



The Middler

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

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Spring 2012

SMFSD TRIENNIAL MEETING 2012

Descendants of Middletown's early settlers to meet in ancestral hometown October 17-20

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

Registration is now open for SMFSD's 2012 Triennial Meeting October 17-20 in Middletown, Conn.

Middletown first-settler descendants, cousins, genealogists, and local history enthusiasts will enjoy a rich program of lectures, research opportunities, and social events in the ancestral hometown. The schedule and registration form is on page 11.

While past SMFSD meetings have been in August or September, this year's meeting is scheduled so that attendees may also choose to attend the annual seminar of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists on Saturday, October 20 in North Haven, Conn.

Event-planning subcommittee members Marge Piersen and Sue Welles have brainstormed for over a year to craft a genealogy-filled and history-packed program.

Wednesday, October 17 is designated as a welcoming "Meet & Greet" day at the headquarters hotel, the Marriott Residence Inn in Rocky Hill, Conn., with an informal group dinner in the evening at a nearby restaurant.

Thursday, October 18 will be "Cemetery Day," when descendants returning to Middletown will have the opportunity to tour a number of the oldest in-town cemeteries that are seldom unlocked for public access, thanks to Augie DeFrance of the Middletown Old Burying Grounds Association and Ruth Shapleigh-

At right is a look down tree-lined Broad Street, Middletown, as seen from the corner of Broad and Washington Sts. in an early 20th-century postcard view. Attend our meeting in October and see Broad St. in fall color.



Brown of the Connecticut Gravestone Network. Featured this year is Ms. Brown's tour of Old North Burying Ground in Middlefield, the town that was once the westernmost part of early Middletown. Thursday afternoon will be a visit to the Cromwell Historical Society – the present town of Cromwell was the northern part of

early Middletown known as the "Upper Houses."

Friday, October 19 will be "Research & Lecture Day" that includes research periods at Godfrey Memorial Library and Russell Library. An afternoon lecture, "Middletown as a Seaport," will be presented at Russell

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SMFSD meeting convenient to CSG annual seminar

The dates for this year's SMFSD Triennial Meeting were chosen so our members from distant points might also attend the annual seminar of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists.

This year the seminar is Saturday, October 20, 2012 at the Holiday Inn, North Haven, Conn., just 23 miles south of our headquarters hotel.

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SMFSD NEWS

Three newest members on SMFSD rolls span the continent – east, west, & middle

• **Welcome new members.** SMFSD extends an enthusiastic welcome to three new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Arlene Knappe Shuster**, LM-297, Escondido, Calif. (1st settler William Cornwall); **Matthew Robert McCormack**, AM-298, Dexter, Mich. (1st settler Isaac Johnson); **Fredric W. Scott**, D.V.M., Ph.D., LM-299, Brooktondale, N.Y. (1st settler Thomas Ranney).

• **Geographical distribution of membership.** Your editor has always been fascinated by the migration paths of Middletown first-settler descendants, and by the geographic distribution of the avid genealogists who elect to join SMFSD. Perhaps this is because your editor's family, on both sides, resolutely

stayed within the New England states from the 1620s onward – generations of farmers, mariners, and craftsmen. Most SMFSD members appear to be descendants of families that migrated to New York, Ohio, or Michigan, and whose

later generations carried descendants to points further west. SMFSD has comparatively few members from Connecticut, even though there are very likely many who qualify. Could it be that our Connecticut first-settler “cousins” take for granted the genealogical riches in their midst? Or that our geographically distant “cousins” are more riveted by the thrill of a far-off family history discovery? Perhaps an informal survey at our October meeting is in order! ■

Triennial Meeting set for Oct. 17-20

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Library by researcher and author Erik Hesselberg (co-sponsored by Russell Library, Godfrey Library, and the Middlesex County Historical Society). Later in the afternoon, genealogy gives way to oenology at the Wine & Cheese social hosted by Don & Lyn Brock. The Friday evening banquet at Carmen Anthony's Restaurant in Wethersfield will be followed by guest speaker Dr. Ronald Schatz, professor of history at Wesleyan University.

Saturday, October 20 will be “CSG Seminar Day” for those that

choose to attend the all-day event in North Haven. (See the separate article on the CSG seminar for details.) Attendees may also research independently at libraries with Saturday hours, such as the Connecticut State Library or the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, Conn.

