



The Middler

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

Vol. 10, No. 1

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/Index.html

Spring 2010

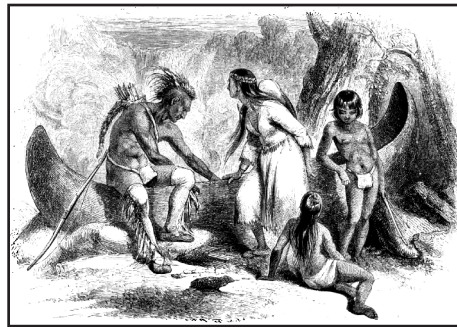
A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Native Americans in Middletown, Part I: Who called it 'home' before our 'First Settlers'?

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

With the passage of new SMFSD bylaws that extend membership eligibility to all who can document ancestors who lived in Middletown before 1700, summary articles about Native Americans and African-Americans in Middletown are in order for *The Middler*.¹ This issue presents Part I of an overview of Native American presence in pre-1700 Middletown.

In preparing this article, one truism became evident: Confusion abounds. On the subject of Native Americans along the Connecticut River in the 17th century, there have always been conflicting interpretations of identity, location, and population.



Above: An illustration of a Native American family from John W. DeForest's *History of the Indians of Connecticut* (1853).

Why the confusion? In the 17th century, the Dutch and English observers could only report the incomplete picture they saw, their knowledge of Indian ethnic organization was rudimentary, and further, their reportage

was filtered through an impenetrable cultural bias. In the centuries since, despite considerable archaeological findings and linguistic scholarship, Native American history and culture by nature do not fit neatly into political and geographic categories. Finally, in the 21st century, there are two federally-recognized tribes in Connecticut – and a dozen or so others angling for position in a politically-charged and money-driven atmosphere. This is not an atmosphere conducive to scholarly inquiry and impartial fact-finding.

Who were the Native Americans in Middletown? It is agreed that the Wangunks were of the Algonquian linguistic group. Beyond that, the tug-of-war over political and cultural categories has lasted over four centuries. Where were the Native Americans in Middletown? They moved seasonally. The notion of firmly-fixed political boundaries was, and is, folly. How many Native Americans were there on both sides of the river? In the 17th century, everybody was guessing, but nobody was counting. Historians of the 19th century maintained that the very

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New SMFSD bylaws pass unanimously; pre-1700 'qualifying ancestors' redefined

The votes are in on SMFSD's proposed bylaw changes raised at last year's Triennial Meeting – and both proposals were approved unanimously.

The first proposal changes the name of the head of the board to "president" from the former title of "commander."

The approval of the second proposal extends membership eligibility beyond our fixed – and incomplete – list of first settlers to anyone who can prove descent from any individual documented as having lived in Middletown before 1700. This readjustment of policy, simple on the surface, may attract some notice, however, as it also

means that any Native Americans and African-Americans who were documented in Middletown before 1700 are now "qualifying ancestors." The burden of proof still rests with the applicant.

Cursory investigation is inconclusive, but SMFSD is very likely among the few Colonial-era descendency organizations to open membership to descendants of Native Americans and African American slaves. The vote was unanimous, both at the Triennial Meeting and by mail-in ballot. Time will tell if SMFSD's new policy is part of a trend toward even more inclusiveness among history/genealogy organizations. ■

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SMFSD NEWS

Welcome to new members & non-descendant 'friends'

• Welcome new members.

SMFSD extends an enthusiastic welcome to two new members since the last issue of *The Middler*:

Deborah Hartley Forchielli, AM-275, Oakville, Conn. (1st settler John Kirby), and **Ross Gamble Perry**, LM-280, Arlington, Va. (primary 1st settler George Hubbard & secondary 1st settler John Kirby).

• **SMFSD Friends Membership Category.** The SMFSD bylaws have always included a provision for non-descendant "friends" members, but only recently has this category prompted attention and inquiries. This category will be of special

interest to those who do not have any family connection to the early settlers, but who are interested in Middletown history and would like to receive *The Middler*. Our new brochure includes reference to this membership category. The dues are

the same as for descendant members – \$20 per year. If you know of any potential "friends" of SMFSD who would like to receive their own copy of *The Middler*, suggest that they contact our Registrar, Don Brock, at dhbrock@msn.com for information. ■

If imitation is the greatest form of flattery, then the SMFSD has been duly 'flattered'

If indeed "imitation is the greatest form of flattery," then the SMFSD web site was flattered early this year when a noted genealogist and author appropriated lengthy passages from our site's local history essays for his most recent genealogical tome.

This was more than a brief quotation of the copyrighted works. The wholesale "flattery" amounted to 16 paragraphs lifted from three essays, spread over eight pages. If this were not bold enough, only the cryptic URL was credited in the footnotes, not the organization, author, or the sources footnoted in the hijacked text.

This came to light in February 2010 when SMFSD editor R.W. Bacon was researching Native Americans in Middletown. An Internet search led him to a preview of a recently-published book that has been fully viewable at the Google Books site since 2009. As your editor was eagerly reading through relevant passages, the phrasing began to seem very familiar. "Hey, I wrote this stuff!" he realized. And it went on for pages.

The next day the transgressor was contacted by e-mail, and a tail-between-the-legs apology was forthcoming almost immediately. Your editor informed him that the SMFSD essays were placed on the web site in generous spirit, with the goal of providing local history context to both current and prospective SMFSD members. But at the very least, without invoking the "P-word" or any other legalese, your editor insisted that SMFSD be identified and fully-credited in the footnotes. The transgressor, author of several highly-regarded family histories, also

avoided the "P-word," and referred to his boo-boo as "a discourtesy." He was effusive in his praise of our web site, and stated his intention to address the issue with Google Books and in future hard-copies. But as of May 1, the appropriated passages remain.

Of course, this book is a genealogy book, not a best-seller ... or not even a term-paper. (Any high school teacher who discovered a transgression like this would be on the war-path.) So this veteran author should know better. If this same issue involved a popular history book about a figure like Abraham Lincoln or John Adams, the "P-word" would be in the headlines, the author would be in hiding, and the lawyers would be dancing in the streets over their share of the damages.

One outspoken lawyer-genealogist claims that in issues like this, public humiliation is a more effective remedy than the courts. "If someone steals and publishes my stuff, I don't go to court," she said, "I just make sure everyone in the world knows about it." But since your editor is a patient sort, the transgressor's name is being withheld in this issue. But if there is no action by the fall issue, his name will be Mudd. Or something like that. ■

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

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1650-1700 – Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfspd/Index.html

Vol. 10, No. 1
Spring 2010

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Meet Barb Stenberg, SMFSD's first and only 'Commander' – and now President – since 2000

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

This is the second in a series of profiles that give our members across the U.S. a chance to get to know a bit more about their SMFSD "cousins" and fellow genealogy enthusiasts. This spring *The Middler* interviews Barbara McGee Stenberg, of Surprise, Ariz., who has been our "commander" – and now president – since the organization's founding a decade ago.

The Middler: How did you first come to know SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell? And how did he coax you to step up and be our first commander?

