writing and research for the Middler as well as publication and distribution, going forward the Middler will need to be a group effort. I cannot emphasize enough that now is the time for you to indulge your wish to become a published author. If a number of you submit just one article, we will continue to have a dynamic newsletter.

If you are reading this newsletter, we know you have an interest in your ancestors and their Middletown connection. All members have some knowledge of their heritage to share. What do you know about your ancestors' lives in Middletown? From where did they arrive or to where did their descendants move? Do you have an interesting story about a descendant? Do you own a special family keepsake?

What are your own experiences chasing your family roots? Did your family tell you of your Connecticut connections or did you discover them yourself? Is there some aspect of colonial New England life that particularly interests you? Is there a pertinent book you would like to review? Tell us about yourself, especially your broader genealogical adventures and research. Use your imagination when considering what you might contribute.

We aim to resume publishing twice each year, so I hope you will let Warren know how you will assist with one of the two 2020 issues. Please send your article proposals by mid-January and finished articles by March 10. Articles should be submitted as email attachments. Send your proposals, finished articles, and/or comments to warren@savageplace.com.



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CONNECTICUT, USA

www.Middletown1650.org

Vol. 19, No. 1 Fall, 2019

Please send articles, news items, corrections & comments to Warren Savage

warren@savageplace.com

----- SMFSD OFFICERS -----

President	Marge Piersen
Vice President	Reg Bacon
Secretary	Laura Hobbs
Treasurer	Mike Campbell
Registrar	Cindy Nicewarner
Historian	Don Brock
Middler Editor	Warren Savage (2020)
This Middler issue	Kitty Ryan, Marge Piersen
Honorary Board	Barb Stenberg
Members	Hal Whitmore

WELCOME to our newest member, Dora Smith of Austin, TX. Dora joined us July 27 as an associate member.

----- 2020 dues -----
ANNUAL MEMBERS: By January 1, please send a check for \$20 made out to SMFSD to Mike Campbell, treasurer SMFSD
3570 Willow Street
Bonita, CA 91902-1226
For the cost of changing to a life membership, see page 29 of this newsletter. Mike can also help you with such a change.

NERGC Ancestry & Genealogical Conference

by Reg Bacon



Laura Hobbs and Reg Bacon attended the New England Regional Conference
Manchester, NH April 4-6, 2019.



Former editor of the Middler Reg Bacon (from Massachusetts) and SMFSD secretary Laura Hobbs (from Connecticut) held forth at the SMFSD booth display during the event's "Society Fair" with a charm offensive on the milling masses, chatting up potential members, passing out brochures, and consulting about Middletown ancestors. Later they decompressed at a local restaurant, then returned rejuvenated to the conference the next day --- Laura to help staff the Godfrey Memorial Library booth and Reg Bacon to promote a new book, *The Micro-Historian's Guide to Research, Evidence & Conclusions: Step-by-Step Research Planning & Execution*. The next NERGC conference will be April 14 - 17, 2021 in Springfield, M.A.

Join Doolittle Descendants to Celebrate 350 years in Wallingford

by Marge Piersen

SMFSD was founded at the time Middletown celebrated its 350th anniversary with festivities that included a big parade in which our newly founded society participated.

Likewise, Doolittles of America will help the residents of nearby Wallingford, CT, to celebrate “large” with a week full of festivities June 20-27, 2020. Society members may march alongside or ride on the society’s float, currently being designed. Hopefully, some of us who are descended from Middletown’s early settler Samuel Doolittle will be there. Doolittles of America will hold its own annual meeting June 19-22 to coincide with the town’s anniversary.

Events:

Saturday, June 20 Jubilee Float Parade

Sunday, June 21 Religious Day * 1776 Jubilee Play, Day 1

Monday, June 22 History and Diversity Day * Descendants Ceremony, Food Fest, 1776 Play

Tuesday, June 23 Women’s Day * Tea, Art show, 1776 Play, *Closing Performance*

Wednesday, June 24 * Business and Agriculture Day

Thursday, June 25 * Senior Bargain Day

Friday, June 26 * Youth Day * Dance, Concert, Fireworks

Saturday, June 27 * Black Tie Ball

Descendants’ Book:

Wallingford will be publishing a book listing known descendants of the town founders. Even if you are not descended from Wallingford first settlers Abraham Doolittle and John Moss through Middletown first settler Samuel, it wouldn’t be surprising if you are descended from another Wallingford founder. Check out the list and consider listing your name in the Wallingford 350 book. The list can be found at

<https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=30039>.

In addition to these signers of the plantation covenant; the Beach and Royce settlers who came in 1671/2 qualify. The book will include information on each founder and his wife and children as well as living descendants and state where they live.

For additional information on Wallingford 350, the Doolittles of America society, and the form to include yourself in the descendants’ book, contact the Doolittles of America registrar Nancy Redling, nancy@nroseassoc.com or SMFSD president marge.piersen@comcast.net.

“Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past.” James Joyce

The Origin of the Doolittle Name in History

by Kitty Ryan

This information regarding the origin of the Doolittle surname is from The Doolittle Family in America; Volumes I - VIII by, William Frederick, Doolittle, M.D. 1902

“Note: from old English records: *Radulphus de Doleita*, Testimonio: For forgiveness of misdeeds of himself and predecessors, and successors he grants in the time of William, King of England, to the Monks of St. Michael and for the brotherhood and prayers of St. Michael and the Monks, his servants, all the dues on his lands, etc. [Recorded in original charters in archives of La Manche, Abbey of Mont St. Michael for Benedictine monks in Diocese of Avaranche, France, A.D. 1085-1087] *Radulphus de Dolieta*, a Norman noble, who accompanied the Conqueror appears to have been the progenitor of the origin of the Doolittle name family in England. Doleita is the name of a place or village on the coast of Normandy located on the peninsula where Cherbourg is and near the town of Avaranche and neighboring Mont St. Michael.” (A world Heritage site.)

I was traveling in France with my daughter Bridget, during a break from her French Language School in Paris. We took the train to Caen, and from there we rented a car and visited the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach. It started to rain as we were walking through unending rows of Roman Crosses and Stars of David we started walking faster to get under some shelter. Then at the same time we turned and looked at each other and agreed "If these men gave their lives for our freedom, we can get wet." We continued to walk and touch the Roman Crosses and Star of David on others. From there we drove south and stayed at a small Inn near Mont St. Michael. I had no idea that in the future I would learn that through our ancestor ("for forgiveness of misdeeds..."), we have an ancestry connection to the Abbey and Mont St Michael!

Middletown Military Museum

By Marge Piersen, President

The Greater Middletown Military Museum held its grand opening April 13, 2019. This new museum aims to honor those who have fought in any branch of the military from colonial times to the present. The museum organizers realized that as World War II and Korean artifacts, including books, letters, photographs, uniforms, medals, flags and weapons have been assembled with care and included in their growing collection. The museum now serves military historians as well as offering educational opportunities for school children and the public. Group tours and meeting space for small groups are available.

Website: <https://gmvmm.com>

Facebook page: The Greater Middletown Military Museum, Inc.

Location 200 Walnut Grove Road Middletown, CT

Visiting Hours: Weekdays from 10:00am - 3:00pm

“The cement of this union is the heart-blood of every American.”

~ Thomas Jefferson ~

Former *Middler* editor tells how he got started in family history research

by R.W. Bacon, former editor, *The Middler*

Leading up to the transition in editorship of *The Middler*, I suggested that SMFSD members contribute articles about their own genealogical research, discoveries, or adventures that relate to our Middletown roots. Topics might include (1) how a particular “brick wall” challenge was surmounted; (2) out-of-the-ordinary discoveries about a fascinating or infamous ancestor; or (3) boots-on-the-ground tales of research, whether *spelunking* through archives or slogging through farm fields. To “break the ice,” I agreed to start off with an article about how I first became connected to Middletown history and genealogy. So here it goes.