Throughout the four days will be ample opportunity to network and socialize with Middletown “cousins” at informal dinners and lunches apart from scheduled events.

Check out the schedule and registration form on page 11, then mark your calendar and plan to join us this fall in New England for the 2012 SMFSD Triennial Meeting. ■



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FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS
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In town for SMFSD's Triennial Meeting? Sign up for CSG's annual seminar, too

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The all-day (8 a.m. - 4 p.m.) seminar, “Enhancing Genealogical Paths,” will feature four speakers.

Laura Prescott of Research Services LLC will speak on historical context in her presentation entitled “Timelines: Placing Your Heritage in Historical Perspective.”

Melvin Smith of the Connecticut State Library will speak on “Probate Records: A Gold Mine for Genealogical Research.”

“Pilgrim Migrations: The Why, Where, and Results” is the topic of Gregory Thompson of the Mayflower Society.

Joseph Camposeo, the Manchester, Conn. Town Clerk, will dispense advice on research in his presentation

entitled: “Researching at Your Local Town Clerk's Office: A Storehouse of Genealogical Treasures.”

SMFSD will also be an exhibitor at the CSG seminar.

Registration and payment for the seminar is separate from SMFSD Triennial Meeting registration. Pre-registration is required by October 15. The cost is \$45 if registration is postmarked before Sept. 30; \$55 after Sept. 30. The cost includes lunch. Reservations are accepted by mail (Connecticut Society of Genealogists, P. O. Box 435, Glastonbury, CT 06033) or phone (860-569-0002).

For the latest information, visit the Connecticut Society of Genealogists web site at www.csginc.org. ■

Connecticut Society of Genealogists can take pride in its continued advocacy of vital records access

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

Since the 2012 SMFSD Triennial Meeting is scheduled in October, and since many attendees are likely to register for the Connecticut Society of Genealogists (CSG) annual seminar October 20, *The Middler* newsletter is a fine medium to offer some background information about CSG – and encourage membership in an organization known for its advocacy of vital records access.

CSG is a non-profit membership organization with its headquarters and library located in East Hartford, Conn. The society was founded in 1968 to promote genealogical research, elevate standards, and publish both research and educational material. According to the organization's web site, www.csGINC.org, membership exceeds 4000, with over 1,000 outside of Connecticut.

Five classes of membership are offered, from Basic (\$34 annually) to Life (one payment of \$680). Benefits include the society's quarterly journal, *The Connecticut Nutmegger*; the CSG quarterly magazine, *Connecticut Genealogy News*; access to members-only web site content; and discounts to selected books. The blue CSG membership card is recognized by town clerks throughout Connecticut, and provides streamlined access to vital records held in local and state archives.

The CSG Library (175 Maple Street, East Hartford, Conn.) holds over 5,000 books, plus more than 18,000 pedigree charts submitted by members over the past 40-plus years. The library is open Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

For additional information about CSG membership, visit the web site as www.csGINC.org and download the membership application.

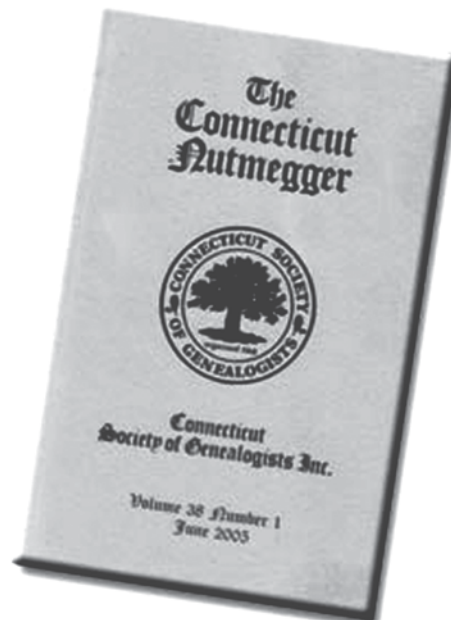
CGS history. The idea of a statewide genealogical organization grew in the 1960s from discussions



among researchers at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. These researchers shared the common experience of meeting resistance from government bureaucracy when seeking access to vital records.

Humble notices on the library's bulletin board led to a meeting of 22 interested genealogists in March 1968. At a second meeting a month later, the name "Connecticut Society of Genealogists" was adopted.

Eminent genealogist and Connecticut native Donald Lines



The Connecticut Nutmegger, the journal of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, has been published quarterly since 1969. CSG also publishes a quarterly magazine, *Connecticut Genealogy News*.