Barb Stenberg: I saw an article about this new organization and joined the effort right away. It cost little and intrigued me. At our first meeting he asked for volunteers, and when it came to Commander we all just sat and waited for someone to step forward. Well, of course, no one did. Then to my shock Gale called on me to come forward because I "had been so helpful in getting this meeting together."

The Middler: When did you first catch the genealogy bug? What's your education and career background?

Barb: I was interested as a child in where everyone came from. My mother had no interest and would get annoyed at my persistent questions. I continued to ask, however, and when I got into my 40s I decided to really get into it. I think the TV drama *Roots* got me started. My degree is in health science. I was an RN, and retired from nursing in 1998.

Genealogy has no relationship to my career, but is now my main endeavor. I love the digging and following clues. I get as much fun out of finding something for someone else as for myself.

The Middler: Tell us about your travels and experiences – and how the lifestyle impacted genealogy pursuits.

Barb: My late husband was a U.S. Navy chaplain for 12 years and then with the reserve for 16 years. While in the navy he traveled all over the world



SMFSD President Barb Stenberg strikes a pose at the 2009 NERGC.

while I held down the home front. The thing I gained from that is an ability to be independent and to step out and do things I find others won't do. So I can go hunting for dead relatives and travel alone and be just fine. I've been to Australia, Norway, England, Scotland, Germany, Italy, France, and of course, Hawaii. I've been in almost every state.

The Middler: Are you a member of other genealogy organizations?

Barb: I was president of our genealogy group at Placerville, Calif. I belong to the NGS, NEHGS, and I just finished as 2nd vice-president of the West Valley Genealogy Society. I teach a novice genealogy class, and also belong to the DAR and Colonial Dames. For five years I worked on the Record Preservation Project for the DAR.

The Middler: What makes SMFSD special for you? What challenges do you see? What are your goals or wishes?

Barb: I have met great friends that I simply would never have met if it weren't for SMFSD. I had focused my research on my father's line, but the SMFSD connection is my mother's line, and that side and the period is so interesting. I think our challenge is to make SMFSD a society that people feel really eager to join and reluctant to leave. I would love to see us offer a seminar that becomes as well-known as some by other organizations. One thing I've learned over the years is to not be afraid to try something. I am willing to leap in where angels fear to tread!

The Middler: Tell us about your own research. How many first-settlers? What's your most vexing "brick wall"?

Barb: My research has concentrated on my McGee line. That is my most vexing brick wall, too. I cannot prove the relationship of Thomas MaGee of New Jersey to three men who went to Virginia about 1789. because so many records burned. I have been searching since the mid-1970s. As for SMFSD, it has been easier to find connections in Middletown. I have descent from John Stow, Daniel Harris, Nathaniel White, John Savage, and William Cornwell, on whom I joined SMFSD. There are collateral connections to most everyone!

The Middler: When you grow weary of pounding the "brick wall," what activities and interests keep you busy?

Barb: I just finished three years on our church council. I sing in the choir and serve as their librarian. I play in the chime choir, and I play the piano for pleasure. I play bridge when I can. I am the secretary of my church women's organization. In May, my son and I are going to Germany. And lastly I have a man friend who takes a certain amount of maintenance time!

The Middler: How has your family responded to your genealogy interests?

Barb: I don't have a family member with an ounce of interest. But my children are very good at listening to me prattle on. My mother always said "Oh they're dead now. I don't care about them." I have one grandson and another on the way. They will probably hate to see me coming as they will be entertained with their ancestors at every opportunity. It has often struck me that the bug catches us in spite of the rejection by our families. If your goal is to enthrall your family, you probably won't last. But if the task grips you, as it has me, you will go on in spite of others' disinterest. Then someday you may even leave behind something of meaning to someone, somewhere. So I say, keep going. Every nut we find may hang on someone's tree. ■

Science & serendipity drew John Cornwell into the 'prop wash' of our founder's genealogy crusade

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

In August 2009, John Cornwell and his father, William Cornwell, crossed the continent from California to attend the SMFSD Triennial Meeting in Middletown. During the weekend we learned that his trip was a chapter in a story highlighted by contact with SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell (1927-2007). In early 2010 John consented to the e-mail interview that follows.

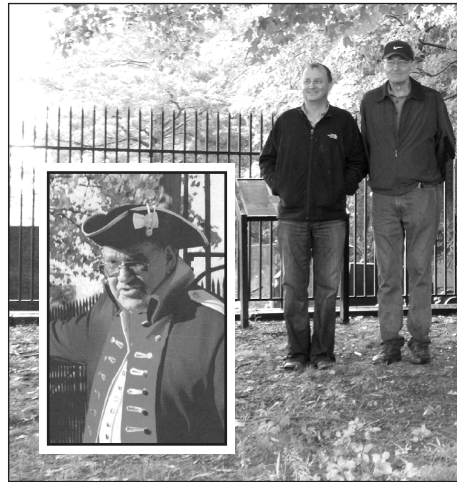
The Middler: When did you first become interested in your family's genealogy? Is your research an extension of your education or career?

John Cornwell: Initially, DNA was the trigger for my interest. I've been involved with genetic engineering vis-à-vis the biotech industry for more than 20 years, studied medical biophysics at Berkeley, worked at Genentech, and even ran a DNA sequencing lab at one point. My scientific background probably made me susceptible to the bite of the genealogy bug; genealogy is just an open-ended personal research project.

About five years ago, I heard about the National Geographic Project to gather DNA samples from humans around the world to trace the origins and historical movement of human populations. It seemed like a noble effort and I could subsidize it by paying for my own DNA mapping.

My Dad and I had no idea about our Cornwell family roots beyond his grandfather, who died before he was born. I think the easy access to historical documents on the internet, and software to organize and display them, has fueled the our recent interests.

My reasons for attending the SMFSD Triennial were curiosity and my promise to Gale Cornwell that I would attend if able. I was still feeling guilty that I didn't join SMFSD before he died. My father decided to come because it would be a good chance for us to travel together – we both needed a father/son road trip – and because he once worked in Stamford, Conn. He



Above, l. to. r., are John Cornwell and his father, William Cornwell, in Middletown in 2009. Inset is SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell (1927-2007) in 2000.

was intrigued by his previously unknown family connection to Connecticut. It was an interesting moment to see the name of Middletown founder and emigrant William Cornwell (the same name as my father's) on the founder's monument in the old cemetery in Hartford. In fact, most of my recent ancestors have been Williams ... coincidence or subconscious tribute to the original William of Middletown?

The Middler: How did this initial interest evolve into serious research, and then contact with Gale Cornwell?

J.C.: I became connected to Gale through a combination of serendipity and the Cornwell Family Tree DNA project. My DNA profile sat isolated in the National Geographic database for a year or so until I read an article on connecting with specific relatives via

“We e-mailed at first, then several phone calls, then an in-person meeting. I received almost daily mailings after I first met him in-person.”

– John Cornwell,
on Gale Cornwell

DNA results and decided to submit my profile to the Family Tree DNA site, which also hosts the Cornwell and related names project. Soon thereafter, I discovered I had a very close match to Gale Cornwell (36/37 markers) and was able to get his e-mail via the website. We connected by e-mail and a follow-up phone call in April 2007, six months before he passed away.