It was the mid-1970s. I was in my late 20s, a few years into what became a 35-year show business career --- acrobatic juggler, circus artist, comedy tap dancer, and jazz/ragtime musician. At that time, I was a solo performer, a few years before teaming with my talented wife and partner, L.J. Newton, for 25 years of dazzling synchrony until her retirement from the stage.

This show business odyssey began as what I thought would be just a short-term sociological research sabbatical from my work as a journalist, editor, and publication designer. Thanks to the foundation of a rigorous journalism education and the mentorship of old-school news editors, I was already years into the profession that “writes the first draft of history.”

But in the 1970s, even after a decade of “writing the first draft of history” on subjects from cows on the highway to con men in public office, there was much about my own family history I did not know. I knew plenty about my mother’s side of the family --- generations of northern Vermont mountain folk, hardscrabble farmers, and lumberjacks, with family lines documented to the deepest of New England roots. When I was a boy I was enraptured by my maternal grandfather’s stories of old Vermont. But about my father’s side of the family, especially the Bacon surname line, I knew almost nothing.

The reason for that void in family history was that my father, Wesley H. Bacon (1922-2001) was abandoned by his own father when he was four years old. After his mother’s divorce and her remarriage to a professional chauffeur, my father, though an only child, grew up anchored by his mother’s large working-class family in Depression-era New Britain, Conn., and did not look back.

As the stepchild of a workaholic professional chauffeur to the well-to-do in New York and Florida, my father bounced from school-to-school in three states, and this disjointed education ended at the ninth grade. Yet from his early youth to the very end of his days he possessed an indefinable spark of self-motivation. In his lifetime Wesley H. Bacon --- small in stature, quiet, and modest by nature --- became a virtuoso telegrapher, radio wizard, global traveler, bold aviator, elegant sleight-of-hand magician, Houdini-like escape artist, stentorian speaker, hypnotic baritone vocalist, Wild-West six-gun twirler, erstwhile short story writer, WWII U.S. Navy veteran, mystic philosopher, citizen of the world, ... and Dad.

My sisters and I puzzled over the origin of our father’s remarkable focus and capacity for

deep study. He was a math whiz, while we stumbled through freshman algebra. He was the most well-read person we knew, with a nuanced vocabulary that dwarfed that of our English teachers. He expounded on big thoughts and universal concerns, while other relatives appeared only concerned about the source of the next piece of pie.

My younger sister, Linda Bacon (1956-2000), was always asking "I wonder what makes him tick?" She was curious about the age-old "nature or nurture" question. But our father, for all his wisdom, had nothing to contribute on the subject. Although he carried the Bacon surname, he revealed no curiosity about his own father. There was no bitterness or animosity, just abject indifference. He had built his own life, and like the mystic thinkers he studied, he was the personification of calm.

His mother (my paternal grandmother), Anna Mae (Conger) (Bacon) Richmond (1902-2000), on the other hand, was not the personification of calm. At the mere hint of the existence of her first husband, W. H. Bacon, Sr., her brow knitted, her eyes narrowed, and it appeared that steam was about to emanate from her ears. So, we continued to know nothing about the Bacon family history that we wanted to know about most.

My sister Linda would not be denied. In June 1977 she traveled from Georgia to my home near Boston for a week-long visit. In our advance planning by phone, she expressed an interest in an investigative mission to Connecticut to look up our "real" grandfather, Wesley H. Bacon, Sr. (1900-1980). I was not thrilled about my sister's idea. I did not like the idea of intruding on a stranger and probing around the scar tissue of his abandoned marriage and kid, especially when our father's only enduring memory of the man was that "he was always cleaning his guns."

But Linda Bacon --- less than five feet tall, and 100 pounds of muscle --- was a force of nature. She had even done the research --- long-distance and pre-internet --- to find out W. H. Bacon, Sr.'s address and telephone number. She was very persuasive, even to an older brother who had been around the block as a journalist covering the seamy side of life along with everything else. She did not even want to telephone the old fellow first, fearing that he would get suspicious. "Let's just go to Connecticut tomorrow," she reassured me. "Even if he's not home, we can still drive by and see what his house looks like. It'll be a fun drive." I reluctantly agreed.

On a mid-morning in June 1977, the two of us set out for Berlin, Conn. The trip would take just over two hours. During the drive we talked about what we wanted to find out, how we would phrase our questions, and how much we would reveal. We wanted to get some background about previous generations for future research, but we did not want to give the guy the satisfaction --- or perhaps the horror --- of knowing that we were his grandchildren.

And of course, we did not want to get him riled up about the past. So, we decided to be very oblique. We decided that we would introduce ourselves in a very general way as doing broad research on the Bacon family . Upon arriving in Berlin, Conn., in the early afternoon, we

Reg Bacon, Cont'd...

did a few reconnaissance circuits of the neighborhood, and even passed the house twice, so we could make a very general reading of his social, cultural, and economic situation before calling him on the telephone. (Despite all my sister's bravado, I got the job of talking our way into the guy's life.)

When I called (... from a roadside pay phone), a woman answered. Okay, that's a good sign, I thought. The guy was probably not an eccentric hermit or unpredictable sociopath. I asked to speak with Wesley Bacon, and she put him on the phone. "Hello, my name is Reginald Bacon, and my sister and I are in the area doing some research on the Bacon family," I said. "We were wondering if it would be okay to drop by and speak with you very briefly about what you remember about earlier generations of the Bacon family in the area. We would be happy to come by anytime this afternoon for just a few minutes, at your convenience."

This will go nowhere, I thought. He probably thinks I'm nuts. "That's fine. Come by anytime. I'll be here," he said firmly without any hesitation. I was pleased, and shocked. "We could probably be there in a half-hour," I said, even though we were just five minutes away. "Would 1:30 be okay?" "That's fine," he said, and we hung up.

We were on the spot now. Linda and I pulled up in front of the house and we walked to the front door. A pleasant-faced woman, probably in her late 60s, met us at the front door and welcomed us in. She called out "Wesley!" and said he would be right in. Two seconds later Wesley H. Bacon, Sr. was walking into the living room on crutches, one leg amputated above the knee. (We later learned that this was a consequence of diabetes.) His striking resemblance to our father took us by surprise, but of course we had to restrain ourselves at that moment. The facial bone structure, the hairline, the hair, and the eyes, looked so much like our father that it was spooky. (See the comparative photos on page 12.)

The pleasant-faced woman welcomed us into the living room and Linda, and I took seats on the couch, while Wesley Sr. settled into his chair. Thank goodness for the welcoming and chatty woman, whoever she was. Wesley Sr. appeared to be the taciturn Yankee type, and she greased the bearings of conversation. At the time Linda and I had no idea whether she was his wife, sister, friend, caretaker, or the mother of a half-dozen of his children. So, despite her openness, we did not want to risk spilling the beans about our father, Wesley Sr.'s child, born in 1922, about whom she may have known nothing.

When I restated my interest in earlier generations of the Bacon family, the taciturn Yankee got on a roll, telling me that the family was from Middletown, Conn., to the south, but that more recent generations had lived in New Britain. He told me his father's name was Frank Hubert Bacon (1849-1890) and his mother's name was Grace Clark (1874-1976). His knowledge of the family did not appear to go back beyond his grandfather, Frank A. Bacon (1875-1956) of New Britain, who was born in Middletown. I jotted down information as fast as I could in a tiny notebook.

While Wesley Sr. was reciting what he knew with pride, the pleasant lady was carrying in tea and cookies on a tray. Then she joined in on the conversation, as she seemed interested in the subject of family history. After 30 minutes, not wanting to overstay our hosts' hospitality, Linda and I thanked them for taking the time for us on such short notice. But the pleasant-faced lady would not let us get off the couch without telling us how we could find out more about the Bacon family. She strongly suggested that we go to Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown, just a few miles away. She said the library was devoted to genealogy, and it held information on all the early families of the area. She said the librarians there would be helpful and would put us on the right track. She seemed to know quite a bit about the library --- she gave us directions and said "They're open today until five o'clock. You could get there before they close."