Jacobus was given membership number one in recognition of his contributions to the field, even though he was not in attendance.

The following objectives were adopted at CSG's founding meeting:

"The objectives of the Society are locating, preserving, and indexing public and private genealogical records and making such records and collections available to members and to the general public; acquiring genealogical and historical materials and contributing them to public libraries or historical or genealogical organizations; encouraging and instructing members in the art and practice of genealogical research and compilation; and maintaining and elevating genealogical standards."

Publication of CSG's quarterly journal, *The Connecticut Nutmegger*, began in 1969. This publication features articles on Connecticut genealogy, family histories, town histories, vital records, cemetery records, book reviews, and member queries. CSG members can search *The Connecticut Nutmegger* online. Members of the New England Historic Genealogical Society can also access page images of vols. 1-43 (all issues through 2010) online.

CSG is one of the founders of the Federation of Genealogical Societies and the New England Regional Genealogical Conference. Perhaps the most longstanding interest is the advocacy of vital records access. CSG works in cooperation with Town Clerks of Connecticut to ensure ethical and responsible use of records, and as such, the CSG membership card signals the credibility of its holder.

The CSG Library was a research destination at the 2003 SMFSD Triennial Meeting. Since then, SMFSD members have crossed paths with CSG at numerous genealogical conferences, and this year SMFSD looks forward to renewing acquaintance at the CSG Annual Seminar. ■

EXODUS FROM MIDDLETOWN: WHERE THEY WENT

A shift in political winds, and some luck, could have led more Middletown families to ... Natchez, Mississippi?!

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series entitled "Exodus from Middletown: Where They Went," that explores places where descendants of early Middletown families removed to in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Previous topics were Whitestown, N.Y. (*The Middler*, fall 2007 issue) and Stow, Ohio (*The Middler*, spring 2008 issue).

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

Early 2012 has already seen the welcome republication of three classics by the New England Historic Genealogical Society. One of these is *The Expansion of New England: The Spread of New England Settlement and Institutions to the Mississippi River 1620-1865*, by Lois Kimball Mathews, originally published in 1909.

For those interested in the movement of early Middletown families out of New England, the familiar material is there about the settlement of central New York and northeastern Ohio. Revisiting this book, however, also served as a reminder of an ambitious colonization effort by Middletowners and others in the 1770s that did not quite go as planned – in the unlikely "West Florida" destination now known as Natchez, Mississippi.

The following details about the difficulties of the "Phineas Lyman Colony" are drawn from (1) Ms. Mathews' book; (2) *The Memoirs and Adventures of Capt. Matthew Phelps* (1802), (3) *The History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period*, by Albert James Pickett (1851), (4) *The Pioneers, Preachers, and People of the Mississippi Valley*, by William Henry Milburn (1860); (5) *All the Western States and Territories, from the Alleghenies to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf, Containing Their History from the Earliest Times*,

by John Warner Barber (1867); and *The Encyclopedia of Mississippi History*, by Dunbar Rowland (1907).

The ill-fated "Lyman Colony" in what was known in the 1770s as "West Florida," was the brainchild of Major General Phineas Lyman (1716-1774), a native of Durham, Conn. He was a lawyer, graduate of Yale College, and commander of Connecticut forces for the provincial British army in the French-and-Indian War (1754-1763).

In 1763 he went to England to begin his campaign for a grant of land for New England veterans (the "Military Adventurers") and their families in the new British colony of West Florida. He remained in England, separated from his family, until 1772, when a royal charter was granted for land along the Mississippi River, near what is now Natchez, Miss.

The surveyor for the Lyman Colony, Rufus Putnam, reported so favorably on the soil and climate that families from towns all along the Connecticut River signed on. In December 1773 two ships departed from Middletown bound for New Orleans. Enumerated from Middletown on the passenger lists: Hugh White (who later in 1784 led the exodus to "Whitestown" near the present Utica, N.Y.), Capt. _____ Ellsworth, Ira Whitmore, and _____ Sage. Accounts of the enterprise are

full of names familiar to Connecticut genealogy researchers, and refer to others from Middletown whose names escaped the records. Some brought with them as many as eight slaves.

Gen. Lyman and his company arrived at New Orleans in 1774, but while they were at sea, an order from England was received by the colonial governor of West Florida prohibiting the grant of more land. Gen. Lyman and company learned that they could settle only as "squatters," and might lose their land in the future. They continued with settlement plans about 17 miles north of Natchez.

