



# The Middler

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

Vol. 8, No. 1

[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/Index.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/Index.html)

Spring 2008

## A GODFREY LIBRARY EXCLUSIVE

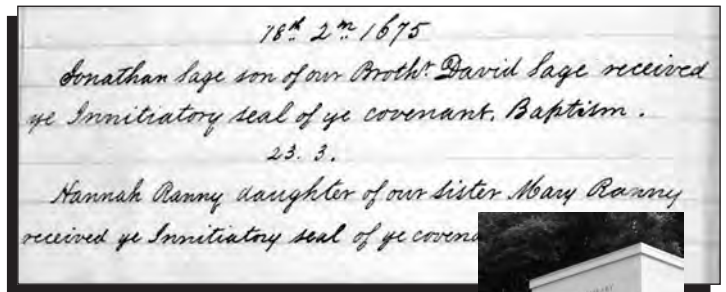
# Over 1500 pages of Middletown church records now available to 'Godfrey Scholar' members

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

In recent months, Godfrey Memorial Library, SMFSD's nominal headquarters and home of our organization's archives, has made available online thousands of records of interest to Middletown genealogy researchers.

Our members know that genealogists far-and-wide consult the renowned library. But the recent additions of Middletown-related records to the online collections will have SMFSD members dusting off their Godfrey Scholar memberships. New records online since last fall include (1) digitized images of

At right is a typical section of a PDF image of the Middletown First Congregational Church Records digitized and made available by Godfrey Memorial Library. (Image by permission of Godfrey Library)



**By agreement with the Rev. John Hall of the First Church of Christ, Middletown, Godfrey Library was able to digitize handwritten transcriptions of records.**



## Gale Cornwell, SMFSD founder, 1926-2007

We regret to report the death of the founder of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, Gale Cornwell, on October 17, 2007, in Roseville, California, shortly after the publication of our last issue of *The Middler*.

Well-known to most SMFSD members, Gale Thomas Cornwell – genealogy enthusiast, SMFSD founder, WWII D-Day veteran, and fervent patriot – was 81-years-old. He had been in

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Middletown's First Congregational Church records – about 1500 pages and 12,000 names; (2) an index to transcriptions of the library's Family Bible Collection – 78 Bibles, many with names related to Middletown; and (3) a digitized version of *A Statistical Account of the County of Middlesex in Connecticut* by David D. Field, D.D., first published in 1819.

The First Congregational Church records are from a series of handwritten record books encompassing the period from 1668 to 1870. The records were transcribed from the original books by D. T. Haines, Clerk of the Church from 1896-1910.

The online records are the result of a cooperative agreement with the Reverend John Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational in Middletown. The relationship began when Godfrey Library board member and treasurer August DeFrance, who

is also president of the Middletown Old Burial Grounds Association, had difficulty locating some unmarked family burial sites. After consulting city records, DeFrance turned to the First Church for assistance, and learned of the handwritten record books. Subsequently, Godfrey Library director Richard Black proposed that the library digitize the records, and in

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## Godfrey Library digitizes Middletown church records

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exchange for making the records accessible, supply the church with digital and hard copies, and pay for the cost of rebinding the books. Five record books were digitized and returned to the church, and then a second batch of 10 books was delivered to the library for digitization that is now in progress.

The digitization of original records is much more than a pushbutton operation. "When we began this project, we were using several scanners," explained the library's information technology specialist, Christine LeFoll. "Later we moved to a digital camera designed for archiving books and photographs, and the quality of the product was better and things moved along faster. We wound up re-shooting the previously scanned

pages for a better quality end product. Time is the challenge, as there is so much to be preserved, and cameras and computers can sometimes seem to have a mind of their own."

Godfrey's mission to make records available is at the forefront of LeFoll's workday, even as she deals with inanimate computer hardware. "Without Godfrey's digitization initiatives and the help and cooperation of Reverend Hall, and others like him, these records might as well be buried in the ground with those whose names are contained in them, as sitting, closed, on a shelf somewhere," she said. "Godfrey is reaching out, striving to bring previously lost or hidden data to light. We are assisted everyday by others who share our vision."

The Family Bible Collection at Godfrey consists of Bibles donated or purchased by the library and transcribed by volunteers. The Bibles are named for the principle owner. The database contains information on birth/death dates and locations. Of the 78 Bibles online thus far, seven have surnames connected to Middletown: Gilbert, Hubbard, Ives, Miller (2), Savage, and Wetmore. In addition to access to the database, users can purchase copies of relevant handwritten pages.

"We have tried to put the word out to everyone who has a Bible to share in this project," explained membership librarian Sharon Dahlmeyer. "We have room here for Bibles and have dedicated an area in the Great Room for all of these precious books. We know that many people do not want to part with these treasures, so we encourage owners to photocopy the insides that contain the births, marriages, and deaths, and send them to us. We then set up an area in the vertical files for this collection."

David D. Field's 1819 book, *A Statistical Account of the County of Middlesex in Connecticut*, was made available free to the public as part of a Middlesex County Histories Digitization Project, financed by a grant from the Middlesex County

Community Foundation/Connecticut Humanities Council.

In the future, Middletown genealogy researchers can look forward to the digitized records of the Doolittle (funeral home) Burial Return Records. "We learned that from volume 16 through 54, Doolittle morticians placed a handwritten index of each individual named in a burial return, as well as other names mentioned or connected to the individual's record," said LeFoll. Volunteers will create a time-saving searchable index from all of the names. "We welcome dialogs with any group, club, or society on working together to archive, preserve, and display historical, biographical, or genealogical documents and photographs," she said.

For information about library services and Godfrey Scholar membership, contact the library by phone at 860-346-4375, visit [www.godfrey.org](http://www.godfrey.org), or visit in person at 134 Newfield Street, Middletown, Conn. ■

## SMFSD NEWS

### Member news ... & Thank You's

SMFSD extends a "Welcome Back" greeting to **Rita Ann Urquhart**, CM-166, of Elizabethton, Tenn., who reactivated her charter membership (1st settler John Savage). We also extend our welcome to two new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Paula K. Higgins**, AM-261, Mansfield, Texas (1st settler George Hubbard); and **Meredith L. Campbell**, AM-262, Bonita, Calif. (1st settler David Sage).