We thanked them both, shook hands, and we were on our way. When we got in the car, Linda could hardly contain herself. "We did it!" she exclaimed. "Did you see how much he looked like Dad?!?" We compared our observations as we drove away. We were both glad that the pleasant and welcoming woman was there. By the time we left we felt fairly certain she was his wife. We were also glad to get some information useful for future family research without giving our father's dead-beat dad any confirmation that we were his grandchildren. It may sound odd, but he didn't ask, and we didn't tell.

The afternoon was still comparatively young, so Linda and I decided to do just as the supposed "Mrs. Bacon" suggested: Make a visit to Godfrey Library in Middletown, the private library devoted to genealogy. In retrospect, those days I thought genealogy was the pursuit of eccentric old ladies desperate to find a connection to royalty, or of pompous old guys who like to brag about being related to a famous general. But Linda and I were now at a genealogy library, not to find bragging rights, but instead to find the "nobodies" in a previously unknown family line.

We walked in about 3 p.m. and told the librarian we were interested in connecting the two Bacon ancestors, revealed to us just an hour before, with the earlier Bacon generations in Middletown. She sat us down at a table, brought us a small stack of books, and we dug in.

A few minutes later she came in lugging a book as fat as an unabridged dictionary. It was the *Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County, Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens, and of Many of the Early Settled Families, Illustrated*.

"You might find something of interest in this," she said, lowering the book to the table with a thud. I went to the index. There were multiple listings for biographical sketches of men with the Bacon surname. Time was growing short before closing, so we skimmed through the sketches like speed-readers.

We hit the jackpot in a lengthy and glowing sketch for Middletown mariner Capt. Charles Bacon (1815-1902), which among the information about his five children and their

Reg Bacon, Cont'd...

wives, listed “Frank, born February 6, 1849, married Ida Westover. He died in New Britain, where he was foreman in Russell & Erwin’s Brass Foundry for many years.”

This same biographical sketch of Capt. Charles Bacon, who we determined to be our 3rd-great-grandfather, listed all seven generations of this Bacon line back to Nathaniel Bacon (1630-1705), one of the earliest settlers in Middletown in 1650. I scribbled my notes as fast as I could, and we thanked the librarian profusely, with a vow to return in the future. What a day! We met our real paternal grandfather for the first time. We gathered from him some family information. Then, at the genealogy library, our “brick walls” tumbled before us as easily as a row of dominoes. In just one day we had gone from knowing next-to-nothing about the Bacon family line, to knowing all the generations back to the immigrant ancestor.

Our drive from Connecticut back to Massachusetts could have been powered by our exhilaration alone. We had a good story to tell, but for the most part we kept it to ourselves. Not wanting to upset any apple-carts, our visit to W. H. Bacon, Sr. was never revealed to our father ... and certainly not to our grandmother.

In the next few years, when my travels brought me near Middletown, I made research detours to Godfrey Library to verify and expand on the genealogical discoveries. Research revealed that generations of my Bacon family line throughout 18th and 19th centuries Middletown were shipmasters and mariners. Then about 1870, Frank A. Bacon changed course and moved nine miles north to New Britain, Conn., where he became a craftsman and molder of ornamental brass. The next generations remained in the hardware industry, until my grandfather, 8th-grade educated W. H. Bacon, Sr., settled into a long career with the Connecticut Power & Light Co.

But despite tracking down the history, trades, crafts, aptitudes, and specialties of previous generations, to this day there is still no clear answer to my sister’s “nature or nurture” question about our father. In this imperfect analysis, the “wild card” may be in the undocumented talents, aptitudes, proclivities, and influences of all the *mothers* in the family line. In my view, my father’s singular spark was the product of both nature and nurture ... and his own free will.

The genealogical discoveries in Middletown more than 40 years ago combined with my journalist’s internalized curiosity to spur a journey still not finished. Along the way in my performance career I had become a scholar of early 20th-century vaudeville and circus. So, when my “shelf life” as an aging acrobat grew short, I went back to graduate school to earn credentials in the history and museum field and remain engaged in the profession today.

In 2001 I learned of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants (SMFSD) and determined that I am descended from about half of the individuals on the qualifying list for membership. I lurked on the periphery for one day of a three-day meeting that year and joined a few months later. I attended the Triennial Meeting in 2003, and in 2005 assumed editorship of *The Middler*. In 2007, I compiled the content for the SMFSD website, figuring that with so much of my own research buttoned-up, I could help facilitate the discoveries of others.

Back in 2003, during some late-night internet sleuthing, I stumbled onto the obituary of the "pleasant-faced woman" who directed my sister and me to Godfrey Library in 1977. The obituary in the *Hartford Courant* of July 24, 2003 began as follows: "Hildur (Claudelin) (Morse) Bacon, 94, of Kensington, died Wednesday, July 23, at New Britain General Hospital. She was predeceased by two husbands, Roger Morse in 1963 and Wesley Bacon in 1980." More than 25 years later, I had hit the jackpot again. From information in the obituary I contacted Hildur's two daughters from her first marriage. Excited emails flew back-and-forth. The first marriage of W. H. Bacon, Sr. --- and the existence of a son (i.e. my father) --- was completely unknown to the family.

It turns out that after the divorce from my grandmother in 1930, W. H. Bacon, Sr. married again in 1934. There were no children, and after his second wife's death in 1965, later that same year he married Hildur, then a 56-year-old widow with two young-adult daughters at home. I learned that my father's "dead-beat dad," although known to sometimes be ill-tempered and inflexible, had a long and stable career, was active in numerous charitable organizations --- including as a Boy Scout leader --- and was admired by friends and neighbors.

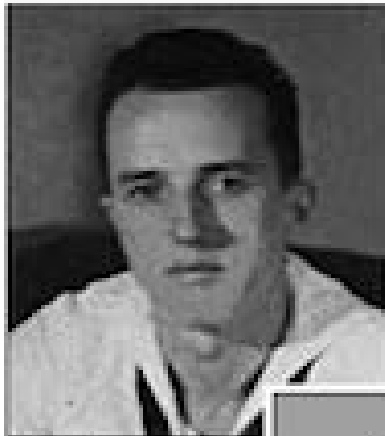
In September 2003, on one day of the SMFSD Triennial Meeting in Connecticut, I arranged to meet with one of the daughters. She was about my age, and genealogically, my "step-aunt." At this happy meeting she gifted me with a treasure-trove of Bacon family photos from the late 19th century. She told me that her mother, Hildur, was into genealogy big-time, and was always visiting old cemeteries. No wonder she seemed intimately acquainted with Godfrey Library back in 1977.

So, as you can see, history and genealogy research can lead one down some interesting and unpredictable paths. May this narrative prompt *you* to share the story of your own research meanderings in future issues of *The Middler*.

About the author: Reginald W. Bacon, the former editor of *The Middler*, is a museum/history professional with specialties in 17th and 18th centuries New England architecture and domestic life --- and early 20th-century vaudeville and circus. He is the author of a dozen books on varied history topics. Of particular relevance to Middletown history and genealogy researchers are *Early Families of Middletown, Conn., Vol. I: 1650-1654* (2012) and *The Micro-Historian's Guide to Research, Evidence, & Conclusions: Step-by-Step Research Planning & Execution* (2018).

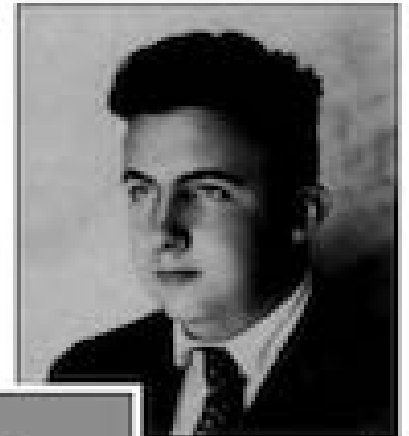
Much of the content in this article is excerpted and abridged from a chapter entitled "Nature or Nurture: The Search for 'The Spark'," in *The Wesley H. Bacon Reader: Pursuits, Passions, & Peregrinations of a 20th-Century Autodidact* (2015), a compilation of Wesley H. Bacon's own memoirs of life at sea, short stories, scripts, stage repertoire, and mystical aphorisms, with career profiles and a biographical sketch by the compiler, R. W. Bacon. Learn more about these books and others at the publisher's website, www.VarietyArtsPress.com.