In 1773-1774 more than 400 families removed to West Florida. Most went by sea, but some traveled by flatboat down the Ohio River, and some overland through Tennessee.

Gen. Lyman saw his 10-year vision become a reality, but the hardships took their toll, and he died in 1774 before he could cultivate his land. His eldest son died shortly thereafter.

Before the general's passing, Capt. Matthew Phelps had returned to

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Middletown to West Florida? The above map shows the boundaries of West Florida under the British rule 1763-1780. In 1763 a royal proclamation limited West Florida on the west by the Mississippi River, on the north by the 31st parallel, and on the east by the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola rivers. In 1767 the territory as far north as 32-28 was added to West Florida.

Connecting to Grace Bacon: A 1670 land grant, a 7th cousin, two libraries, and a hardware store

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

A few months ago I stumbled across an article that appeared in *The Connecticut Nutmegger*, the quarterly journal of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, in June 1974 (Vol. 7, No. 1). The title caught my eye: “Early Settlers of Middletown.” The parenthetical description was “A talk given by Miss Grace W. Bacon, former librarian at Wesleyan, at the Middlesex County Historical Society, 151 Main Street, Middletown, Conn.”

When I read the eight-page article, I realized that I had stumbled across the same piece years before (**connection #1**) in the proceedings of the Middlesex County Historical Society. I recalled being amused at that earlier time that a Middletown first-settler descendant and distant cousin who shared my surname (**connection #2**) apparently also shared the obsession with under-the-radar history and hanging out in research libraries. (**connections #3 & #4**)

The 1974 article is a brief but worthy history of the early settlement of Middletown, a compilation from various well-known sources such as David Dudley Field’s *Centennial Address* (1853) and the one-and-only Frank Farnsworth Starr’s *Settlers of Mattabeseck* (1900). (**connection #5** – F. F. Starr profile in *The Middler*, spring 2007.) The article is also spiced with tidbits from town records culled from secondary sources, and mentions dozens of early settler families.

But after the most recent encounter with this article, I decided to find out more about Grace W. Bacon, the cousin/historian that I missed during my earliest research in Middletown in the 1970s. What I discovered was a web of connections so dense that I wonder how I avoided crossing paths with this 7th cousin/3x removed.

Grace Williams Bacon was born in Middletown in 1902, the daughter of

Willis E. Bacon (1867-1950) and Susan T. Williams (1869-1945). She graduated from Boston University in 1926, and later earned a second master’s degree from Columbia University. In 1930, Boston University published her thesis, *The Military Career of Israel Putnam*. After teaching school for a few years, she spent the early decades of her library career at the Yale Law Library. During her time there she published articles in law journals on topics of crime and punishment in early Middletown. In later decades she was assistant librarian at Wesleyan University’s Olin Library. Who did she assist? Until his retirement in 1953, none other than Fremont Rider (1885-1962), library science icon and founder of Godfrey Memorial Library (1951), the genealogy library which is now SMFSD’s nominal headquarters. (**connection #6** – profile of Fremont Rider in *The Middler*, fall 2010.)

After Grace Bacon’s retirement from Wesleyan University in 1967, she turned her energies to organizing the library at Middletown’s First Church, now known as the Grace W. Bacon Library.

In 1996, when Grace Bacon was still living an active, independent life at age 94, she was the subject of a lengthy profile in the *Hartford Courant* Sunday magazine by Larry Bloom entitled “Aging With Grace.” The author was obviously smitten by her life experience, world travels, intellectual curiosity, outwardly-focused humanity, and the atmosphere of her lifelong, book-filled family home.

“I don’t mean to suggest that she has solved the great issues of life, or that we ought to review earlier eras in a way that would paint them, falsely, as Paradise,” wrote Bloom. “But there is something to be learned from Grace Bacon, something to be learned from people like her, particularly in a society that worships what is young and new and facelifted.”

“I am a chatty old gal,” said Grace Bacon, apologizing for close to a century of stories, such as her recollection of baling hay in her family’s fields off Newfield Street – then a mud road – and hearing the town whistle announce the end of World War I on Nov. 11, 1918.