The Middler: After your initial contact with Gale, what was the nature of your communication?

J.C.: We e-mailed at first, then several phone calls, then an in-person meeting. I received almost daily mailings after I first met him in-person.

The Middler: When you first connected with Gale, what was the primary focus of his genealogy work?

J.C.: He seemed most focused on the family connection between the Cornwell and Cornell families. He had just connected with a Cornell with a very close match (35/37 markers) via the Cornwell DNA project who had extensive family research tracing back to Thomas Cornell, the Rhode Island Cornell immigrant. The DNA match validates the theory of the families sharing a common ancestor in 16th century Essex, England. Gale took a marketing approach on some genealogy matters: e.g., he was intent on proving and spreading the Mary Hyanno story (Ed. note: See *The Middler*, spring 2006) and the “Feud of the Four Brothers” story. (Ed. note: This supposedly involved four Plantagenet heirs wrestling over the Earldom of Cornwall in 1272.) He also spent time researching my line and writing hereditary societies on my behalf for membership applications.

The Middler: Did you ever determine your exact relationship to Gale?

J.C.: Gale and I are 7th cousins, once removed. Hart Cornwell (1764-c. 1810), son of Cornelius Cornwell (1722-1811) was the last to live in Middletown. He and his family, including his young son and my ancestor Gilbert Cornwell (1796-

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Science & serendipity in Cornwell genealogy

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1856) moved to Schoharie Co., N.Y., about 1798. Gilbert and family moved to Morton, Tazewell Co., Ill., in 1846.

The Middler: When did you first meet Gale personally?

J.C.: Gale had recently moved from his “compound” in Indio, in the California desert (he gave me pictures of his ranch with plaques, etc.), to an assisted care facility in Carmichael, a suburb of Sacramento. Coincidentally, this was less than a mile from my in-laws’ home. I arranged to meet him next time I was visiting the area. He was not in great health due to obvious respiratory problems, but was emphatic about all things related to genealogy. We spoke about aviation a lot, as I’m a private pilot and he had this incredible aviation career as an NTSB accident investigator, a WWII veteran, flew helicopters, etc. He got me excited about genealogy, especially as it related to Middletown, Conn. I had already begun to do some basic genealogy based on some 30-year-old family data sheets my Dad gave me, but after my first visit with Gale I was inspired. He started an all-out – and unauthorized – campaign to get me into various hereditary societies, SAR, Descendants of Colonial Wars, and of course SMFSD. I began to receive daily envelopes packed with his research on my family’s ancestors and applications to various societies he had solicited on my behalf, and at least one e-mail per day with new finds. It was a month-and-a-half later that I was able to first visit him, and this time I had the benefit of having performed some of my own Cornwell research. At this point he was committed to indoctrinating me into his various theories (some of them controversial) regarding Mary Hyanno as Sgt. William’s Indian princess wife, the family document ceding any Cornwell family claim on the Estate of Cornwell/Cornwall via Queen Victoria’s agent, and the William Cornwell connection to the British royal family. I was intrigued by these

tales and proceeded to try to confirm them independently.

E-mails and packets continued to arrive, always recognizable by their durable cigarette smoke essence. Soon thereafter he relocated to a townhouse with his son, Gary. The assisted living environment apparently imposed on his independence and smoking habits. I visited him there a month later and his health seemed to be failing. He was weaker and had a harder time breathing. He seemed to be preparing for his demise. He was telling me about getting rid of a lot of his documents and that I could take anything I wanted. It didn’t seem right to me, that I didn’t know him well enough to be taking the fruits of his decades-long personal genealogy crusade and it seemed my taking them would substantiate his mortality. They were also, for the most part, poorly organized, I think from his recent moves – and marinated in cigarette smoke. His computer, with much of his correspondence and other research items, had crashed recently, and he didn’t seem interested in my offers to help him recover the hard drive. He decided to ship in bulk a whole bunch of stuff to the Cornell University library. They hold a collection of personal papers related to its founder, Ezra Cornell, who DNA testing has proven to be a cousin of the original immigrant Sgt. William Cornwell. Other items went to NEGHS and other researchers he had collaborated with. I showed him some of the source materials I had discovered, and that I had either downloaded or scanned all paper items into PDFs, and offered to scan his remaining binders for archival purposes and to distribute to his family. Strangely, he seemed more interested in having me take the binders and wasn’t concerned with getting them back or in the scans.

A few days later he e-mailed that I needed to arrange accommodations for he and I for the Triennial in August 2009. He was a very willful man.

A couple weeks later in August 2007, I was headed to New York City from Boston on business and had a day to kill, so I decided to visit Middletown. I

“His methods were not always conventional and didn’t always follow the accepted protocols for objective research.”

– John Cornwell

walked around Main Street, grabbed dinner, and checked into the Middletown Inn at the old armory. The next morning, I jumped the fence at Riverside Cemetery and spent an hour hunting for recognizable names from my own research.

When I got back to California, I tried calling Gale to tell him about my exploration of Middletown, but his number didn’t answer. This wasn’t disconcerting at first, because he changed numbers often due to his moves. No e-mails nor smoky packets in the mail. No response to e-mails or calls. I hoped he was visiting family or was only temporarily indisposed, but feared the worst, given his age and deteriorating health.

I monitored the SMFSD web site for an announcement, but nothing. A month later I dropped by Gale’s latest residence in Roseville, but nobody was home. I looked in the window by the front door. Clearly there were different people living there. The American flag doormat was gone, too. I tried getting information from the management, but they told me they couldn’t tell me anything due to privacy laws.

Finally, I called the County Recorder, who said she couldn’t give me information either, but that I could order a copy of a death certificate for someone of that name ... a subtle hint. That is how I confirmed he had passed away.

The Middler: Is anyone in Gale’s family interested in Cornwell genealogy?

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“E-mails and packets continued to arrive, always recognizable by their durable cigarette smoke essence.”

– John Cornwell

Native Americans in Middletown, Part I

continued from page 1

last Wangunks faded away late in the 18th century. Yet museums hold in their collections baskets and brooms made by Middletown area Wangunks a hundred years later.

Nevertheless, your editor will try to make sense of it all by digesting the most credible scholarship, and, in Part II, by noting relevant town records about Native Americans in Middletown. This summary compilation will proceed from the general to the specifics related to Middletown.