Comparative Photos of Wesley H Bacon II, and Wesley H. Bacon I, as they aged.



▲ A young Wesley H. Bacon II.

When Linda and I saw our grandfather for the first time, the close resemblance to our father was spooky. He was older and not as heavy as in the photo at the lower right, so the similarity of the facial bone structure was more evident.



A young ▲ Wesley H. Bacon I.



Wesley H. Bacon II at age 65. ▶



Wesley H. Bacon I at age 65. ◀

Above center description:

"When Linda and I saw our grandfather for the first time, the close resemblance to our father was spooky. He was older and not as heavy as in the photo at the lower right; so, the similarity of the facial bone structure was more evident."

"True patriotism springs from a belief in the dignity of the individual, freedom and equality not only for Americans, but for all people on earth, universal brotherhood and good will, and a constant and earnest striving toward the principles and ideals on which this country was founded."

~ Eleanor Roosevelt ~

Farmer	Nathaniel Bacon (1630-1706) b. Bramford, Suffolk, England	M. 1689: Ann Miller (1636-1660); 10 children M2 (1682): Elizabeth Pierpont (1661-1697); 1 child
Farmer	John Bacon (1662-1732) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1689: Sarah Wetmore (1664-1698) 7 children
Farmer	John Bacon (1695-1781) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1719: Sarah White (1696-1771) 11 children
Farmer, Militia Captain; Broker of Rigging, Equipment, & Supplies for the Maritime Trade	Capt. Joseph Bacon (1728-1785) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1785: Rhoda Plumb (1765-1836) 8 children
Shipmaster, West Indies Trade & Coastal Schooner Trade; Import Customs Inspector	Capt. Isaac Bacon (1766-1856) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1785: Dorothy Stow (1765-1836) 13 children
Cabinetmaker, Farmer, Horse Team-and-Wagon Trucker	Amasa Bacon (1788-1842) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. c. 1814: Betsey Foster (1785-1840) 7 children
Shipmaster, West Indies Trade & Coastal Schooner Trade; Brownstone Transport	Capt. Charles Bacon (1815-1902) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1839: Eunice Bridgham (1816-1851) 5 children
Ornamental Brass Molder & Foreman, Russell & Erwin Co.	Frank A. Bacon (1849-1890) b. Middletown, Conn.	M. 1869: Ida May Westover (1851-1912) 5 children
Hardware Packer & Inspector, Russell & Erwin Co., Corbin Co., New Britain Machine, & Stanley Works	Frank H. Bacon (1876-1956) b. New Britain, Conn.	M. 1897: Grace E. Clark (1874-1976) 7 children
Lineman & Inspector Connecticut Light & Power Co.	Wesley H. Bacon I (1901-1980) b. New Britain, Conn.	M2(1930): Sadie Bittner (1897-1965) M3(1965): Hildur (Claudelin) Morse (1909-2003)
Radio Telegrapher, U.S. Navy WWII; Radio Officer, Merchant Ships; Performer; Sleight-of-Hand & Escape Artist	Wesley H. Bacon II (1922-2001) b. New Britain, Conn.	Aircraft Dispatcher, Northeast & Delta Airlines; Aerobatic Aviator; M. 1948: Barbara Weeks (1928-2003); 3 children



Wesley H. Bacon in Athens, Greece, 1946

Reg Bacon's 11th generation English lineage starting in 1630 with the birth of *Nathaniel Bacon*, (1630 - 1706) in Bramford, Suffolk, England, who had eleven children with Ann Miller, and one child with 2nd wife Elizabeth Pierpont.

INTRODUCING MEMBER KITTY RYAN

Kitty joined SMFSD in 2015 and attended the triennial meeting that year. She also came to our 2018 meeting where she volunteered to serve as editor for this issue of *The Middler*. Kitty and SMFSD president Marge Pierson met through Ancestry because of their shared heredity. Kitty is Marge's third cousin twice removed.



Kitty Ryan (nee Katherine Doolittle May)

by Kitty Ryan

Here's little bit about my background. My parents moved to Miami from their hometown of Jersey Shore in 1948. Dad was employed in Miami at Eastern Airlines as a sheet metal design engineer. He had enlisted in the Army Air Corps after graduating high school in 1934 and was assigned to Langley field. After an honorable discharge he took a train across country to San Diego, California. He lived with his father's sister Mary and her husband while attending Ryan Aeronautical Technical School.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, dad was already working at Consolidated Voltee, a precursor to Lockheed-Martin in San Diego. On Monday morning December 8, Dad reported to work and told his employer he needed to go and report for duty, as he was in the Army reserves. His employer made a few phone calls and told dad he was assigned state-side as his skills were needed to build aircraft. After the war dad returned home to Jersey Shore and met mother in their hometown.

I am the eldest of their four children born in Miami, Florida. Mother, Mary Louise "Mitzi" Baur, was really wonderful at concocting fun plans for outings at the beach and scavenger hunts at parks. She was very resourceful, a child of the depression, so nothing went to waste. On one particular outing to the beach, dad suggested we drive to Bahia Mar on Fort Lauderdale Beach. It was a long drive in those days as there were no highways then. We drove up US1 then crossed over the intercoastal bridge to get to the beaches. We kids made for the beach with dad, splashing and just having a ball. Meanwhile mother was unloading the picnic items. When looking through the bags that carried the food from home, she realized she had forgotten the paper plates! Not to worry... she spied a Sea Grape Tree near our picnic table. Sea Grape leaves are somewhat thick, non-toxic, deep green in color; the average size of the leaves was almost the same size as the paper plates.

When we ran back to the picnic table, mother had the table set... and a stack of Sea Grape leaves for our plates. She cheerfully dished up our "plates" with baked beans and fried

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chicken from home (yes, the leaves held up under this food.) South Florida was a very different place in the 50s... a paradise of warm weather, palm trees swaying in the tropical breezes which drifted at night into our open bedroom windows.

After High School, I enrolled in a local State College. Initially I was going for a Teaching degree. As an elective I chose Interior Design. The professor saw that I hadn't taken the first semester course, after some mix-up in registering. He said he would allow me to stay but if my work was not up to snuff, I could drop the class with no retributions by the second week of the semester. Reviewing my first project, he admired how I took to drawing with multiple vanishing points of buildings. I had taken similar classes while in high school, and so had been well prepared by one of my favorite high school teachers, Miss Long, who taught art and art history. After four college semesters close to home, I enrolled in the University of South Florida in Tampa. After graduating from the USF with a double degree in Fine Arts and Art Education K-12, I returned to Miami. Unfortunately, schools in South Florida weren't hiring art or music teachers.

Disappointed, I took a job as an entry level paste up artist in the Graphics Art Department for Dukane Press under the supervision of Bill Johnson, Art Director. Business slowed at the printing company and I followed Bill Johnson when he took an art director's position at a small advertising agency in North Miami. When incoming work was slow there, the owner of the agency suggested I meet a photo retoucher/artist who was soon to retire to Vero Beach, FL. That first lesson with the retoucher Curtis McMichael, at his art studio above the garage at his Coconut Grove home, was an amazing learning experience. This was such a great opportunity that led to further and varied projects for me.

In "the old days" we used water-based paints, and an airbrush with a thin metal needle. A very sensitive part of the airbrush was the "pin" inserted to control the smooth flow of paint. If the needle was bent or the tip was slightly damaged it must be replaced, or the paint would splatter all over your work. The propellant for the airbrush, a cylindrical tank of compressed air that was attached to a hose, that was attached to the airbrush to dispense the flow of paint. Retouching was delicate with real paint; you had to have the right touch on the action with your forefinger to manage and control the flow of paint.