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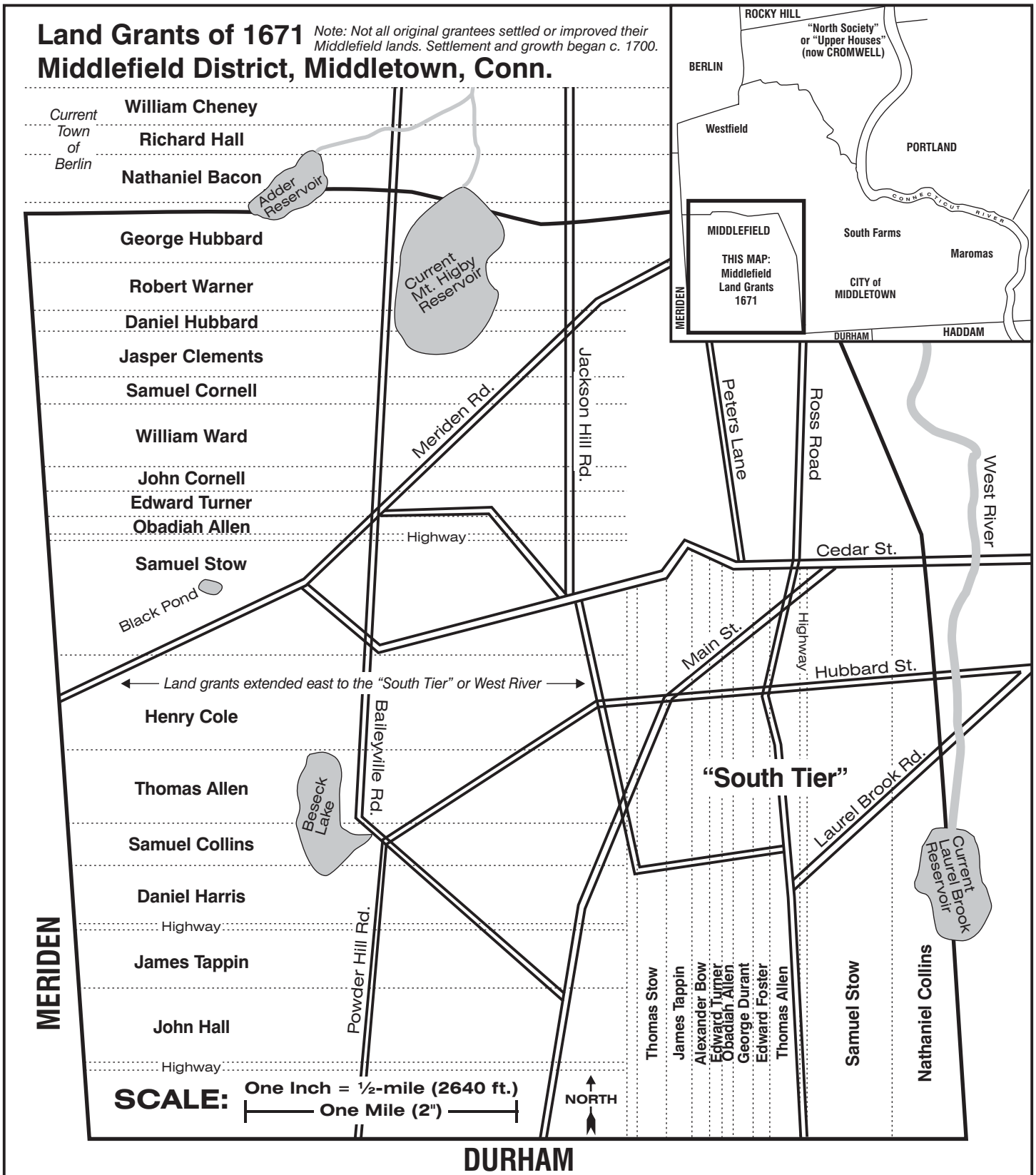


At right is Grace Bacon’s family home on Newfield Street in Middletown as it was shortly after her death in 2000. Her father built the brick house in 1898. The lot was part of the 1670 land grant (297 acres) to 1650 settler Nathaniel Bacon. Above is Grace Bacon’s headstone at New Farm Hill Cemetery in Middletown.



Feature Graphic #16 – Jessie Alsop Map of Middlefield District (1671 Grants)

The map below is redrawn from a digital scan of Jessie Alsop's pencil-drawn interpretation of the Middlefield 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, created her maps. Photocopies are held at the Middletown Room of Russell Library. (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2012.) Other redrawn Jessie Alsop maps were published in *The Middler* in the fall 2007 and spring 2008 issues. (Note that present-day street names are added for reference.)