SMFSD Commander **Barb Stenberg** extends a sincere, loud, and public "Thank You" to our hard-working officers **Suzanne Welles**, **Marge Pierson**, **Tom Smith**, and **Donald Brock**. "People should know about the work that is done for the organization – especially all the paperwork and meeting arrangements – by just a few," she wrote. ■



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SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN  
FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS  
1650-1700 – Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.  
[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsl/index.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsl/index.html)

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

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

#### SMFSD OFFICERS

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. . . . . Albert C. Dudley

## SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell, 1926-2007 . . .

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precarious health for several years, but that did not deter him from contributing his robust energy to the SMFSD Triennial Meeting in Middletown, Conn. in August 2006.

He was predeceased by his wife, Marion E. (MacDowell) (1926-2001), and son Gale T. Cornwell, Jr. (1954-1999). Survivors include three sons and four grandchildren. One grandson, SMFSD member Michael G. Cornwell of Coraopolis, Pa., regularly accompanied Gale to SMFSD meetings.

Gale Thomas Cornwell was born February 8, 1926, in Redwood, N.Y., the son of Leland Cornwell (1893-1965) and Mabel (Howe) Cornwell (1900-1974). He grew up in Redwood, then joined the U.S. Army in April 1942 at the age of 16.

As a paratrooper, Pvt. Cornwell participated in the D-Day invasion at Normandy in June 1944. Four days after D-Day, his mother, 1st Lt. Mabel Emily Howe, a U.S. Army nurse, landed on Omaha Beach and helped establish the 54th Field Hospital that served Gen. George Patton's 3rd Army – making for a notable mother-son military combination. Gale was later commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in France, and after the Battle of the Bulge, served with Gen. Patton's 56th Army Combat Engineers. He was an honoree at the dedication of the National WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. in 2004.

Gale married Marion E. MacDowell, a private in the British Army Signal Corps, in June 1945 in Portsmouth, England. They raised four children.

During the Korean Conflict (1950-53), Gale returned to military service as a helicopter pilot. Following his military service he pursued a career as an investigator with the Bureau of Aviation Safety of the National Transportation Safety Board. He also worked in the private sector with



**In the photo above, from the first SMFSD meeting in October 2000, founder Gale Cornwell, in his Revolutionary War-era regalia, holds court at the entrance to Riverside Cemetery in Middletown, Conn., burial site of numerous first settlers.**

Associated Aviation Underwriters.

Gale was a member of the Order of Founders & Patriots, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the General Society of Colonial Wars.

Gale was also the founder of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants in 2000. His grandfather, Seymour Cornwell (1862-1919), born in Theresa, N.Y., led the initiative to install the plaque on "Founders Rock" at Middletown's 250th anniversary in 1900. Seymour himself was two generations removed from Middletown – his grandfather, Isaac Cornwell, Jr. (1779-1864), was the most recent ancestor born in Middletown. Since Gale was increasingly active in genealogical research in the 1990s, this knowledge of his grandfather's initiative planted the seed of an idea for a hereditary organization.

In 1996 Gale began contacting descendants of Middletown first settlers with the idea of participating

**Gale Cornwell at Founders Rock, Middletown, Conn., at the first SMFSD meeting in October 2000.**

**In a newspaper interview, Gale explained: "Plymouth has got their rock, and 100 years ago they wanted Middletown to have its rock."**



in the 350th anniversary. By 2000 over 200 people across the U.S. had signed on to the idea, and on Oct. 29, 2000, with 58 in attendance in Middletown, the SMFSD was officially formed as a genealogical society. Officers were elected, bylaws adopted, and Godfrey Memorial Library offered to house society archives. Plaques were mounted at the library commemorating the 350th anniversary of the settlement and recognizing the first settlers. The framework was set for the SMFSD to meet in Middletown every three years for organizational business, genealogy research, museum visits, member networking, and social gatherings. Subsequently Gale traveled from his home in Arizona, and later, California, to attend SMFSD meetings in 2001, 2003, and 2006.

In between meetings, Gale communicated regularly with members and the genealogy community via letters, e-mail, and postings to numerous online message boards.

He was an early proponent of DNA analysis for genealogical research. In the months before his death your editor received several enthusiastic notes about a research breakthrough made possible by the Cornwell DNA Project. (Details are in the fall 2007 issue of *The Middler*.)

Apart from scientific genealogy, Gale's compilations and opinionated pronouncements on Cornwell ancestry live on across the World Wide Web, and researchers continue to investigate his hypotheses.

Our organization has lost a passionate voice, and our country has lost another of its generation of true heroes. Our condolences and our appreciation is extended to all of Gale's family and friends, who should know that a bit of his spirit lives on in the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants. ■

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

*Information for this obituary was gathered from Gale Cornwell's own Internet postings; SAR profiles; personal correspondence; a New York Times article (5/30/2004) on the dedication of the WWII Memorial; and a Middletown Press article (10/29/2000) on the SMFSD.*

## Thoroughly-researched Middletown context enriches the story of a slave's life of bondage

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

As one of the last stops before leaving Middletown after the SMFSD Triennial Meeting events in August 2006, your editor browsed the city's largest bookstore to check out the breadth and scope of titles on the store's local history shelf.

What I discovered was that there was no local history shelf, just a regional section with a handful of travel books and hiking/biking guides. The store did have one copy of a book I intended to read since learning of its publication earlier in the year, so I purchased this last local history book for sale in Middletown that day: *A Century in Captivity, The Life and Trials of Prince Mortimer, A Connecticut Slave*, by Denis R. Caron.

The book tells the story of Prince Mortimer (1724-1834), a slave brought to Middletown as a young boy, who after a lifetime of labor in bondage, was sentenced at age 87 to life imprisonment – he was accused of attempting to poison his master, George Starr – and then lived out his life in Connecticut's two most infamous prisons until his death at the age of 110.

The author, Denis R. Caron of Glastonbury, Conn., is an attorney specializing in real property law. His background served him well in this work of history, which stands as a testimony to meticulous research. The book received the Connecticut Book Award for biography in 2007.