Near my home in North Miami, was a photo supply store. I dropped off my card with the manager and let him know I was available for retouching and lived nearby. The store manager called a few weeks later for a possible retouching job. When I arrived at the store, he had two duplicate black and white photos of a military officer decked out in his uniform and hat. The photo was to be used in a book he was writing. I recognized his face immediately; it was Frank Sturgis one of the Watergate burglars.

I was just about 23 years old at that time and the scary Watergate investigation was in the newspaper and television every day. During that time, I was driving a VW Bug with a bumper sticker that read: "*Nixon is a COX Sacker.*" One day I was waiting for a light to change, a man in the car behind me was tooting his horn and waving at me. I was worried about the

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bumper sticker and rolled up my window. He jumped from his car... I thought oh no! I offended someone, and he was approaching the driver's side window. To my relief, the man wanted to know where I bought the bumper sticker, as he wanted one also!

When I finished retouching the Sturgis photo, the long tear on his hat and down his jaw line was perfectly eliminated. I returned to the store with the retouched photograph. The manager was looking over the work I had done when yes, you guessed it, Frank Sturgis walked in the door and made his way to the back of the store where the manager was examining the photo that had been retouched. I stepped back and he didn't notice me; gratefully, the store manager didn't indicate that I was the retoucher. Sturgis was creepy; there was something about his lizard-like eyes and cold blooded indifference.

During this time, my first husband (it is fun to say that, even though I have not remarried) was accepted to the University of Miami law school. I needed a full-time job with benefits, as my husband had quit his job as a firefighter-paramedic to become a full-time law student. I then applied to Eastern Airlines as an advertising artist (might as well keep it in the family... Dad retired after 32 years at Eastern). I went through a series of applications and psychological tests to see what kind of thinking processes I had, how I would relate to people, co-workers and customers. One of the application questions was, "What languages other than English are you fluent in?" I pondered the question. True, I did speak conversational Spanish pretty well but was not fluent. However, this was my chance at being employed full time, so I put a line through fluently and wrote "*some*".

I received a post card from Eastern's personnel department after the test results came in. I was to report for the interview at 9AM. It was a really cold windy day in January, and I had to walk four long city blocks to the building. The woman who had interviewed me before the testing brought me into her office. She eyed my slacks and said, "You were supposed to wear a dress as it is required for the interview". Taken back, I replied that it is so cold and windy today and these are warmest things I have to wear. Then as a sign of the times, she asked me to roll up my slacks and turn around. She examined my legs and said I could sit down. She then went into the results of my 600-question test. She commented that in her experience no one had ever scored as high as I did. I recalled that I could see there was pattern to the questions to trip you up. For instance, "Would you rather be a king or a pawn?" Then later the same kind of question was posed differently regarding seeing myself being a leader or follower. I had only two mistakes. The interviewer gave me more information about the next step; I was to go meet Eastern's station manager at the airport.

Meanwhile I bought a book, "Spanish for the Airline Employee." I was practicing Spanish after dinner with a woman friend from Puerto Rico in advance of my interview with the station manager. I thought, "They haven't tested my Spanish yet, so this is the BIG interview."

I was ready and anxious for the interview with the station manager. I had been seated in the waiting room only a short time when the inner door opened. I thought the man was definitely a native Spanish speaker as he was very tan, with dark hair. I stood, he put his hand

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out to greet me and I said in Spanish it was a great honor to meet him. Surprisingly, he laughed at my speaking Spanish. His nice warm response was, "Oh, I don't speak Spanish. That is why *we need you!*"

For the next two years I worked at EAL/MIA in the art department laying out slides to be shown on a projector promoting Eastern to Travel Agents. Afterward, I would drive to the airport at 5PM to begin my shift as a Ground Hostess. I soon learned that the art department was being dismantled. The art director suggested I apply for a full-time position as a flight attendant. His daughter was a flight attendant, and knew the company was hiring more service personnel. This was a sort of lateral employee shuffle from my Ground Hostess position. As a current employee I could wait for a MIA based class to begin. On the first day, we were given a "homework" assignment; we were to memorize all the station and airport codes where Eastern flew and expect a test the next morning. Class started at 7AM, known as 0700 in the aeronautical and shipping trades. From then on, we used the 24-hour system for time. Being designated as a Spanish qualified flight attendant I was able to sign up for trips to countries where Spanish was spoken. The Caribbean and Mexico flights were usually taken by the senior flight attendants. I was assigned to replace the senior Spanish qualified girls when they had their vacations or days off, a much-desired position.

There were many interesting, dramatic occasions and situations while I worked as a flight attendant and there are many misconceptions of what our job was really about. Our main responsibility was to save lives in case of a crash or water landing. Other times, in the beginning while I was on probation (new hires had six months' probation), they would call me up to replace a sick employee or many times they would send me throughout the system by myself to meet up with crews to help serve meals and beverages. The In-flight schedulers could call you up at any time and we had to be at the check-in window within one hour of their call. I had heard of some flight attendants sleeping in their uniform so they wouldn't be late. I admit I did sleep in my uniform on occasion.

After my husband finished law school and took office space with another attorney, we planned to start a family. After our daughter Bridget was born, I resigned from Eastern.

The next chapter in my life was purchasing a small local well-established (1934) liquor store as the owner. The store was on Las Olas Boulevard and it had seen its glory days. With the advent of air-conditioned shopping centers, it looked like a boulevard of broken dreams. There was a 75% vacancy on the boulevard when I identified and sought the storefront that would become well known as a place to go for great music and also a friendly local hangout.

Initially the jazz music idea was objected to by my manager, customers and others. This attitude was strange to me. I really wanted to give it a go and I did. As the tourist season slowed after Easter, Las Olas Boulevard was virtually vacant. Some said they you could roll a bowling ball down the boulevard without the fear of hitting someone. Drivers would speed through the boulevard to get to the beaches, day and night.

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Interestingly enough, almost all the objections to bringing a Jazz Club with a sidewalk cafe came from the government. *No surprise there.* I had to deal with the State of Florida, local Board of Adjustment, and on it went. A county health official came by and said I couldn't have people eating outside where flies would be a health problem. I then asked if the health department supervised all the outdoor parks, and could give me something in writing about their fly policy outdoors at public parks. Either he was bluffing or didn't want to get into it with me. He did not return.

The slowest months for retail sales were June and September. I decided to have live music on the 3rd Saturday night in June, bound to catch some free advertising from the passing traffic. I made a sandwich style street sign painted red with white lettering on both sides; Live Jazz Tonight! Without a budget for advertising, I was barely getting by. The previous Saturday night our sales had been only \$280; that did it! I ignored the opinions of others and started out establishing the ONLY legal sidewalk dining cafe in the county, and it was a fight. Across street from O'Hara's was a well-established fancy fur store, named "A. Martin Fur Shop". The owners were living illegally above the store. Mrs. Martin complained many times to me and to the police about excessive noise from the band and customers sitting under the sidewalk cafe's awning enjoying the evening. (I think she was jealous that she couldn't be a part of the fun.)

I had several "visits" from the police after the music started at 9 PM. They would arrive with their lights flashing, parking two or more squad cars in front, and the two left wheels of their automobiles were up on the sidewalk. Customers were leaving as a result of the police presence. The police thought the best way to stop the music was threatening to confiscate the band's instruments. I am sure Mrs. Martin must have been looking out her window at the drama she was creating. Something had to change.

One of my patrons was an attorney who had lived in Fort Lauderdale long enough to recall that his father had owned the building in question. His father was an attorney who did business from the storefront. The customer said the building was probably zoned B-2 for business only.