Adriaen Block meets the “River Indians.” By the time Dutch navigator Adriaen Block (1567-1627) first encountered Native Americans when he sailed up the Connecticut River in 1614, they had been established in the region for several hundred years. While the northeast landform became home to Paleo-Indian hunter-gatherers 12,000 years ago, and Archaic (8000 BCE - 1000 BCE) and Woodland (1000 BCE - 1000 CE) civilizations evolved as the climate changed, it was the eastern Algonquians that came to inhabit the New England region in late prehistoric times.² Four Algonquians groups had migrated to Connecticut from the west in separate waves, the last being the Pequots to southeastern Connecticut about 1600. North of present-day Hartford, Block visited a village of the Podunk tribe, one of a number of overlaying and loosely-affiliated sachem-doms with villages along the rivers of Connecticut.³

Archaeological studies and historical accounts indicate that the 16 identified tribes in Connecticut in the early 1600s practiced far more than just a hunting-fishing economy, but also practiced formalized agriculture. The sachemdoms moved seasonally within their lands according to weather and food sources. Travel was by footpath – many of which are today’s main roads – and by dugout canoe. Houses were wigwams built from saplings set in the ground that were bent to the center and fastened at the top, then covered with bark.⁴ According to Daniel Gookin (1612-1687), who wrote *Historical Collections of the*

Indians of New England in 1674, most were dome-shaped or elongated, housing one family, between 20 and 40-feet long, and were built close together. Some houses were as large as 30x100 feet. Furniture, utensils, and implements were found in every household.⁵

It is estimated that there were 6-7000 Indians in Connecticut in 1636, a population drastically reduced by a plague in 1616-1617 that killed thousands, and smallpox epidemics in 1633 and 1635. Dutch observers noted that Indian villages were upriver rather than at the mouth. Clustered around present-day Middletown on both sides of the river were as many as a half-dozen villages, including Mattabessett, Pocowset, Cockaponset, Coginchang, Cononnacock, and Machamodus. The “River Indian” villages were comprised of clans of 100 to 300 individuals. The village at Mattabessett was likely about 100 people.⁶

Colonial settlements on the river: Over the next few years after Adriaen Block’s explorations, the Dutch set up trading posts on the river near present-day Hartford. In the 1620s envoys from the Podunk tribe joined with the Dutch to encourage residents of the Plymouth colony to settle in Connecticut. The Podunks were among the many smaller tribes who looked to the English to provide security from the warlike Pequots, who were known by neighboring tribes as “destroyers of men.” This overture by the Podunks led to interest in the area – Windsor (1633), Hartford (1635), and Wethersfield (1634) were settled primarily by families from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Colonists rout the Pequots. In 1637 the General Court in Hartford ordered a military campaign against the Pequots, who had been terrorizing colonial settlements. The Mohegans, led by their chief, Uncas, joined forces with the colonists, and the Pequots were driven west in a series of bloody battles.

Note: *This summary does not intend to explain or justify the convoluted history of the cultural clash of invaders vs. natives. In the inevitable escalation of hostilities there was certainly enough brutality to spread around among all involved. For more information on the subject, see the bibliography and commentary at the Connecticut Heritage Gateway web site: http://www.ctheritage.org/biography/topical_indians/general.htm.*

Chief Sowheag sets the stage for settlement of Middletown. In 1639, Chief Sowheag (“Strong Stone”) of the Wangunks made the ill-fated decision to aid fugitive Pequots, providing them safe refuge in retreat to Mattabesek after their 1637 attack on the settlers of Wethersfield that killed nine adults and captured two children (later ransomed by Dutch traders). Governor John Haynes (1594-1654), furious at Sowheag for breaking his promise of friendship with the government, threatened retribution and pressed for concessions. The General Court, however, believed that Sowheag’s “haughty and

insulting manner” was a legitimate response to previous provocations by the people of Wethersfield, and appointed a committee to resolve the difficulties.⁷ Sowheag moved his headquarters from Pyquag (Wethersfield) to Mattabesek on the west side of the Connecticut River, now Middletown, and although he was not cooperative initially, he eventually tried to rebuild his relationship with the colonial government. During this period Sowheag conveyed the entire “township” that became Middletown to Gov. Haynes, though there are scant details of the transaction, and the title was not formalized until 1672. In this same period (c. 1640) he built a fortified village at Indian Hill near the present cemetery of the same name, a militant initiative that undoubtedly dampened enthusiasm about colonial settlement. It was not until 1646 that the General Court formed a committee to investigate settlement at Mattabesek. In 1649 an exploratory expedition determined that the lands could support 15 families. In 1650 Gov. Haynes guaranteed the Wangunks a reservation at the riverbend, in three parcels (about 350 acres in total), “for the posterity of Sowheage.” The first permanent white settlers listed on Middletown’s Founders Rock at Riverside Cemetery arrived in 1650, and in 1653 the General Court approved the name “Middletown.”⁸

Who did the first settlers encounter in Middletown? Wangunks? Mattabesics? Quinnipiacs? Quiripi? Who was who? If one reads through several dozen sources, it is the Wangunks who are mentioned most often as being on both sides of the river in early Middletown. Dr. Blair A. Rudes (1951-2008), scholar of Algonquian linguistics, made a convincing argument that the Mattabesic (various spellings that translate to “at the great river”) were loose collection of related sub-sachemdoms, mostly on the west side of the Connecticut River that included the Wangunks (various spellings that translate to “river bend”). Some recent books, including those by Dr. Rudes, define a wider language grouping of related tribes, the Quiripi. Others prefer to call this grouping the Quinnipiac. Older books bundle the tribes into the “Wappinger Federation” with roots in the Hudson Valley, even though nothing so formal ever existed. Perhaps the Dutch saw the big picture best, and used the term “River Indians.” In this article, we will refer to Middletown area Native Americans as the Wangunks. (Bear in mind that in different sources, you will encounter various spellings: Wangonks, Wangum, Wangom, Wongunks, Wongum, etc.)