Caron first read of the case in the 1844 book on Connecticut's copper mine (1705-1750s) that was converted into a prison (1773-1827), *Newgate of Connecticut: Its Origin and Early History*, by Robert Phelps. Over a period of five years, Caron scrutinized the scant evidence that remains of Prince Mortimer's tribulations, and by placing all of the details into well-researched context,

reconstructed the story with a true historian's discipline.

Descendants of Middletown's first settlers and local history enthusiasts alike will find that *A Century in Captivity*, beyond its captivating story, presents informative overviews of two separate topics of contextual interest: (1) the nature of slavery in Connecticut, and Middletown in particular; and (2) Middletown's 18th century population and economic growth – and the eventual decline and exodus from the town in the early decades of the 19th century.

Caron notes that the Puritans who settled Connecticut regarded slavery as part of the natural order of life, and invoked divine justification for the division of society into distinct classes. Since the native Americans proved to be unsatisfactory slaves, the import of blacks increased steadily in Connecticut from the

beginning of the 18th century until the Revolutionary War. The author writes that in Middletown, slaves were used as "house servants or as hands on small family-owned farms," in contrast to the "plantation slavery" of Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut.

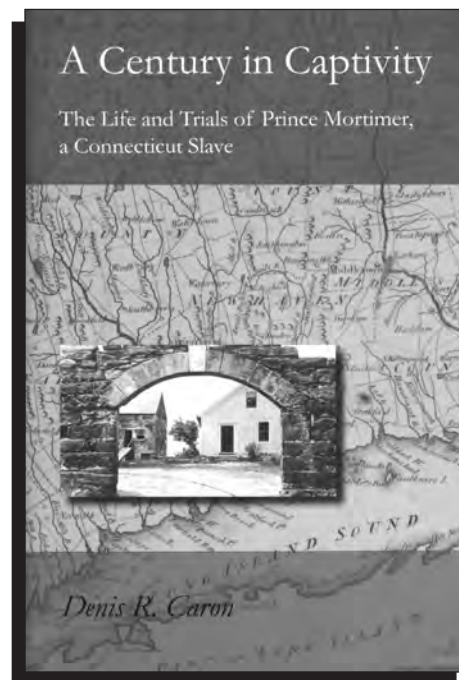
In setting the scene, the author describes the growth, evolution, and decline of Middletown's shipbuilding, trade, and commerce from the 1670s to the Embargo Act of 1807 – and to the time of Prince Mortimer's trial in 1811. These pages give the reader a good sense of the atmosphere in Middletown that prompted many descendants of the early settler families to move elsewhere in the decades after the Revolutionary War.

*A Century in Captivity* devotes considerable attention to the state's penal system of the time, and two of its prisons, Newgate and the state prison in Wethersfield. Today Newgate Prison in East Granby, Conn., is a museum operated by the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism - History Division. (The commission has visitor information in a page buried deep within its web site: [www.ct.gov/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2127&q=302258&cctPNavCtr=|#43551](http://www.ct.gov/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2127&q=302258&cctPNavCtr=|#43551))

### A brief synopsis of the story:

Prince Mortimer was brought to Middletown as a slave from Guinea, in West Africa, as a child of six about 1730. Upon arrival he was likely sold by one of the two slave dealers on Main Street to a farming family. In the late 1750s he was acquired by Philip Mortimer (1710-1794), an enterprising Irish immigrant who had constructed a 1000-foot long, 25-foot wide ropewalk structure for spinning hemp into the rope needed for the burgeoning maritime industry. Prince Mortimer, despite suffering from the disfiguring tropical disease of "yaws", (a bacteriological

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*A Century in Captivity – The Life & Trials of Prince Mortimer; A Connecticut Slave*, by Denis R. Caron (University of New Hampshire Press, 2006, 208 pgs.; ISBN# 978-1-58465-540-4), is available through your library or favorite bookseller.

## Installation #2 of early settler maps by Jessie Alsop, based on her research of Middletown land records

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

The fall 2007 *Middler* featured a profile of Middletown local historian Jessie Alsop (1875-1951). Among her research projects over a period of many years was the transcription and analysis of early Middletown land records. Using the information and measurements from written records, she drew maps of early house lots and land grants. Included in our last issue was a custom redrawing of her map of Main Street, Middletown, in 1654. On page 6 & 7 of this issue are new renderings of two more of Ms. Alsop's pencil-drawn maps that show the 1671 land grants in the Newfield and North Society (west) sections of Middletown.

The Jessie Alsop maps are held in the local history collection at Middletown's Russell Library, along with some typewritten text pages that provide context for the land records. The fall 2007 issue included her general introduction. The following excerpts are her transcriptions of some town votes related to the 1671 land division:

"January 23, 1671. It was agreed by the proprietors of Middletown Jointly

that the land be divided on the west side of the river in two divisions.

"October 27, 1671. Voated that nine square miles of the Comon for the Town shall be laid out on the west side of the Great River. At the same town meeting it was agreed to divide on the west side of the Great River into quarters either three or four, that is the one-half the undivided lands of the town. The Town jointly agreed that it shall lye in two divisions. The north side shall have the quarter the nook, some of Dead swamp about a half a square mile and 120 acres on the hill pointing to the meadow fence, and the rest to begin next to the Wethersfield boundary above that comon on the north side and to run to the bounds west and to come South until they make their quantity.

At the same town meeting it was agreed that the proprietors on the

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**Using the information and measurements from written records, she drew maps of early house lots and land grants.**

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south side of the riverlet to begin their division of Land next to the riverlet above the boggy meadow, that to be the north bounds, and to run the lots that quarter east and west and when that quarter is all lotted to begin in the south quarter at the south west corner of the comons to goe no further west than the comons lying south of the comon two miles and a half east and west and two miles north and south and all those lots to run south and north in length and one square mile and something more to make up the division to lye east of the comons and against Mr. Samuel Collins land to begin next towards the town and so run south until they make up the whole sum."