The next thing I did was to go to Building and Zoning to prove or disprove the man's recollection of his father's law office building. Hopefully, a document of some sort existed. The Building and Zoning supervisor surely wanted to discourage me, but he didn't. I spoke to him, trying to explain that people were living illegally on the second floor and asking whether the building was zoned residential or business. He told me, "Before I could go any further, I would need a written letter requesting the file." I asked for a sheet of paper, wrote my request and handed it back to him. Surprised at my quick thinking, the supervisor realized he might as well deal with my request; it was clear I wasn't leaving empty handed. He said, "Okay, let's go look in the microfiche films in the repository. He found the information I needed and wrote me the letter that I would show to the police officer. The officer happened

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to be working a security detail at night as well as his day job with the city code enforcement department. I felt like I hit the lottery!

The police officer returned the next day and told me the calls were coming from one phone number (I knew that; however, it was a plus that he agreed) and the Martins were living there illegally. In addition, the police officer told me that he had entered into the City's 911 phone system a request to ignore any calls from that number complaining about my business. When appropriate to speak to the officer I informed him that I had a letter from the city building and zoning department that would clear this up. During that time, I was getting multiple phone calls from Mrs. Martin every night.

One night the code enforcement officer and a female partner stopped in front of the fur store because Mrs. Martin was still calling. The officer rang their doorbell, and the Martins came downstairs in their pajamas, using a separate entrance to the apartment with a decorative iron gate. The Martins thought the police were coming to solve the noise problem. *Au contraire!* Mrs. Martin went after the female officer, calling her a drunk and one of my best customers. That confrontation ended the phone calls. The code enforcement officer had researched their surname and learned that she and her husband owned a condo on Fort Lauderdale beach that was rented by a tenant. After the Martins got over their initial shock at this turn of events, the male officer responded to them. It's your decision to move out of this building into your condo on the beach or you can stop calling the police and harassing Mrs. Ryan at O'Hara's. She would be within her rights to have you removed.

Back to the fight with the local state beverage department for the sidewalk café... In Miami-Dade County, Coconut Grove was very hip, and they had tables and chairs reaching to the edge of the streets, and on public property, serving beverages and food. Molly Maguire, my friend and real estate agent, was interested in what was happening with my business. I had related to her my difficulties with the beverage agents. Molly suggested getting in touch with her son who worked as a lobbyist in Tallahassee... perhaps he could help. Her son did call the next day and I told him about the difficulties with the local beverage department in Plantation. He listened and said he would get back to me.

Later the next day in my office, I answered the phone. It was the Chief of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division, Leonard Ivy for the State of Florida calling. Mr. Ivy said, "Darlin', what are those boys in Plantation doing to you?" First, I thanked him for calling me regarding this problem. I then responded that the agents had threatened me with arrest. "All I want to do is have a sidewalk cafe like the ones in Coconut Grove." Mr. Ivy asked me to send him a simple drawing of the limits of the sidewalk cafe in relation to the sidewalk and the private property belonging to my landlord; I was finally successfully operating outside the building under the awning with the help of "darlin' Mr. Ivy".

That memorable third Saturday night in June 1989 when I started to have live music was the beginning of a 20-year success story. I opened with a jazz trio on that last Saturday night in June. We took in about \$1700 dollars, the band cost \$150, and the bartenders were paid a

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base \$2.10/hr. as tipped employees. I was the first waitress at O'Hara's. It was a tough crowd who felt like they were doing me a favor by their "jazzy" presence. They would arrive early before the band set up and block tables for their friends. I waited until they were settled in their tables and approached to take their beverage orders. I was met with a defiant attitude regarding beverages "You can't make me drink alcohol!" Very surprised and taken aback, I assured them we had non-alcoholic choices. That problem was solved by putting out table tents listing choices of our non-alcoholic beverages and a two-drink minimum.

Eventually I started to add a variety of music styles. It is a fact that Jazz is popular with only 1% of our population. Classic rock n' roll, blues and country music are so much more popular and make up the rest of the 100%. This was confirmed to be true by our growing attendance as more people learned we were adding a variety of music styles besides jazz.

Within a year I was presenting a variety of live music every night and twice on Sundays. I decided to have Big Bands on Sunday afternoons, a great niche especially for elderly people who swayed and danced to the music from their youth and did not like to drive after dark.

How could I afford to hire big bands that had as many as 18-24 musicians? Good question! I talked to the band leaders and suggested they use our venue as a practice session on Sunday afternoons. I knew the musicians really wanted to perform in front of a live audience and keep their bands working. We offered a place to which they could invite prospective party planners and others who wanted to see what the bands were like in person. Also, this was an opportunity for them to introduce new music and new performers.

Practice sessions are usually unpaid. I made fair arrangements with the band leaders to pay each musician \$30 plus non-alcoholic beverages. In addition, these performances gave our customers who didn't usually drop in on a Sunday afternoon a glimpse of how different we were from other venues. We had a NO COVER charge policy, which frustrated our competition as they saw their patrons slip away.

The name of my business was *O'Hara's Pub*. A few years later I renamed it the "*World Famous O'Hara's Jazz & Blues Café*." We were really that well known. I would occasionally receive letters from people who had visited O'Hara's from another part of our country.

We received a lot of unexpected free advertising as the Lifestyle and Music Scene reporters would pick up a story about O'Hara's musical attractions written by another reporter and would build on it. In addition, the timing was perfect for "Jazz Light" as WLVE (Love 94) radio station was very popular among the 30 to 60 crowd. The duo, David Caprita and JoAnn Rice, carried on a lively banter between songs and which would lead into how much fun they had at O'Hara's, the only live music scene. This went on for three years, before the station was absorbed by a larger company. During the time the radio station remained we sure did get a lot of new fans all over South Florida and beyond.

At times we had surprise visits from very popular musicians. We had a head's up from Morrison's drummer who had come the previous night to check us out. He told me that Van Morrison would like to stop in but was concerned for their privacy. Morrison showed up the

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next night with his entourage including Dion, wearing a NY baseball cap; they joined our band on stage and had great fun improvising. Grover Washington, Jr. stopped in one evening after his show at the Broward Center; Grover arrived about 11:30 with his sax and jumped in with the musicians on stage and they played through their break until almost 2AM.

George Benson was one of the first major musical stars who dropped in. Benson and our band leader Dr. Lonnie Smith (Downbeat Magazine organist of the year, many times over) made several records together in Benson's recording studio at his home in New Jersey. In addition, the sound technicians at the Performing Arts Center would recommend O'Hara's to traveling musicians as a place to hang out after their show, as we were close by and we had a swinging band every night.

Three recent inventions had a big debut at the **Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876**. Early two wheelers were on display, although the first "safety bikes" would not be designed until 1885. The basic shape of bicycles has changed little from that time on. Alexander Graham Bell received a patent for his telephone in 1876. The first commercial typewriter had been manufactured in 1874. Typewriters would become common office equipment during the 1880s. Connecticut was becoming a manufacturing center for consumer goods such as these.



An advertisement for Columbia bicycles, the pay station -- an early version of the pay phone -- and Underwood typewriters.

“We are called the nation of inventors. And we are. We could still claim that title and wear its loftiest honors if we had stopped with the first thing we ever invented, which was human liberty.”