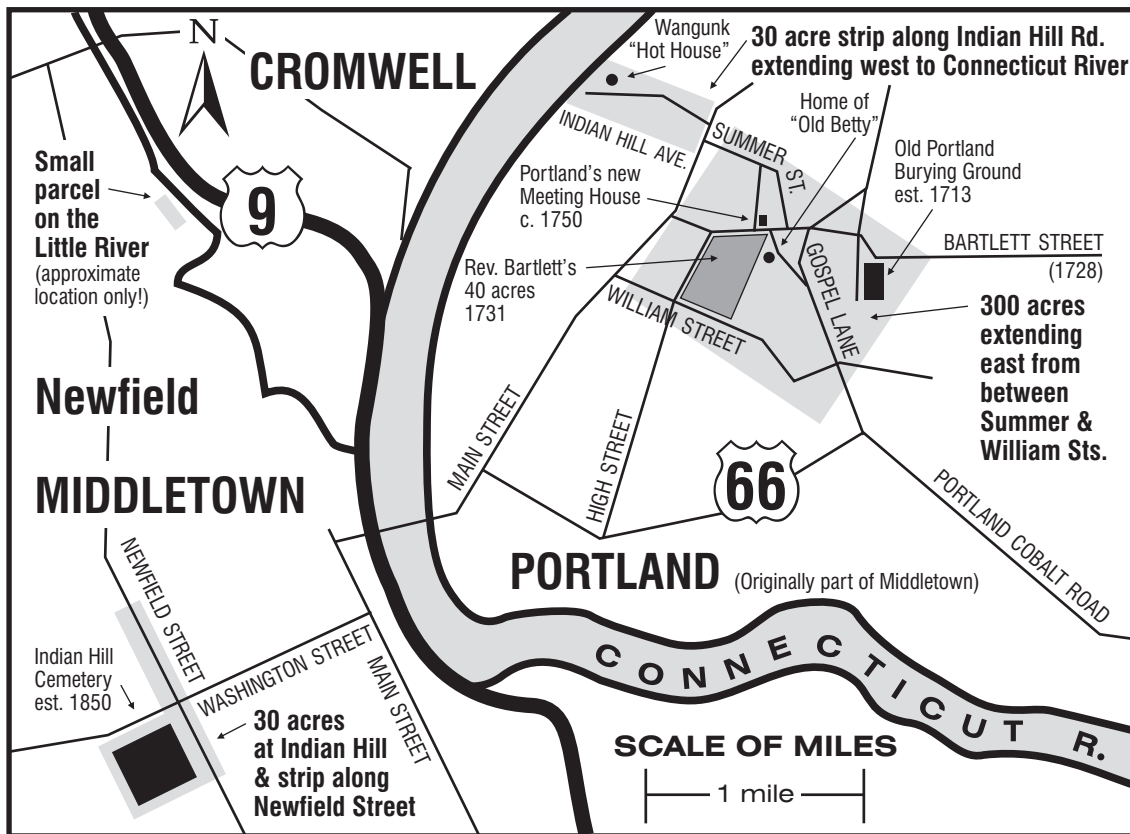
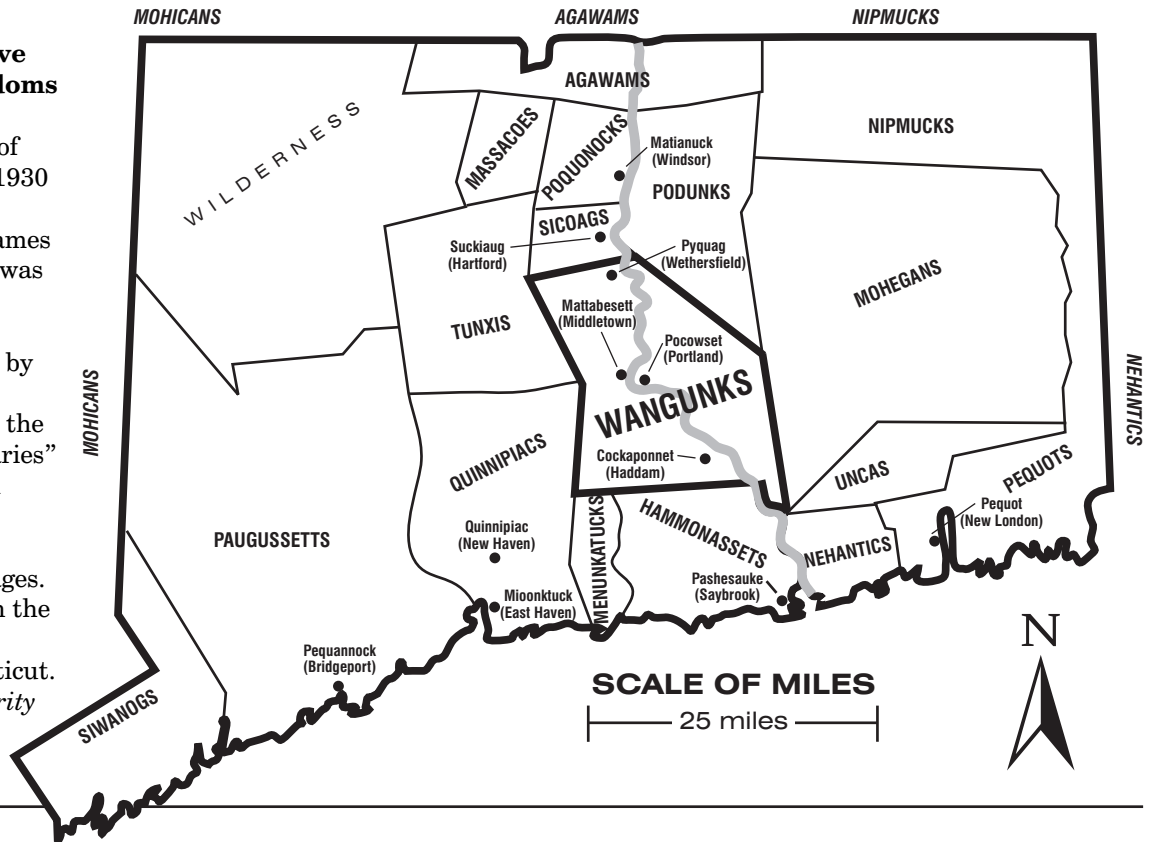
According to the prolific and insightful Portland, Conn. local historian Doris Sherrow, who researched primary source records for a series of fine articles on the Wangunks in 1999, “the picture of the Wangunk that

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Feature Graphic #11: Native Americans in Connecticut ... And Middletown

Connecticut's Native American Sachemdoms in 1625. At right is a simplified redrawing of the map prepared in 1930 for the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America. The map was drawn by Hayden L. Griswold, based on information compiled by Mathias Spiess. In addition to indicating the approximate "boundaries" of the sachemdoms in 1625, the map also showed the primary Indian trails and villages. The original map is in the collection of the University of Connecticut. (Map redrawn for clarity by R.W. Bacon, 2010.)



A map of Native American Lands in Middletown after the Indian Deed of 1672. At left is a map that shows the approximate location of Native American lands in Middletown and present-day Portland, Conn. after the Indian Deed of 1672. Also indicated on the map are several landmarks that are mentioned in Part II of "Native Americans in Middletown," which will appear in the fall 2010 issue of *The Middler*. (Map by R.W. Bacon, 2010.)



Native Americans in Middletown, Part I

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emerges from the scraps of historical sources shows a strong, enterprising people, fully the intellectual equal of the invading English.⁹ The Wangunks were constantly occupied with fishing, hunting, and harvesting, and using the raw materials for food, medicine, clothing, tools, and implements. They adopted the English calendar by the late 17th century, and many were known to write their names in English or by using symbols.¹⁰

David Dudley Field, D.D. (1781-1867), in both his *Statistical Account of Middlesex County*, published in 1819, and in his *Centennial Address*, published in 1853, wrote a narrative of Sowheag, the Wangunks, and how they came to be situated at Mattabeseck. Most later accounts reference Field.

“A large Indian tribe existed here, who were more than suspected of being enemies to the English. Their great sachem, Sowheag, had his castle on the high ground, back from the river, in the north part of the city, and was able thence to call around him many warriors, whose wigwams stood thick on both sides of the Connecticut, at points particularly desirable for settlements,” wrote Field in his *Centennial Address*. “His authority spread over a large territory, over the Piquaug or Wethersfield Indians, over a clan on the north-western branch of the Little River in Berlin, if he had not some right and sway among the Farmington Indians.” In describing how the large township was obtained from the Indians, Dr. Field cited a Yale professor, the Rev. Noah Porter, who referenced two land agreements in an 1840 lecture. Rev. Porter observed that “in 1651 Massacope gives a quitclaim deed of all this land, that he was probably a Mattabesett Indian, and with his son signs the agreement for valuable considerations and gratification at the time of sale.” Not satisfied with the “limits as specified in the deed, he went out and for himself examined and marked the boundaries.”¹¹

In the years following the successful settlement of Middletown, there was increasing interest in the riverbank land to the south. In May 1662, 11 Wangunks, nine men and two women, sold a 150-square mile tract that extended six miles down each side of the Connecticut River. The Wangunks reserved 30 acres of this tract for their own use, plus a river island. This original Wangunk land became part of the future towns of Haddam, East Haddam, and Chester, Conn.¹²