**(Editor's note:** By 1670 the town had grown from its first 23 families to a total of 52 householders (35 surnames). The town sought assistance of the General Court to advise on how, and to whom, to distribute undivided lands. Two appointed arbitrators were charged with coming up with an equitable plan, and in 1671 the undivided land, except nine square miles of common land to be held in perpetuity, was distributed to proprietors on the 1670 tax list.) ■

## History & preservation news from Middletown . . .

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

The following news items are of regional historical/genealogical interest:

• **Middlesex County Historical Society.** In its most recent newsletter, the organization reported on a study of environmental conditions inside the Mansfield House. The study was funded by a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The results led to a plan for a new, integrated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system. The society has applied for a grant from the History &

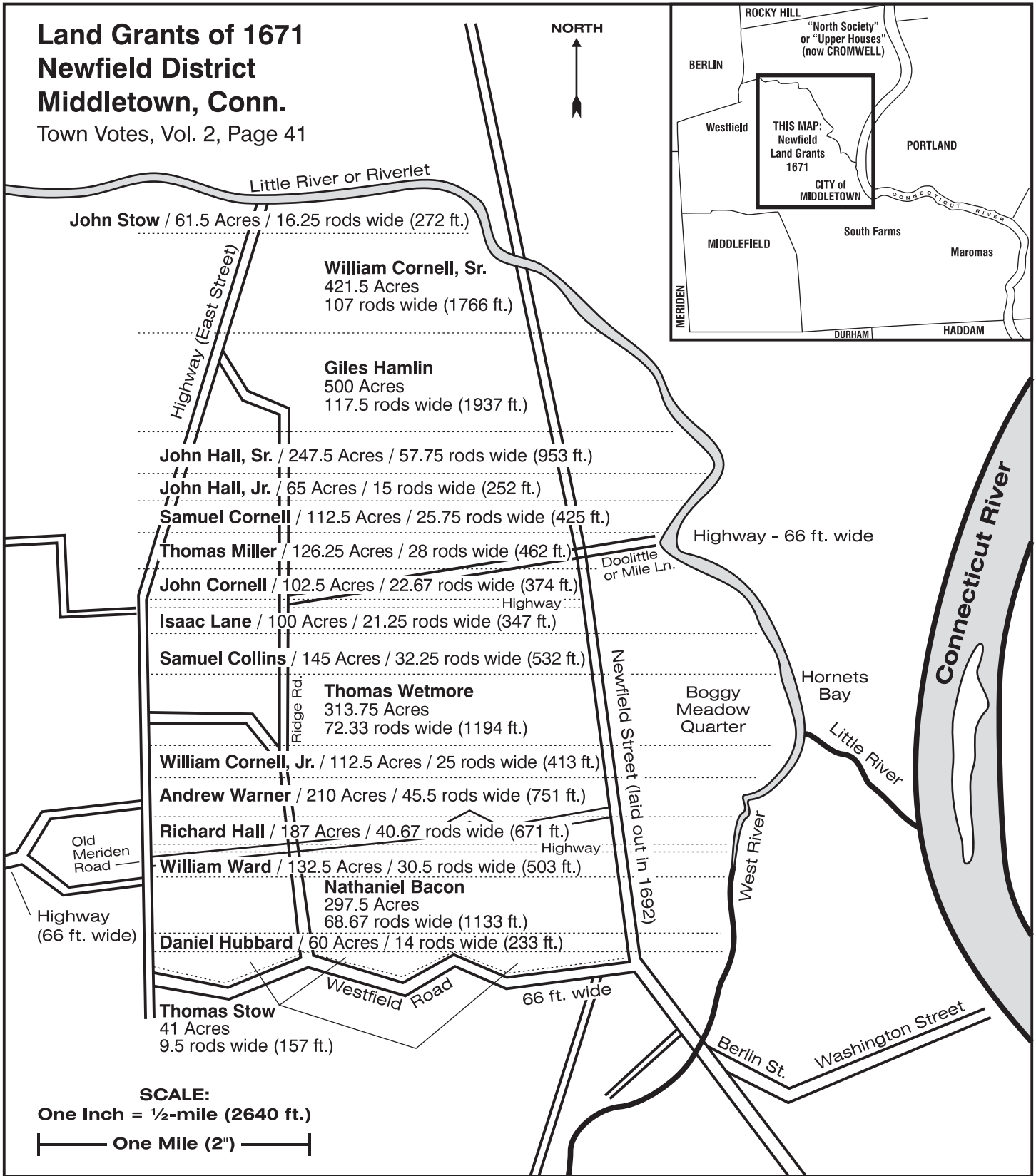
Museum Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism to cover half of project expenses.

• **The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.** Its annual meeting and awards presentations are Monday, April 28 at the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, Conn. Last fall the organization presented two events of interest to Middletown history & genealogy enthusiasts: a two-day symposium, *The Connecticut Farm Landscape – Open Space & Historic Buildings* (Litchfield); and *House Talk: The Wetmore House* (Middletown).

• **Olin Library Archives.** The next time you have a research appointment at Wesleyan University's Special Collections, make sure to pick up one of their bright-red custom-imprinted pencils. Trivia from the Special Collections blog: "Everybody – did you know that for the small sum of 25 cents you can buy a writing instrument that writes under water, in zero gravity, and upside down!? Did you know a pencil can write 45,000 words? And can draw a line 35 miles long?" (*And you will have a classy pencil for library research so you can leave those evil pens at home. - Ed.*) ■