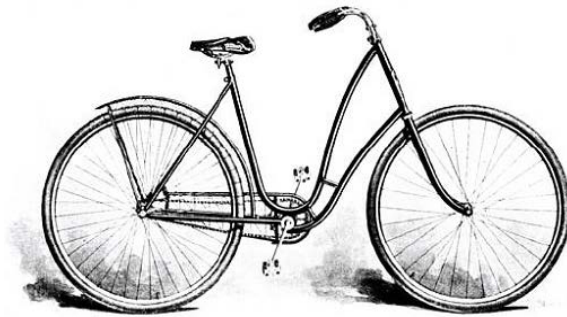
~ Mark Twain ~

The Rebirth of the Wheel Factory

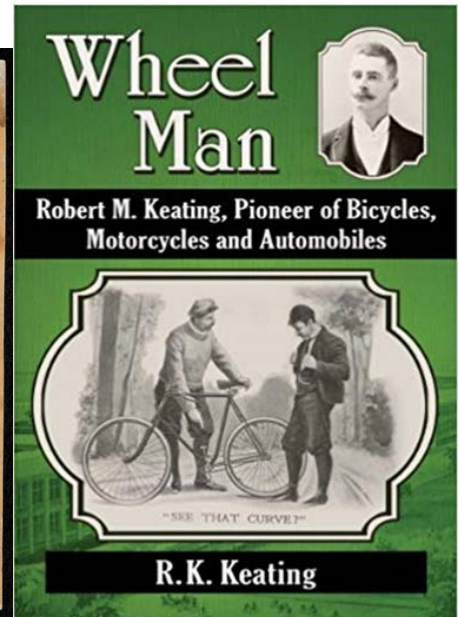
by Kitty Ryan and Marge Piersen

Bicycles, Motor Vehicles, & Typewriters Manufactured in Middletown

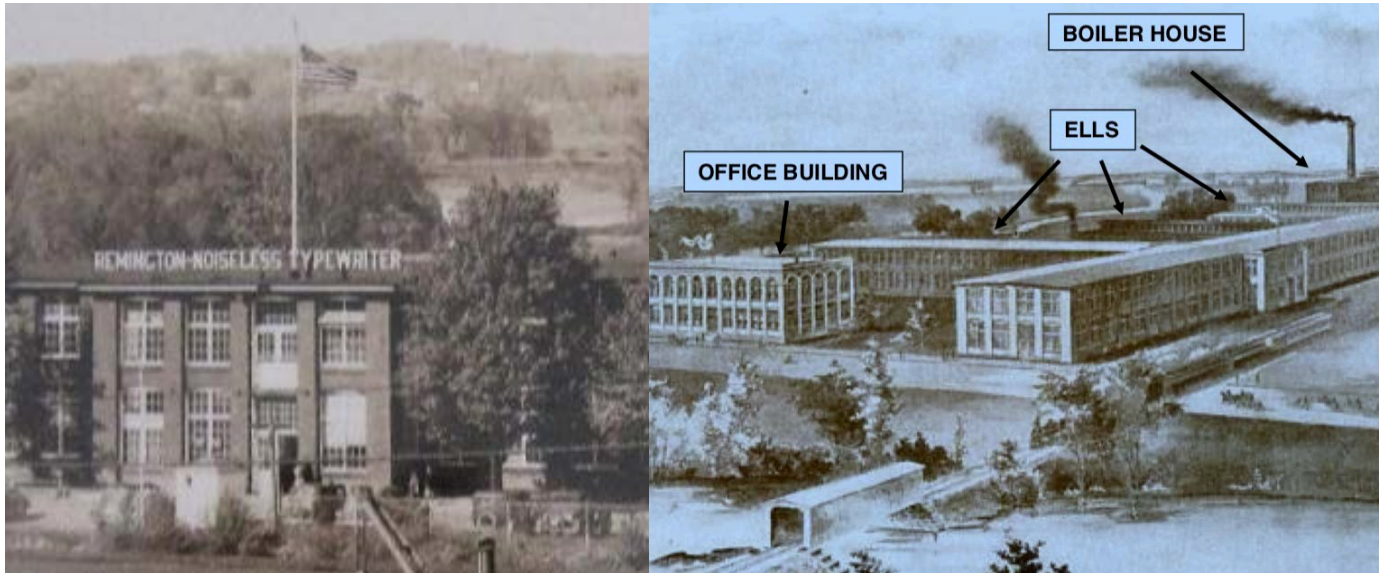
As 1896 ended, inventor Robert H. Keating (1862-1922) opened a bicycle factory at 180 Johnson Street, Middletown, which would continue to house various manufacturing operations through at least the 1970s. During his lifetime Mr. Keating amassed 50 patents including shaving devices (safety razors), several velocipedes, an electric igniter for an explosive engine, a motor bike, arm chairs, rotating lunchroom stools, and flushing valves including those used in "water closets." His companies included in consecutive order the Keating Wheel Company (bicycles), Keating Wheel and Auto Company, Keating Motor Cycle Company, and Keating Valve Company. As a young man Robert Keating (then known as Edward) was a minor league star. In 1887 he pitched one game for Baltimore in the American Association, lost the game, and then disappeared from major league baseball. However, on November 27, 1886, he had obtained patent 357,676 for a "Home-Base for Game of Base-Ball." His rubber base brought a big improvement in safety over earlier games using bases made out of iron, stone, or wood.



The Keating "Grand Bicycle" Model 41



Keating Factory Through the Years



Left: Photograph of Eisenhuth Compound from Middlesex Historical Society, Middletown, Connecticut

Right: Lithograph from an early Keating Wheel Co. publication

Both found in City of Middletown doc: Remington Rand Historical Documentation Report prepared by Historical Perspectives

Robert M. Keating helped design his modern factory which would start up on the last day of 1896. The factory floors were unusually narrow (50 feet wide) with wide banks of tall windows to allow light and ventilation. This was the first factory in the country designed specifically to run on electric power rather than by waterwheel, flumes, or steam. The power was generated in Keating's own electric power plant using motors and generators deigned by Edison's new General Electric Company.

Previously a superintendent at Warwick Cycle in Springfield, Keating started his own business in Westfield, MA where he employed ten men. In 1891, a reorganized company moved to Holyoke, MA where it soon employed 300. When his intention to relocate and expand again become known, a number of cities and towns made him attractive propositions. Proximity to the river and a railroad line made the property in Middletown an ideal location.

Throughout the years, the buildings were converted many times to meet changing consumer demand. While Keating's bicycles were lighter and sturdier than many and sold well, the bicycle market was overcrowded. Between 1896 and 1903, 500 small companies consolidated into 100. In 1899 Keating switched the Johnson Street facility to producing "delivery autos" powered by an electric storage battery. Still in financial trouble, Keating Wheel and Auto Company (1899-1901) began building gas-powered motor cycles. His company is often said to have built the first motor cycle in our country.

Ultimately, unsuccessful with these endeavors, Keating was forced to sell his Middletown factory to the Eisenhuth Horseless Vehicle Company which operated there 1901-1907. Eisenhuth sold top of the line cars with brass fittings; for example, in 1904 a seven-passenger touring car with a very efficient engine was priced \$6000-8000! (In 1965 we

Wheel factory rebirth, cont'd...

purchased our Dodge Dart for \$2000.) Although it started to introduce less expensive models, the Eisenhuth company was put out of business by more affordable cars. It didn't help matters that accusations of mismanagement and fraud had plagued the company since before its arrival in Middletown.

The factory's next occupant was the Noiseless Typewriter Company 1909-1924. In those days a large number of typists were often seated in a large hall and the noise of so many machines had become a real problem for office workers. In 1912, according to the Toronto World, the 31-acre Middletown plant with up-to-date equipment produced an estimated 12,000 typewriters per year, with an expectation of tripling that output. But the company was dissolved because of financial difficulties.

Remington, a typewriter manufacturer in Ilion New York for 50 years, merged with the Noiseless company and continued production in Middletown. After various consolidations, it became the Remington Rand Corporation with a stated goal "to meet the needs of every typist in the world." Remington had been offering a portable typewriter since 1920; in 1931 it started producing a model that was both portable and noiseless.

In 1936, there was a labor strike at the plant and the National Guard was called out. Eventually Remington Rand closed the plant for several years.

When the plant reopened, the company started an electric division and in 1949 introduced the world's first business computer, the Remington Rand 409. During World War II both Remington Rand and Andover Kent Corporation had fulfilled major government contracts for various kinds of ammunition in these buildings. Remington Rand did both Research and Development and production. It produced camera equipment, including technology to guide rockets. Following World War II, the Remington Rand Office Machine Company produced office supplies, typewriter supplies, Univac equipment and microfilm, and more at their Middletown plant through the early 1970s. Thereafter, the property was sold to Unisys.