The Indian Deed of 1672. By 1670, early Middletown settlers, by now numbering 52 families, were coveting the riverbank and meadow on the east side of the Connecticut River that was occupied by the Wangunks, and proposed to exchange “land of equal

value.” But the Wangunks held firm, and on January 24, 1672, 13 Indian proprietors signed the deed that formalized the “gift” of Sowheag and the promise of Governor Haynes years before. The town added to and formalized its claim to undivided lands “for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Midleton, their heirs and assigned forever.” (This land extended north to Wethersfield, south to Haddam, and six miles east of the Connecticut River.) The Wangunks were guaranteed land “within the township of Midleton on the east side of the Connecticut River ... to remain to the heirs of Sowheag and the Mattabesett Indians and their heirs forever, and also, one parcel of land on the west side of the Connecticut River ... to remain to the heirs of Sawsean forever.”¹³

The parcels on the east side of the river in what is now Portland, Conn., were about 300 acres. The reservation extended east from Main Street – between Summer and William Streets in present-day Portland – to Center Cemetery. A smaller 30-acre section extended from Portland’s Indian Hill to the Connecticut River. On the northwest side of the Indian Hill parcel was the Wangunk “hot house,” a kind of sauna, heated by fired stones, which was used for medicinal, ritual, or recreational purposes – followed by a dip in the river. Portland’s Indian Hill was also a Wangunk burial ground.¹⁴

The parcel on the west side, about 30 acres, was a strip that began on Newfield Street and extended to the top of Indian Hill where the cemetery of the same name is located today. (A third parcel, not part of this deed, included land at the headwaters of the Little River.) According to Dr. Field: “The Indians had a cemetery previously to the settlement of the English among them, with rude monuments placed over their dead; on them were drawn such devices as corresponded with their superstitions, and such as they were able to prepare with their rude instruments. The Aborigines were numerous about the north-

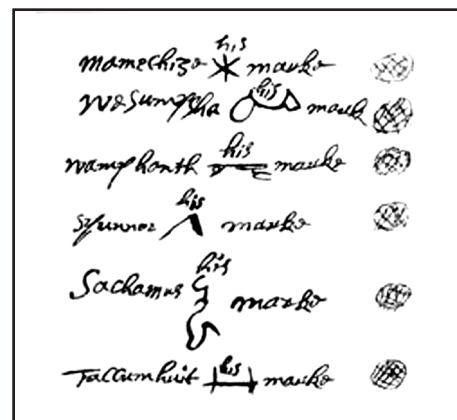
west part of the city, long after the English settlements began. The Little River, where the bridge crosses it from the city to Newfield, was the head of navigation for their water craft, as they returned from trips up and down the Connecticut, loaded with game, peltries and fish. They held lands there until 1713.”¹⁵

The signers of the Indian Deed of 1672: Seponnamoe, Joan alias Weekpissick, Joseph Nash, Mamechize, George Grave, Wesumpsha, Thomas Edwards, Wamphanch, Robard Sanford, Spunnoe, Sachamas, and Taccumhuit. Representing the settlers of Middletown were Samuel Wyllys, John Talcott, James Richards, and John Allyn.¹⁶ On April 8, 1673, additional parties of interest added their signatures: Paskanna, Massekump, Robins, Pewampskin, and Rachiasch. Representing Middletown were Nathaniel White, John Hall, and Samuel Stocking. (A notable cultural difference evidenced by the deed is that among the Indians, both men *and* women could sign legal documents.)¹⁷

Dr. Field noted that the sale of land meant something quite different to the Wangunks than it did to the settlers: “When Indians sold lands, they were in the habit of reserving, besides the exclusive right to small definite tracts, the right of hunting and fishing where they pleased, and of cutting saplings for their simple articles of manufacture, so that the lands were nearly of as much value to them after they were sold as before, until the colonists made very considerable advances in clearing and cultivation. Though such reservation is not mentioned in the deed of the Indians to Mr. Wyllys and others, the right was probably considered as remaining.”¹⁸

King Philip’s War in 1675. When war erupted across New England between the colonists and the Wampanoags of Massachusetts, the Wangunks elected not to participate in war alongside their usual allies, the Narragansetts. The General Assembly noted that “The Womgac have showed willingness to dwell peaceably in our towns.” They were watched closely, however, and expected to “engage in friendship and be enemies to our enemies,” and “set their wigwams where the authority appoints, to be under English watch and ward, and not go forth without license from the authority.” As incentive to peace, the Wangunk were offered two yards of cloth for every head of the enemy – “four yards if alive.”¹⁹

The years were not without incident. In September 1676, a Native American, Cohas, was charged with the murder of John Kirby, Jr. (1651-1676), son of first settler John Kirby (1623-1677) of Middletown Upper Houses (present-day Cromwell, formerly part of Middletown). Kirby was ambushed while traveling on the road to Wethersfield. Cohas was also charged with setting fire to the house



Above is a reduced copy of some of the Wangunk signatures on the Indian deed of 1672. The original is held at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford.

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Native Americans in Middletown, Part I

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of a "Mr. Coale" and a number of robberies. According to Charles Collard Adams in *Middletown Upper Houses*, "The Colonial Records state that an investigation was held by the authorities in August, 1676. Menownieth being examined was asked 'who killed the man between Middletown and Wethersfield?' He gave the names of Munch, Cohas, Tosocum, Cawcochoage, and Wewawoas. At a meeting of the Council of War, Sept. 8, 1676, Cohas, who had been captured by friendly Indians and brought in a prisoner, was accused by Menownieth. The Council decreed he should die by the hand of an Indian: 'The Marshall's appointed to see execution done - which was performed by an Indian.'^{19,20}

The Wangunks sell land to new arrivals. In the 1690s the Wangunks on the east side of the Connecticut River began selling small parcels of meadow land. (Permission was required from the "guardianship" of Connecticut's General Court, which allowed the Wangunks freedom to sell their land if they chose, in one-acre parcels.) According to Doris Sherrow, the deeds often include Native American genealogical information, as if to further justify claim to the land. The parcels were sold at market rate. The daughter of Sowheag himself, Towwehashque Sunck Squa, sold the first parcel to John Clark in 1691.²¹

"There is certainly some reason to suppose that there were several settlers on the east side before the year 1700, but there is only record of three," wrote Julia Bayne on the Portland section of Beers' *History of Middlesex County* (1884). "The first inhabitant of Portland mentioned is James Stancliff. On February 24, 1686-7, the town 'approved of the agreement made by the selectmen with James Stancliff (sic), concerning the building the chimneys, and other stone work, and that when the work is finished the town empower the selectmen to give the said James Stancliff (sic) legal assurance of a parcel of land upon the rocks, according to their agreement.' John Gill also built a house upon the bank about the same time. William Cornwell settled in back of Wangunk Meadow soon afterward."²²