A look back at the early settlement of Middlefield, at the westernmost frontier of early Middletown

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

With the discovery of the Jessie Alsop map of Middlefield and its redraw and publication in this issue of *The Middler*, the time is just right for an overview of this westernmost section of early Middletown. Making the subject even more relevant is SMFSD's visit to Middlefield's Old North Burying ground at this year's Triennial Meeting.

The 13.3 square-mile area became known as Middlefield because it was approximately halfway between Middletown and Durham, Conn. Middlefield became a separate town in 1866, and before that was part of Middletown from the beginning, though it was not settled to any degree until about 1700.

Geographically Middlefield is distinguished in the western part by Higby Mountain and Besek Mountain, part of the Metacomet Ridge that extends north through Connecticut and Massachusetts to the Vermont border. At the base of these mountains in Middlefield are several large reservoirs and ponds, including Higby Mountain Reservoir, Adder Mountain Reservoir, Besek Lake, and Black Pond.

For a concise summary of early Middlefield history, your editor cannot improve on the brief contribution of Phineas Miller Auger in *The History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*:

"Settlement and Early History.

The first settlement of Middlefield was not until some fifty years later than that of Middletown, or about 1700.

The people of Middletown were undoubtedly familiar with her beautiful hills and valleys, her dense forests, her dashing waterfalls, and the abundant game and fish in her forests and streams. Yet the fertile fields of Middletown, her church, and schools, and society were such as to naturally prevent her sons from leaving their established homes at an early period.

About the year 1700, Benjamin Miller, with his wife and several small children, came from South Farms, Middletown, to settle in the wilds of Middlefield. He located on what might have been a partially open field, in the extreme south part of the town, not more than 100 rods from where is now its south line. The same year Samuel Allen came from Middletown to a beautiful site in the extreme north of the town. As Benjamin Miller's place reached the south line of the town, so Allen's reached its north line. Though four miles from his former neighbors, he could undoubtedly see their houses, and they could see his. During the same year, Samuel Wetmore located in Middlefield, near the center.

Though these three men were within what is now the town of

Middlefield, they were in no sense neighbors, for Allen was two miles north of Wetmore, and Miller one-and-a-half miles south, with an unbridged river between, and no roads to connect with either.

Soon, however, the families of Hubbard, Ward, Bacon, Stow, and Turner came from Middletown; Lyman, Coe, and Camp from Durham; Birdsey from Stratford; and Bartlett from Guilford. So the people in this section gradually increased in numbers, until, in 1744, in October, the parish of Middlefield was incorporated as a separate ecclesiastical society.

It appears that the people of Middlefield, from the outset, were independent thinkers, each man having a will and strong convictions

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Below is a view of Black Pond in Middlefield, located at the base of the Besek Mountain cliffs. At right is the gravestone of one of Middlefield's earliest settlers, Samuel Wetmore (1660-1746). The stone is at Old North Burying Ground, a destination on Cemetery Day of the SMFSD 2012 Triennial Meeting in October.



Rum & Axes, a micro-study of American capitalism, is also a window into early 19th-century Middletown

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

In the 2002 book, *Rum & Axes, the Rise of a Connecticut Merchant Family, 1795-1850*, the author, anthropologist and professor Janet Siskind, focuses on the personal correspondence and business records of one tightly-knit entrepreneurial family to explore the beginnings of industrial capitalism in the United States. For those interested in Middletown, Conn. history and genealogy, however, the primary source materials interpreted by Dr. Siskind provide a fascinating look at our ancestral hometown – at precisely the era when so many descendants of early-settler families were looking to leave.

Rum & Axes tells the story of three generations of the Watkinson family, who arrived in Middletown in 1795. The primary source records on this family and their businesses exists because of happy accident: One family member, David Watkinson, founded two historical archives in Hartford, and his nephews, founders of the Collins Co. (manufacturers of axes), preserved correspondence, account books, and a memoir. Combined, the materials present a multi-dimensional story.

The men's letters were mostly about business, but all the brothers and cousins revealed individual personalities. Letters from the women in the family deal more expansively with family, friendship, and the differences between England and Connecticut.

Samuel Watkinson, age 50, his wife, age 51, and their 12 children, aged between 26 and 9, left Lavenham, Suffolk, England for America in 1795. They were an established middle class family, neither rich nor poor, but were "Dissenters" from the Anglican church.