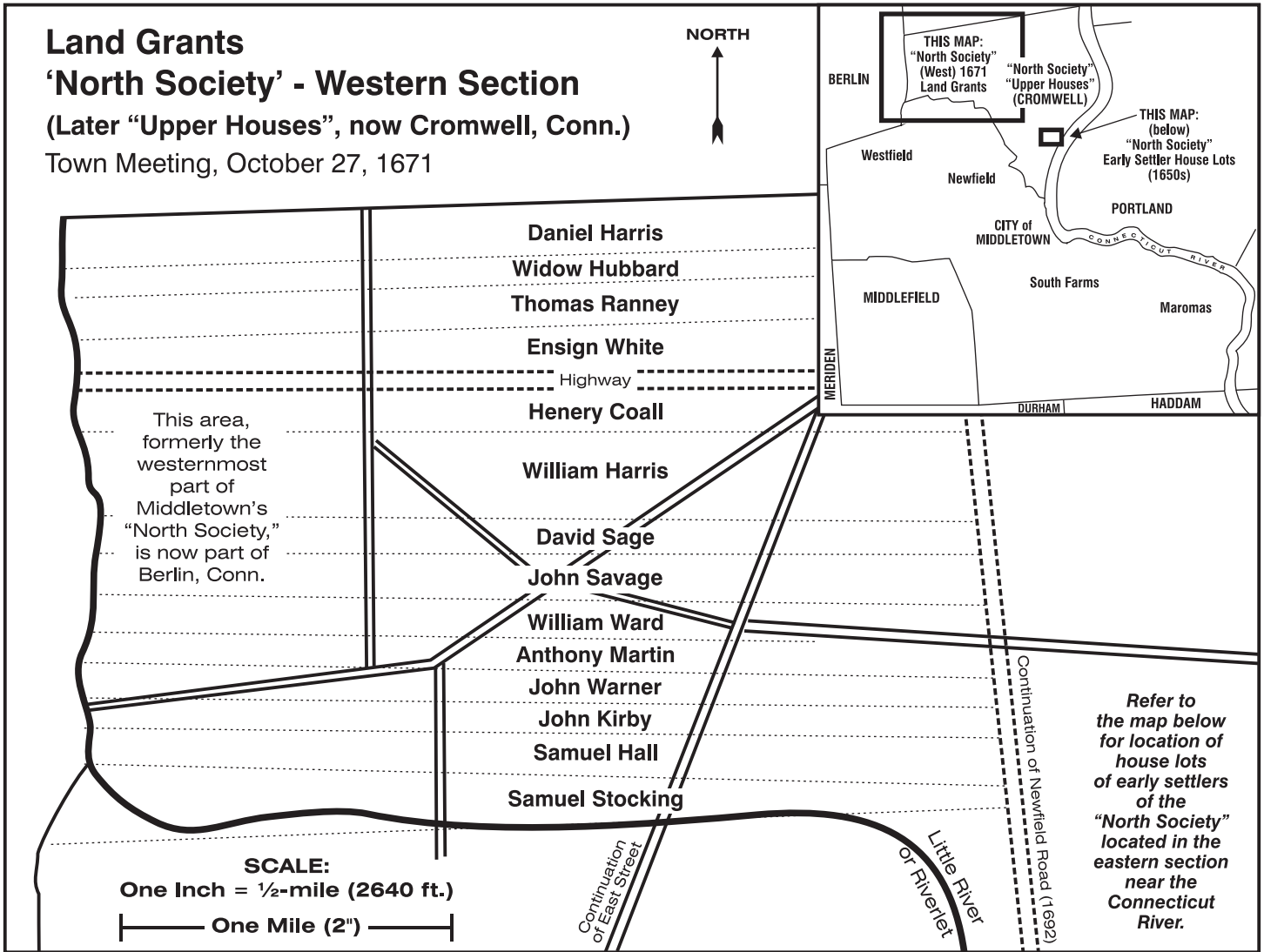
## Feature Graphic #6 – The Jessie Alsop Map of Newfield District (1671 Grants)

The map below is redrawn from digital scans of Jessie Alsop's four separate pencil-drawn interpretations of Newfield land grants of 1671. Over many years as an avid historian of Middletown, Ms. Alsop (1875-1951) transcribed early land records, and using information and measurements gleaned from the text, drew her collection of maps. Photocopies of her maps are held at the Middletown Room of Russell Library. (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2008. The scale of miles is approximated from measurements in the original records, and from comparison to current maps and aerial photos.)



## Feature Graphic #7 – The Jessie Alsop Map of ‘North Society’ Land Grants (1671)

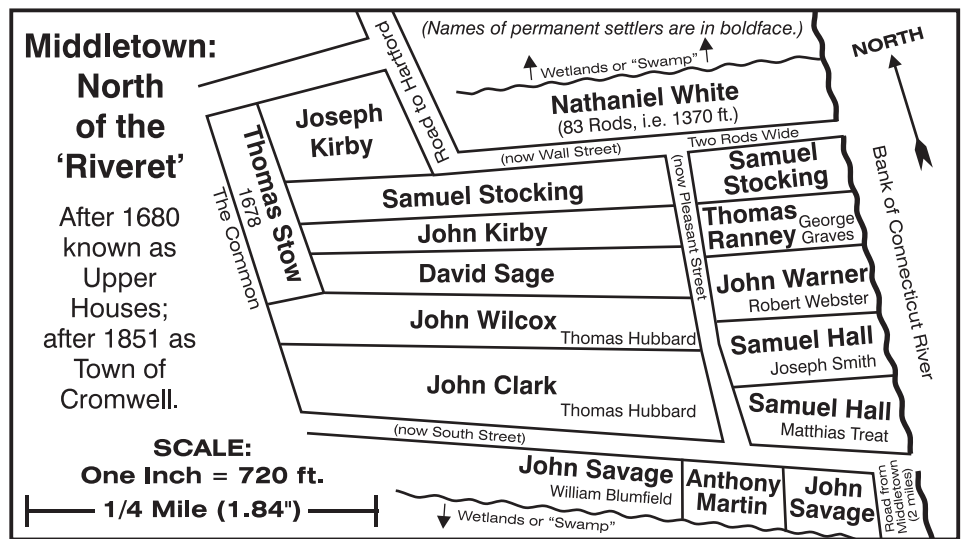
The map below is redrawn from scanned copies of Jessie Alsop’s pencil-drawn interpretations of the Middletown land grants of 1671 for the western section of the Middletown Upper Houses district. Ms. Alsop (1875-1951) utilized information and measurements gathered from her transcriptions of original land records to create her maps. Photocopies of the maps are held at the Middletown Room of Russell Library. The redrawn map below is based on a combination and interpolation of two separate maps. (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2008. The scale of miles is approximate.)



## Feature Graphic #8 – “Plan of Middletown North of the Riveret”

Map adapted from *Middletown Upper Houses* by Charles Collard Adams, (New York, N.Y.: Grafton Press, 1908).