The first wave of settlers on the east side of the river included many other descendants of pre-1700 settlers of Middletown. These families lived in close proximity to the Wangunk and very likely had regular encounters and commerce with them. In May, 1714, 31 persons in "East Middletown" (very likely all heads-of-families) petitioned the General Court and received parish privileges: Beriah Bacon, Shanga Barnes, John Bevin, Samuel and Nathaniel Bidwell, Thomas Bucke, William and Jacob Cornwall, Richard Sill, John Gaines, Ebenezer and Joshua Gill, Richard Goodale,

sen., Richard and Ebenezer Goodale, Thomas Hale, Samuel Hall, Walter Harris, Ebenezer Hurlbut, John Miller, Job Payne. Jonathan Slead, Nathaniel Savage, Jonathan and Ebenezer Smith, James and William Stancliff, Joseph Warner, Joseph and Nathaniel White, and Thomas Wright. Additional settlers arrived in the next several years, and a meeting house was built in 1716.²³

As families settled in "East Middletown," joining stone carver James Stancliff, who was eventually granted land by Middletown selectmen in 1690, they became more involved with their Wangunk neighbors, and vice versa. Several generations of the Stancliff family became known for their gravestone carvings, and in 1702 employed a Wangunk Indian, Sacient, to deliver gravestones to distant towns. In the 1720s the Wangunks donated land for for several town roads, and one of the three surveyors, Giles Cuschoy, was a Wangunk. Information on deeds from Wangunk land transactions in this period indicate that they participated in the Middletown economy, doing business with various tradesmen.²⁴ On the west side of the river, the Wangunk held their lands at Indian Hill and Newfield until 1713.

Wangunk unrest & town pressure. Doris Sherrow, in her article "What Happened to the Wangunks, Part II," cites a town clerk filing as evidence that there may have been a power struggle among the dwindling numbers on the Wangunk reservation. In 1726 several Wangunk, descendants of Wesumsha and Pewampskin, thought it was important to document their descent from the proprietors listed on the Indian Deed of 1672. The Cuschoy surname appeared more frequently on the deeds of that time. The family descended from Robin, also known as "Doctor Robbin," one of the leaders of the Wangunk. Meanwhile the growing town of "East Middletown" was coming to regard the Indian reservation in its midst as a growing inconvenience.²⁵

In the middle of the 18th century it appears that even among their declining numbers, more Wangunks were moving north and west to join other Native American groups, most notably those that merged with Paugussett and Mattabesic Indians at the Schaghticoke reservation near Kent, Conn. Other Wangunks are said to have moved to join a group of Mattabesics, first in Farmington, Conn., then in Stockbridge, Mass. This group, comprised of Pequots, Narragansetts, Montauks, Mohegans, Tunxis, and Niantics, would later move for a time to Oneida, N.Y. before joining other Mattabesics in northern Wisconsin.²⁶

A mid-point summary - but not the final word. Fortunately for today's researcher, the compiler of the Portland, Conn. section for the Beers & Co. history was the capable author/historian Julia Taft Bayne (1845-1933). The following is an excerpt: "For more than 80 years the Indians lived among the whites in

this town. While they were the most numerous it does not appear that they ever used their power to the injury of the settlers. There are no bloody traditions of murdered settlers or burning cabins. They constantly dwindled in number, but remained quiet and gentle, unless under the influence of undue 'fire water' or a frenzied 'powwow,' amenable to the laws, and treated with kindness and consideration. Much of this part of their history is necessarily but the faint echo of tradition."²⁷

In the next issue of *The Middler*, Part II gathers 18th- and 19th-century references, records, and anecdotes about Native Americans in Middletown from various sources and presents them in chronological order. Part II concludes by looking into the whereabouts of Wangunk descendants today. ■

Endnotes for Part I

- (1) *The Middler*, Fall 2009. (Newburyport, Mass.: Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 2009), pg. 11.
- (2) Philip Kopper, Ed. *The Smithsonian Book of North American Indians*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1986), pg. 123-143.
- (3) John W. DeForest. *History of the Indians of Connecticut*. (Hartford, Conn.: Hamersley, 1853), pg. 69.
- (4) DeForest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, pg. 4-13.
- (5) Daniel Gookin. *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*. (Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1792), pg. 149-152.
- (6) Sherburne F. Cook. *The Indian Population of New England in the 17th Century*. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), pg. 60-66)
- (7) David Dudley Field. *Centennial Address, with Historical Sketches of Cromwell, Portland, Chatham, Middle Haddam, Middletown, and its Parishes*. (Middletown, Conn.: W.B. Casey, 1853), pg. 33.
- (8) Field, *Centennial Address*, pg. 34.
- (9) Doris Sherrow. "Who Were the Wangunk?" in *Portland On the Move*, Nov. 1999 (Portland, Conn.: Town of Portland, 1999).
- (10) Sherrow. "Who Were the Wangunk?" in *Portland On the Move*.
- (11) Field, *Centennial Address*, pg. 32.
- (12) DeForest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, pg. 254.
- (13) J.H. Beers. *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*. (New York, N.Y.: J.H. Beers & Co., 1884), pg. 62.
- (14) Sherrow. "Who Were the Wangunk?" in *Portland On the Move*.
- (15) Field, *Centennial Address*, pg. 37.
- (16) Beers, *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*, pg. 62.
- (17) Sherrow. "Who Were the Wangunk?" in *Portland On the Move*.
- (18) Field, *Centennial Address*, pg. 35.
- (19) Beers, *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*, pg. 71.
- (20) Charles Collard Adams. *Middletown Upper Houses*. (New York, N.Y.: Grafton Press, 1908), pg. 595.
- (21) Doris Sherrow. "What Happened to the Wangunk?" in *Portland On the Move*, Dec. 1999 (Portland, Conn.: Town of Portland, 1999).
- (22) Beers, *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*, (Portland section by Julia Bayne), pg. 498.
- (23) Field, *Centennial Address*, pg. 253-254.
- (24) Doris Sherrow. "Portland's First European Resident," in *Portland On the Move*, July. 1999 (Portland, Conn.: Town of Portland, 1999).
- (25) Doris Sherrow. "What Happened to the Wangunks?, Part II," in *Portland On the Move*, Jan. 2000 (Portland, Conn.: Town of Portland, 1999).
- (26) Carl Waldman. *Encyclopedia of American Indian Tribes*. (New York, N.Y.: Facts On File, 2006), pg. 10.
- (27) Beers, *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*, (Portland section by Julia Bayne), pg. 496.

SMFSD member & researcher Hal Whitmore clarifies the Wetmore/Whitmore puzzle in NEHGS magazine

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

Featured in the fall 2009 issue of *New England Ancestors*, the quarterly magazine of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), was an article by SMFSD member Hal Whitmore of Wilmington, Del., that dared to take on the multiple theories about Wetmore, Whitmore, and Whittemore genealogy. Thanks to his years of research and his involvement in the Wetmore/Whitmore DNA project, he was able to clarify the subject for interested researchers both present and future. The following is a recent e-mail interview.

The Middler: What fueled your interest in genealogy? How long have you been researching the Wetmore/Whitmore families?