In England Samuel Watkinson was a master wool comber, purchasing raw wool for manufacture and coordinating its cleaning, combing, spinning, collection, and resale.

The family arrived on several ships, eventually gathering in Marblehead,

Mass. They scouted the Connecticut River Valley, and chose Middletown as a place to set down roots, comparable in size and geography to Lavenham.

Farming was still the main occupation in the town at large, but the town center was packed with merchants, artisans, sailors, and slave dealers. Middletown was in its heyday as a port in the West Indies trade. Class stratification was evident in wealth, education, and manners, and poverty was beginning to be a social problem. After the Revolution, party politics beget suspicion, Federalists vs. Jeffersonians.

The Watkinsons arrived as well-read as they could be about New England, and brought with them letters of introduction and some capital. The young men in the family had expected to take up farming in the manner of English gentlemen. But then they discovered that in New England farmers did most of their own work. After visiting factories along the coast

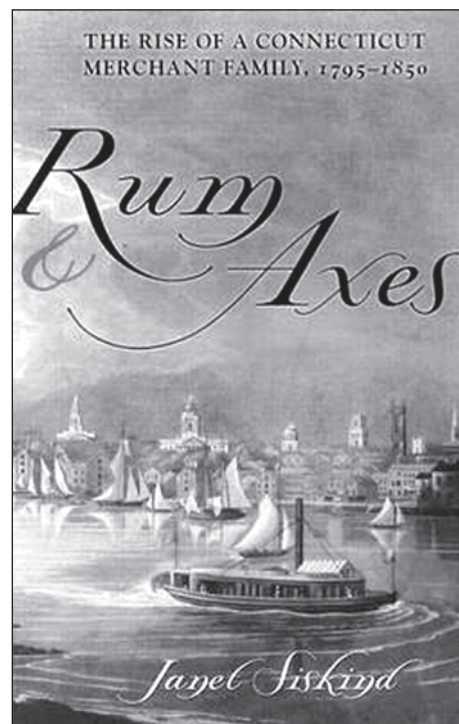
from Massachusetts to Connecticut, they observed that the class of men they identified with were engaged in mercantile or manufacturing activities. In Middletown they made a point to socialize with the established merchant families: "Yesterday eve we went to Capt. Wetmore's to tea, and met Jehosophat Starr and his lady."

Samuel Watkinson nurtured friendships with Jeremiah Wadsworth of Hartford, and Elijah Hubbard and William Ely of Middletown. In this way he was able to place his sons in the lucrative shipping business in New York and Philadelphia. His daughters married into merchant families.

By 1798 the Watkinson brothers were back in Middletown, solidly set up in the West Indies trade, owning several ships and dry-goods stores in partnership with Elijah Hubbard, John Watkinson's new father-in-law. For export Watkinson bought produce, barrel staves, horses, beef, and oats. On the return he imported and sold sugar, molasses, rum, and coffee. The author notes that nowhere in the ledgers is there mention of slave labor, as if the ships were "magical sites where horses were transformed into rum."

After the 1807 Embargo Act and the War of 1812, family enterprises shifted to production of cloth. In 1826 two Watkinson nephews founded the Collins Co. to manufacture axes and a variety of edge tools. The essence of the book is the study of management's pragmatic, devolving attitude toward its labor force. After 140 years, the company closed in 1966. The mill buildings in Collinsville, Conn. still stand.

Throughout the book are excerpts from family letters that describe their activity in Middletown in the early 19th century. One of your editor's favorites concerns the lovable traits of Yankee independence and utter lack of deference: "We have just got a new maid servant ... and also a black boy. Both promise to suit pretty well, though the woman is rather too Yankyfied." ■



Rum & Axes: The Rise of a Connecticut Merchant Family, 1795-1850, by Dr. Janet Siskind, emeritus professor of anthropology at Rutgers University, was published in 2002 by Cornell University Press.

Middletown to West Florida?

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Connecticut to recruit more families – some with their slaves – from Middletown and along the Connecticut River. After some delay, a ship commanded by Middletown’s Capt. Eggleston sailed from Middletown in spring 1776. His passengers included the general’s wife, Eleanor (Dwight) Lyman, hoping to join her husband, and five of their younger children; and Eleanor’s brother, Major Timothy Dwight and family. There were other unnamed passengers, according to Phelps, “who accompanied me in my two voyages, whose memories I shall ever respect, although their names have escaped my recollection.”