Notably absent from the assemblage of maps drawn by Jessie Alsop is one that plots the location of early settler house lots in the “North Society,” or “Upper Houses.” Therefore, to complete this installment of early settler maps, included here is a redrawn, enlarged, and amplified version of the map from the well-known Middletown genealogy compendium by Charles Collard Adams, *Middletown Upper Houses*. (This section of Middletown was incorporated as the separate town of Cromwell in 1851.) (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2008.)



## EXODUS FROM MIDDLETOWN: WHERE THEY WENT

# Joshua Stow & William Wetmore combined to ease open the gateway west to Stow, Ohio

**Editor's note:** This is the second in a series entitled "Exodus from Middletown: Where They Went," that explores places where Middletown residents removed to in the years after the Revolutionary War. The first article in the series appeared in the fall 2007 issue, and was about "The Mother of Towns," Whitestown, N.Y.

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

Stow, Ohio, located in the rolling hills of Connecticut's "Western Reserve" in the northeastern part of the state, was a primary destination for emigrants from Middletown in the early decades of the 19th century. The story of its settlement – and its namesake – is one of geography, politics, economics, and personalities.

Once again there is no better way to begin an article in this series than with Peter D. Hall's 1981 booklet, "Middletown: Streets, Commerce, and People," prepared for Wesleyan University's *Sesquicentennial Papers*. Your editor regards this 40-page work as an essential reading in Middletown history and genealogy. For the purpose of this article, Hall's work provides an excellent overview of the early 19th century social, political, and economic climate in Middletown that led to the exodus.

"Middletown in the early 19th century was not the peaceful New England village of popular lore," wrote Hall. "It was a place in fundamental transition, changes as enormous, uncontrollable, and incomprehensible as those of our own time." Middletown had grown from a farming village into an international port, and along with growth came poverty, crime, disease, environmental crises, and changes in social order. "Once a pleasant place to live, Middletown became a place to leave," wrote Hall.



**Joshua Stow (1762-1842) of Middletown, a descendant of Thomas Stow (1615-1684), is regarded as the founder of Stow, Ohio, although he never actually lived there.**

**Joshua Stow.** At the center of political and religious conflict in the years after the Revolutionary War was Middletown native Joshua Stow (1762-1842), a descendant of numerous pre-1700 Middletown families.

In the 1780s Joshua Stow had organized a group of "freethinkers" to discuss the works of Voltaire and Thomas Paine. He also opposed the idea of the state supporting the Congregational Church. He favored Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800. Middletown businessmen, who sought to preserve the status quo, were rankled even more when Stow was appointed postmaster and tax collector. In 1818 he wrote Article Seven of the state constitution, which expanded religious freedom. He was harassed by the Federalists and labeled an "infidel," but successfully won a libel suit after two lengthy trials.

But let us leave Joshua's crusades and troubles, and instead backtrack to 1796, when he was engaged to join the team that surveyed the Western Reserve in Ohio.

**The Western Reserve.** After the Revolutionary War, the new federal government took possession of all the states' former sea-to-sea land grants in exchange for assuming the individual states' war debt. Connecticut, however, was the one state that chose not to participate in this agreement. While the state did give up its far-west claims in 1786, it retained three

million acres in northeastern Ohio. The land was sometimes referred to as "New Connecticut." In 1792, a half-million of the western-most acres were designated as "Firelands," reserved for residents of several New England towns that were destroyed by fire during the war. In 1796, the state sold the "Western Reserve" to eight investors, one from each county. The investor from Middlesex County was Elijah Hubbard (1745-1808), a Middletown merchant and banker. The investors, who had no personal interest in moving to Ohio, in turn sold shares to 48 individuals. These shareholders formed the Connecticut Land Company to survey, further divide, and sell the land.

A surveying team, led by shareholder Moses Cleaveland (1754-1806) of Canterbury, Conn., was formed in the spring of 1796 to map the Western Reserve into a grid of uniform 25-square-mile townships. The team of 50 included six surveyors, a physician, chaplain, and a boatman. Joshua Stow, also a shareholder, was responsible for all supplies, provisions, and lodging for the company.

This first surveying team established the route that future settlers of the Western Reserve would follow in the decades to come. The journey combined both land and water travel. To begin the frontier journey from Schenectady, N.Y., the survey party arrived overland through western Connecticut, then up the Hudson



**William Wetmore (1771-1827), born in Middletown, was hired by Joshua Stow as a land agent, and moved to Stow in 1804. He was among the founders of Cuyahoga Falls in 1812.**



## Migration Route to the Western Reserve from Survey (1796) to Settlement (1804) of Stow, Ohio



**“It will pay the reader to take a map and follow their route** from Connecticut to Schenectady, up the Mohawk river into Oneida lake, on to the Oswego river, into Ontario lake, along the southern shore of this lake to Canandaigua, and then to Buffalo, from there touching at least once at Presque Isle (Erie), on past the Pennsylvania line. They rowed, sailed and walked the shore. Sometimes part of them turned back to help bring up those delayed, or went ahead of the party to counsel with military officers or to make necessary preparations for the party. It was a tedious trip.”

– An excerpt from  
*History of the Western Reserve,*  
by Harriet Taylor Upton (1910)

River. From Schenectady, most of the team sailed, paddled, or poled in four boats up the Mohawk River, across Oneida Lake, and down the Oswego River to Lake Ontario. Others leading horses or cattle traveled by land along the shore. The party followed along the shore of Lake Ontario, then carried provisions and three boats (one had been damaged in a storm) by land for seven miles to get around Niagara Falls. Then the team poled along the shore of Lake Erie to the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, and access to the area they sought to survey.

En route to the Western Reserve, the surveying party was confronted twice by Native Americans claiming possession of the land, but in both cases they were appeased with gifts.

Joshua Stow liked what he saw in Town 3, Range 10. It was heavily forested, with navigable rivers, numerous creeks, plentiful wildlife, a temperate climate, and rich soil. He purchased the five-mile square, now Stow Township for \$14,154, an area he called “one of the prettiest and romantic spots in the Western Reserve.”