But, by the end of the twentieth century, these once modern and well-designed buildings were in disrepair.

Condition of the site in 1999 before Middletown took action:

- Absentee landlord
- Virtually no on-site management
- Drug sales, chop shops, pit bull breeding and resident prostitute
- Over 50 abandoned, stripped cars
- 21 tenants month to month verbal agreements, no real leases
- Most tenants engaged in some type of illegal or environmentally unfriendly activity.
- Over 120,000 sq. vacant
- Over 10 years delinquent on taxes, water and sanitation fees
- Antiquated electrical including 4 very large transformers full of PCB
- Inoperable dry sprinkler system throughout
- Sewer discharge directly into Coginchaug river
- Entire building unheated

- Not up to current Fire and Building codes
- Required renovations:
 - lead and asbestos removal,
 - new windows,
 - roof work
 - heating, plumbing, electrical
 - sprinkler system; and
 - every other building component.

Credit: William Warner, *Presentation on History of Remington Rand, City of Middletown document*

Remington Rand Buildings in the 1990s



Credit: William Warner, *Presentation on History of Remington Rand, City of Middletown document*

Middletown's Intervention and Renovation Process

In November 1999 the City of Middletown took possession of the property through strict foreclosure paying the owner \$250,000 and giving up back taxes.

City of Middletown Plan for this property:

- Vision – A safe, affordable center for small – mid-sized companies.
- Goal – consistently add value to create an economically viable property.

From the beginning and to this day, this revitalization and environmental cleanup project was a cooperative venture between government agencies at various levels.

Wheel factory rebirth, cont'd...

Examples:

- 1) DECD/CDBG funding was used to purchase the property.
- 2) (CT Department of Economic Community Development; federal Community Development Block Grant Program)
- 2) \$756,000 DECD grant for a new water line and extension of the sanitary sewer onto the property.
- 3 In 2002 "Unisys entered into a consent order with the Attorney General to clean up property to commercial/industrial standard."
- 4) The City received \$400,000 from the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to clean up non Unisys contamination

Credit for examples: William Warner, *Presentation on History of Remington Rand, City of Middletown document*

By 2009, the city had 17 stable tenants and grossed \$347,000 rental income. "A property that would have generated \$29,000 in taxes per year is now producing a net income after all expenses of \$137,000 per year," according to a slide presentation prepared for the city board by the city Director of Planning, Conservation, and Development. Profits will go to an Economic Development Fund. This was a substantial improvement from the run down and environmentally hazardous property that had produced little income in the late 1990s.

One of the Renovated Buildings



Credit: William Warner, *Presentation on History of Remington Rand, City of Middletown document*

Remington Rand Property Rebranded Robert M. Keating Historical Enterprise Park

In 2016 the City of Middletown officially renamed this redeveloped property the Robert M. Keating Historical Enterprise Park. Councilman Gerald Daley, then chairman of the economic development committee was quoted as saying the name was carefully chosen to capture both the historical significance and the innovations still to come. Plans were being made for a

Wheel factory rebirth, cont'd...

mini-museum near the entrance way.

An August, 2016 article in the Hartford Courant listed 25 tenants including a Crossfit gym, an eel farmer, a furniture builder, two breweries, a custom motorcycle shop, a solar power firm and a company that makes mail-sorting machines. ID mail and Greenskies Renewal Energy were listed as the anchor businesses.

In this same article Don Brutnell, Robert M. Keating's great nephew, thanked Gary Keating and his brothers Robert and Bryan Keating for their study of the "the Wheel Man's" inventions and for their work with the city board to preserve his legacy. "For example, as the Keating brothers point out, Robert M. Keating was so brilliant and ahead of his competition that he won patent infringement suits against both Harley-Davidson and Indian."

ADDITIONAL FUN CYCLING FACTS

- In 1890, when Keating started making bicycles, 27 companies were manufacturing bikes.
- In 1895, the Keating Wheel Co. gave away complimentary copies of sheet music entitled *Keating Wheel March*.
- Keating bicycles won many state and world records in then popular cross-country races.
- A Scientific American article from 1896 wrote of the bicycle: "As a social revolutionize it has never had an equal. It has put the human race on wheels, and has changed many of the most ordinary processes and methods of social life."
- Susan B. Anthony was quoted in a New York World interview, "I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world."
- An elevated bike path called the California Cycle way was built between Los Angeles and Pasadena in 1900.
- A new family business, again using the name "Keating Wheel Company," will soon be making bicycles using many of R. K. Keating's designs.
- Both this new business and the recently published "Wheel Man" book by R.K. Keating are the outcome of decades of family vacations spent searching for Keating memorabilia at old barns, vintage race tracks, and swap meets to recover the Keating story. Few details had been passed down through the family.

Source: Keating Wheel Co. website, <https://www.keatingwheelcompany.com>

MAIN SOURCES:

At the request of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and the Tourism/State Historic Preservation Office, the condition of the Remington Rand property was meticulously documented before remediation began. History of the site was also compiled. Two resulting slide presentations are the main sources of information for this article. Both can be accessed at <http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/215/Remington-Rand> Site accessed October 10, 2019

Remington Rand Historical Documentation Report-2010 (PDF)

Prepared for the City of Middletown, CT by Historical Perspectives, Inc. P.O. Box 3037 Westport, CT 06880 Primary Authors: Cece Saunders, RPA Faline & Schneiderman-Fox, RPA March, 2010

Power Point Presentation on History of Remington Rand (PPT)

by William Warner, AICP Director of Planning, Conservation and Development City of Middletown, CT

Wheel factory rebirth, cont'd...

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LOOKING BACK to the 2012 SMFSD TRIENNIAL MEETING

Photos by Marge Piersen



Augie French, Barb Stenberg, Barbara McCarthy, Reg Bacon Sue Welles, Don Brock, Hal Whitmore, Stan Wetmore

Our next meeting will be held in the fall of 2021.
We hope you will plan to join us. Bring your relatives
and spread the word to prospective members.

SMFSD Membership Information

If you descend from a pre-1700 settler, we welcome you to join us

The following are individuals (and presumably spouses & families) said to have settled in Middletown, Conn. before 1700. The list is from *The History of Middlesex County* (Henry Whittemore, Beers Co., 1884), derived in part from the *List of Householders & Proprietors*, Middletown, March 22, 1670. **Names in boldface** are the original 1650-54 settlers. **NB!** *This list is known to be incomplete!* If you descend from a pre-1700 settler *not* on this list, including a Native American or African-American ancestor, please contact our Registrar about submitting lineage and references. **Not a descendant? Join us in the Friends category!**

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.
- 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, 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 *any* pre-1700 Middletown settler, and would like to join SMFSD, here is the easy procedure:

- (1) **Contact our Registrar, Cindy Nicewarner** (cnicewarner@verizon.net), about your interest. She will email an instruction sheet and application.
- (2) **Complete the SMFSD application** and mail to the Registrar. The applicant shall do their own research. Lineage should be accompanied by copies of reference material by generation. SMFSD seeks to verify information, but does not research family lines. A \$10.00 application fee will be added to the dues payment upon verification.
- (3) **The Registrar will review the application** for approval. Documentation is required only through the line of descent from the 1650-1700 settler. Instructions are included with the application that explain guidelines for documentation of descent by generation. (SMFSD will return an application if more documentation is needed. It is the applicant's responsibility to complete any gaps in the records.)

Dues: When approved, new members can choose to pay annual or lifetime dues: (A) Annual dues (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31) are \$20.00. (B) New members may elect to pay lifetime dues based on age: Age 0-50, \$300; Age 51-70, \$200; Age 70+, \$100.

Friends of SMFSD. Are you a Middletown history enthusiast, but not a descendant of the early families? Would you still like to receive *The Middler*? That's easy! Join us at \$20 per year!

Please send membership inquiries to: Cindy Nicewarner, Registrar, Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 6006 River Birch Court, Hanover, MD 21076; or via e-mail to: cnicewarner@verizon.net.