Hal Whitmore: I think the earliest item in my files is a response received from a Whitmore great aunt in 1945, when I was 12-years-old. My grandmother Whitmore gave me a carbon-copy typescript of a genealogy of her paternal grandmother's family which was sent to her in 1921 by a cousin. This traced the Converse family back to a de Coigniers who had been with William I at the Battle of Hastings. From this I "proved" a royal descent and spent a lot of my free time in high school collecting royal genealogies. (I since proved to my satisfaction that the de Coigniers tale was woefully poor genealogy, and that Deacon Edward Converse who arrived with the Winthrop Fleet had excellent yeoman roots in Essex.)

I first learned that my great-great-grandfather Whitmore was born a Wetmore about 1964 when I corresponded with the granddaughter of his younger brother, and I began building my genealogy library at about that time. Really serious research began some time after 1990.

The Middler: Did your education and/or career factor into your interest in using DNA for genealogy?

H.W.: I don't know that it has. My undergrad degree was in chemical engineering, and then an MBA at night school. In later life I earned an M.A. in religious studies, and after I retired from du Pont, an M. Div. I do remember that all those tests that one took in high school said I should be a librarian, or a teacher of history or English, but I knew they were wrong because I was going to study chemical engineering. I think I took only the most basic course in biology in high school, and nothing later on.

I was an only child and only grandchild of my grandmother Whitmore, and we were close, so I grew up knowing all about her grandparents and great grandparents that she had known as a child. So all the family things that were a part of her memory became a part of mine as well.

The Middler: You have made multiple trips to Middletown for "old-school" genealogy research. Has DNA analysis overturned any prior findings?

H.W.: No, it hasn't. I concluded before DNA testing that the Whittemores were not closely related to the other two, based on some research I had done in England with probate and parish records. The case for making the claim was flimsy. I also thought the case for claiming Francis Whitmore and Thomas Wetmore were brothers was pretty weak, but didn't really have any "conclusion" about that until we completed the testing.

The Middler: When did you first propose the Wetmore/Whitmore article to NEHGS? Were there "hoops" to jump through before publication?

"It was simply a matter of constructing a solid straw man to attack."

— Hal Whitmore



H.W.: I first proposed it to David Allen Lambert on the fall 2008 TMG genealogy cruise. David was leading a seminar on DNA research. I think I knew a good deal more than he or anyone else participating in the Wetmore/Whitmore topic, and we agreed I should "write it up." I finally got around to doing so and sent it off to David, who passed it along. I didn't hear anything for two or three months, followed up and got the editorial revisions pretty quickly, and bingo, it was in print. (I assume they were short on articles for the DNA section.) The editors were great to work with.

The Middler: How did you distill centuries of conflicting and confusing interpretations into 2½ pages?

H.W.: LOL. I'm inclined to phrase this as "how did you stretch such a simple idea into 2½ pages?" Put simply, the article can be summed up as: A lot of Whitmore and Wetmore genealogists thought the two patriarchs were brothers and some Whittemore genealogists claimed all three patriarchs were closely related. DNA proves that none of the three were closely related. I had encountered most of the articles to which I referred in the course of routine research, so it was simply a matter of constructing a solid straw man to attack.

The Middler: What feedback have you received since the article appeared?

H.W.: I received a nice letter from the editor, favorable comment from several members of SMFSD, and from a couple members of the DNA project to whom I sent copies.

The Middler: As a relatively new member of SMFSD, what are your current research interests?

H.W.: I'm presently trying to do a complete study on the descendants of Joseph/2 Wetmore, one of the sons of Thomas/1 Wetmore (the immigrant and first settler) up through the 1930 census. That should cover eight or nine generations. I'm the 10th from Thomas and was born in 1933. ■



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), which itself was derived in part from the *List of Householders & Proprietors*, Middletown, March 22, 1670. **Names in boldface** are the original 1650-54 settlers. **N.B.!**: *This list is known to be incomplete!* If you descend from a pre-1700 settler *not* on this list, 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	John 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 Stancliff . . . 1686	Francis Whitmore . . 1674
Nathaniel Collins . . 1664	Benjamin Hands . . 1678	Thomas Miller . . . 1650	Samuel Stocking. 1650	John Wilcox 1654
Samuel Collins 1665	Daniel Harris 1653	John Payne 1676	John Stow 1667	James Wright 1690
William Cornwell 1650	William Harris . . . 1650	George Phillips . . . 1680	Nathaniel Stow . . . 1676	

Membership benefits . . .

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

- Two issues per year of *The Middler*, the SMFSD newsletter full of information useful for research about Middletown's first settler families and local history.
- Full member access to the SMFSD web site which includes first settler profiles, genealogy resources, local history articles, a custom-prepared annotated bibliography for Middletown research, and an archive of past *Middler* issues.
- The annual membership roster enabling you to network with Middletown "cousins" and researchers across the country.
- The opportunity to attend SMFSD meetings (every three years) in Middletown that include genealogy research, cemetery tours, library/museum visits, member networking, and social events.
- The opportunity to participate in the organization, suggest/plan meeting activities, and vote on SMFSD business.

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

If you are a descendant of *any* pre-1700 Middletown settler, and would like to join SMFSD, here is the easy 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 Registrar will review the application for approval. Documentation is required only through the line of descent from the 1650-1700 settler. 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 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 \$20.00 (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.

Friends of SMFSD. Are you a history enthusiast? Would you like to receive *The Middler*? Join us at \$20 per year!

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.



Science & serendipity ...

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J.C.: I only met his son, Gary, who appeared to be living with him. I think Gary spoke five words to me over several visits. I got the impression Gale was estranged from some of his family.

The Middler: When Gale asked you to take his genealogy files, was it to be an “agenda-driven gift,” or did he just want the papers in responsible hands?

J.C.: Both. I think he wanted to convince me of his viewpoints and thought I’d be a responsible party with his documents. I couldn’t take them, and they were very unorganized. He sent most of them to Cornell University, based on the DNA connection showing Cornells and Cornwells are “unanimous” as he would say. There was a letter sent to Cornell family researchers by Ezra Cornell in the late 1800s soliciting genealogy materials. Gale used this

as a basis to send cases of mostly unorganized materials to the Cornell library. I have a copy of the letter of acceptance.

The Middler: Gale’s initiatives are still in progress today as evidenced by the SMFSD and the Cornwell DNA project. Are there other ways that Gale made his mark in the genealogy world?

J.C.: I think he inspired a lot of people to be passionate about family history and city, state, and national patriotism. His methods were not always conventional and didn’t always follow the accepted protocols for objec-

tive research. This is rather surprising for a career NTSB investigator. He was one of the last of a generation of dyed-in-the-wool patriots to whom the country owes a debt of gratitude.

The Middler: Finally, give us your impressions of Middletown and the SMFSD Triennial. What’s on the horizon for your genealogy pursuits?

J.C.: I really liked Middletown. Main street is a great mix of old and new. Nice restaurants and bars. Wesleyan is a beautiful campus. I would like to visit again soon with my wife. I enjoyed the cemetery tours, and O’Rourke’s Diner. A highlight was the Saturday dinner and getting to know other Middletown first-settler descendants. I definitely plan to attend the next Triennial. I’m working on a well-referenced Cornwell ancestry, with copies of all primary sources, and will try and get a copy together for Godfrey Library. ■

“I think he inspired a lot of people to be passionate about family history and city, state, and national patriotism.”

– John Cornwell