But while the township came to be named for Joshua Stow, and he spent considerable money to develop the settlement, he never lived there. He was known as a rugged outdoorsman adept at frontier exploration, and he returned to Ohio 13 more times to

oversee his investment. (The arduous journey took one month each way.) But commitment to public service, family, and friends in Connecticut took precedence. Upon his return from the first trip to Ohio, Stow hired his cousin, William Wetmore (1771-1827) as land agent.

**William Wetmore.** In 1804 William Wetmore moved to Stow Township with his wife, three sons, and a daughter. He built the second house in Stow, and along with his sons, in the ensuing decades laid out the first village (now Cuyahoga Falls), and built a dam and numerous mills on the river. During the War of 1812 he was commander of troops stationed at Old Portage.

**Middletown families in Stow.** Arriving with William Wetmore and family in 1804 were his brothers Titus (1781-1837) and Josiah (1783-1828); Josiah Starr (1786-1862), Gregory Powers & family, Thomas Rice & family, and John Campbell.

In 1809 Jonathan Gaylord (1747-1821) came to Stow from Middletown with 40 relatives, including his son-in-law, William Stow (b. 1776), a cousin of Joshua.

The first order of business for the early settlers of Stow was clearing the land for their houses and farms. Also of primary importance was establishing good relations with the

500 Native Americans living along the small lakes in the region.

The first town election was held in 1811. Middletown natives elected were Titus Wetmore, Josiah Starr, and Christopher Starr (trustees); Thomas Gaylord (constable); Titus Wetmore (treasurer); and William Wetmore (justice of the peace).

By 1830, the federal census showed that 18% of households were early Middletown family names: Cheney, Gaylord (5), Hamlin (3), Harris, Hubbard, Johnson, Southmayd, Starr (3), Stow (3), Wetmore (8), White (2), and Wilcox (5).

Almost two centuries later, a look at a city directory reveals well over 100 households with early settler family names – descendants of those hardy adventurers who poled, plodded, heaved, and hauled their way west to Stow 200 years ago. ■

## SOURCES

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

Hall, Peter D. *Middletown: Streets, Commerce, and People 1650-1981*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 1981.

Hatcher, Harlan H. *Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1949.

Mills, William Stowell. *The Story of the Western Reserve of Connecticut*. New York: Brown & Wilson Press, 1900.

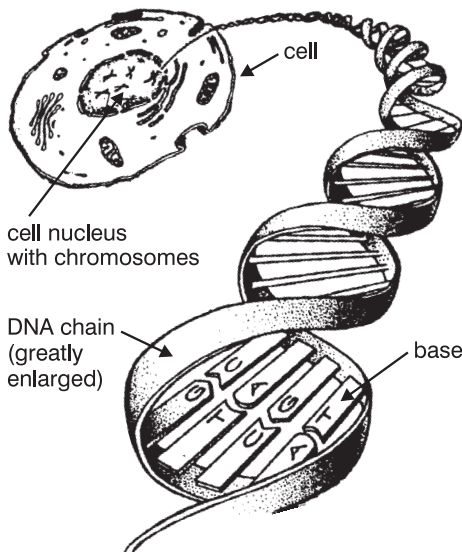
Upton, Harriet Taylor. *History of the Western Reserve*. New York, N.Y.: Lewis Publishing Co., 1910.



## Existing DNA Surname Projects for 1654-1700 early settlers of Middletown

The fall 2007 *Middler* featured a list of genealogy DNA projects established for the surnames of Middletown earliest settlers that arrived in the 1650-1654 period. In this issue is a similar list for the 1654-1700 settlers, along with the current – and growing – number of already-DNA-tested participants. Keep in mind that all study participants are not necessarily descendants of Middletown first settlers, but may just share the common surname. This list, along with the 1650-1654 list and a brief overview of the use of DNA analysis for genealogical research, is also on the SMFSD web site:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/MiddletownDNAInfoPage.pdf> ■



... and a random sampling of Middletown first-settler descendants.



### DNA Surname Projects for 1654-1700 Middletown Settlers:

<b>Adkins</b> .....	none
<b>Briggs</b> (39) .....	<a href="http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~briggsdna/">http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~briggsdna/</a>
<b>Blake</b> .....	none
<b>Boarn</b> .....	none
<b>Bow</b> .....	none
<b>Brown</b> (436) .....	<a href="http://brownsociety.org/">http://brownsociety.org/</a>
<b>Burk</b> .....	none
<b>Cheney</b> .....	none
<b>Clark</b> (147) .....	<a href="http://www.htmlsd.com/">http://www.htmlsd.com/</a>
<b>Clements</b> (107).....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/ClementsClemmonsDNA/">www.familyreedna.com/public/ClementsClemmonsDNA/</a>
<b>Cole</b> .....	none
<b>Collins</b> (43) .....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/c/collins/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/c/collins/</a>
<b>Cotton</b> (20).....	<a href="http://home.comcast.net/~cottondna/">http://home.comcast.net/~cottondna/</a>
<b>Doolittle</b> (12).....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Doolittle/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Doolittle/</a>
<b>Durant</b> .....	none
<b>Eggleston</b> .....	none
<b>Elton</b> .....	none
<b>Ferman</b> .....	none
<b>Foster</b> (101).....	<a href="http://www.fosterdna.org/">http://www.fosterdna.org/</a>
<b>Gilbert</b> (34) .....	<a href="http://www.janegilbert.org/gilbertdna/">http://www.janegilbert.org/gilbertdna/</a>
<b>Gill</b> (55) .....	<a href="http://www.rootsweb.com/~ctcsouth/GillDNA/index.html">http://www.rootsweb.com/~ctcsouth/GillDNA/index.html</a>
<b>Goodale</b> (7) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/GOODALL/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/GOODALL/</a>
<b>Graves</b> .....	none
<b>Hands</b> .....	none
<b>Higby</b> .....	none
<b>Hill</b> (267) .....	<a href="http://www.hilldna.com/">http://www.hilldna.com/</a>
<b>Hopewell</b> .....	none
<b>Hulbert (Hurlbut)</b> (15) .....	<a href="http://hurlbutdna.pbwiki.com/">http://hurlbutdna.pbwiki.com/</a>
<b>Johnson</b> (432) .....	<a href="http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~hjohnson/index.html">http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~hjohnson/index.html</a>
<b>Jones</b> (188).....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/jonessurname/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/jonessurname/</a>
<b>Jordan</b> (153) .....	<a href="http://www.jordannctoal.homestead.com/DNAindex.html">http://www.jordannctoal.homestead.com/DNAindex.html</a>
<b>Lane</b> (51) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/lane/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/lane/</a>
<b>Lewis</b> (234) .....	<a href="http://lewisurnamednaproject.com/">http://lewisurnamednaproject.com/</a>
<b>Lucas</b> (48) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Lucas/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Lucas/</a>
<b>Markham</b> (20) .....	<a href="http://worldfamilies.net/surnames/m/marcum/">http://worldfamilies.net/surnames/m/marcum/</a>
<b>Payne</b> (153).....	<a href="http://home.earthlink.net/~ppayne1203/">http://home.earthlink.net/~ppayne1203/</a>
<b>Phillips</b> (31) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Phillips%2DAmerica/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Phillips%2DAmerica/</a>
<b>Pryor</b> (18) .....	(Family Tree DNA group, but no active web site.)
<b>Ranney</b> (81) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Rainey%2DRaney/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/Rainey%2DRaney/</a>
<b>Roberts</b> (129) .....	<a href="http://home.comcast.net/~libpjr1/robertsdna.htm">http://home.comcast.net/~libpjr1/robertsdna.htm</a>
<b>Rockwell</b> .....	none
<b>Rollo</b> .....	none
<b>Russell</b> (74) .....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/r/russell/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/r/russell/</a>
<b>Sage</b> (3) .....	<a href="https://www.familyreedna.com/surname_join.aspx?code=Z86900&amp;special=True&amp;projecttype=S">https://www.familyreedna.com/surname_join.aspx?code=Z86900&amp;special=True&amp;projecttype=S</a>
<b>Scovill</b> .....	none
<b>Shepard</b> (22) .....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/shepard/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/shepard/</a>
<b>Southmayd</b> .....	none
<b>Starr</b> (25) .....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/starr/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/starr/</a>
<b>Stancliff</b> .....	none
<b>Sumner</b> (15).....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/summers/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/s/summers/</a>
<b>Tappin</b> .....	none
<b>Turner</b> (267) .....	<a href="http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~turnerdna/">http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~turnerdna/</a>
<b>Ward</b> (89) .....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/ward/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/ward/</a>
<b>Warner</b> (11).....	<a href="http://www.familyreedna.com/public/warner/">http://www.familyreedna.com/public/warner/</a>
<b>West</b> (163) .....	<a href="http://web.utk.edu/~corn/westdna/">http://web.utk.edu/~corn/westdna/</a>
<b>Wilcox</b> (15) .....	<a href="http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/w/wilcox/">http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/w/wilcox/</a>
<b>Wright</b> (210) .....	<a href="http://www.wright-dna.org/">http://www.wright-dna.org/</a>



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



## A Century in Captivity ... *continued from page 4*

condition that covered his face with hard, walnut-size nodules that left permanent scar tissue) went on to become one of two master spinners indispensable to the ropewalk.

Philip Mortimer accumulated great wealth, and he was generous to his family, slaves, and to the people of Middletown. (Mortimer donated the land for the cemetery on Liberty Street that bears his name.) A fervent patriot, Philip Mortimer supported the efforts for independence, and while too old to serve himself, offered the assistance of his servants on his behalf. Prince Mortimer is said to have served in the Continental Army, running errands for officers.

In Philip Mortimer's six-page will of 1792, he directs that Prince Mortimer be set free three years after his death. Since Philip Mortimer had no children, the complicated will directed most of the assets, after large gifts to the people and city of Middletown, to his niece and her children. (His niece, Ann Carnall, who came from Ireland in 1760, had married George Starr (1740-1820), a Middletown merchant, in 1775.)

Caron describes the will as "undoubtedly the most complex testamentary disposition to see the light of day in Middletown and perhaps all

of Connecticut." The will was amended twice in the next two years. When Philip Mortimer died in 1794, his funeral was among the largest ever seen in Middletown. George Starr was to be the executor, but discovered that he was essentially "cut out" of the will in favor of his wife, children, and the people of Middletown. In late 1795 George Starr went to court seeking a reversal of the will, and after convoluted arguments and testimony, the will was declared void. The provision to set Philip Mortimer's slaves free in three years was now just an unenforceable promise of the deceased.

Most likely Prince Mortimer served his new master at the ropewalk until it was sold in 1806. At that time, in his 80s, he may have become a servant in George Starr's household.

In the December 1811 term of Middlesex County Superior Court, Prince Mortimer and another slave, Jack Mortimer, were charged with the attempted murder of George Starr on August 5 of that year. (Starr noticed something amiss in his breakfast drink that morning, and did not drink the arsenic-laced chocolate.) The complaint against Jack Mortimer charged that he persuaded Prince to serve Starr the poisoned bowl of chocolate. The complaint against Prince Mortimer, however,

made no mention of his being produced by Jack into being an accomplice.

Mysteries in this case remain. Jack Mortimer was never prosecuted, and no records exist to indicate why. He was much younger than Prince, and he, his wife, and family had been favorites of Philip Mortimer. In contrast, Prince Mortimer, in his disfigured condition, never married. Almost six feet tall, lean, and muscular, he was also the blackest slave in Middletown. His countenance was so repulsive that it was most likely difficult for the jury to consider the *man* behind the hideous scarring. On December 21, 1811, 87-year-old Prince Mortimer was convicted of the attempted murder of George Starr and sentenced to life in prison.

Prince Mortimer served his sentence at the notorious Newgate Prison in East Granby until it was closed in 1827. At age 103 he was transferred to the new Wethersfield State Prison, where he lived another seven years in a 3½' x 7' cell until his death in 1834.

The above paragraphs represent only the skeleton of the story. The book provides more detail, more context, and the reasoning behind the interpretations and reconstructions.

The author maintains a web site where visitors can read an excerpt of the book: [www.princemortimer.com](http://www.princemortimer.com). ■