The ship reached New Orleans after a three-month voyage. Capt. Phelps and his entire family were overtaken by illness, so the rest of the passengers poled small boats up the Mississippi River eager to see the improvements made at the settlement. Upon arrival, the party’s minister, Rev. Elnathan Smith, died of exhaustion in the sweltering heat. Eleanor (Dwight) Lyman was greeted by the news that her husband and eldest son had died.

She died less than a year later in April 1777 at age 60. Her brother, Timothy, died in June 1777 (1726-1777).

Capt. Matthew Phelps had his own trials while his small raft remained tied up among the willows at Point Coupee due to his family’s illness: “the malaria of the swamps,” according to historian William H. Milburn. First, two of his children died, then his wife, and he buried them at the river’s edge. With his two remaining children (a boy, 5, and girl, 10) and two hired helpers, they poled upriver towards the settlement. Before reaching their destination the raft was upset by the current and the two children drowned.

The remaining members of the Lyman family – and the “colony” – continued until invasion by Spain in 1781-82. Histories cite the Connecticut settlers as “thrifty and successful planters in the country round Natchez, with handsome dwellings, large estates, and scores of slaves.”

As ardent Loyalists at the time of the Revolution, they were courted by agents of the new American Congress to remain neutral, but promises were broken, followed by distrust and skirmishes. Being British subjects

unwilling to cooperate with the independence movement or submit to Spain, they fled through the wilderness to Savannah, the nearest British post. But with England and the American colonies at war, a direct route was too dangerous. They were determined to avoid the colonials, but they also feared hostile Indians. It is estimated that the caravan of men, women, and children covered a circuitous 1400 miles in 149 days.

In Dunbar Rowland’s *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History*, he writes: “In the year 1802, the survivors of the colony, about one hundred in number, reorganized themselves, and petitioned congress for a confirmation of their old grants, but it does not appear that anything was done for them. Thus ended this famous land venture, which caused a good deal of excitement in New England at the time.”

Lois Kimball Mathews concludes mention of the Lyman Colony thusly: “Illness overtook many, and the outbreak of the Revolution put an end to further additions to the colony. There are, however, many families of New England origin in and about Natchez today.” ■

Middlefield settlement ...

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of his own, which is a striking characteristic of their descendants. At the time the ecclesiastical society was incorporated the following were the chief citizens: Samuel Allen Sen., Samuel Allen Jr., Ephraim and Obadiah Allyn, Thomas Alvord, Nathaniel and Joseph Bacon, John Bartlett, John Birdsey, John Brown, Abraham and Edward Camp, John Chilson, John Chilson Jr., Joseph, David and Robert Coe, Gideon and Thomas Cook, John and Isaac Doud, Daniel Briggs, Jeremiah Gould, Ebenezer and Joseph Hale, Eliakim Hale, Samuel Stow, Hawley and Ebenezer Hubbard, Jeremiah Leaming, Benjamin Miller Sen., Ichabod, Amos and David Miller, Moses Parsons, John, Rockwell and Daniel Stow, David Strickland, David

Strickland Jr., Stephen Turner Sen., Samuel Warner, Samuel Wetmore Sen., Benjamin Wetmore, Benjamin Wetmore Jr., Beriah, Joseph Thomas, Daniel, Caleb and Prosper Wetmore, Josiah Wetmore Jr., and Titus John Wetmore.

These people were farmers, and as a rule, thrifty farmers, and it is a matter of note that in laying out their roads and farm lines, the roads, as nearly as possible, ran straight and parallel, so that there are three principal streets running north and south, and five original roads east and west. The fields, as a rule, are rectangular, and of course the lines parallel. This is strikingly the case even to this day.

Little is known of the religious and moral character of the people previous to 1744. Of course, their connection was with Middletown, and although a few miles from public

worship there is no doubt many of them were attentive to it. It is told of Governor Benjamin Miller (as he was called) that at one time in this period, he lost of a number of pigs strangely, so he watched one Sunday, gun in hand, to learn the source of the mischief, and after a while a bear came along in search of a pig. Mr. Miller shot the bear, and saved the pigs; but he was arrested, taken before a magistrate in Durham, and fined for this profanation of the Sabbath.” ■

Editor’s Note: *The author of this historical sketch (1884), Phineas Miller Augur (1826-1891), was born in Middlefield and had a long tenure of varied public service to the town. In 1872 he was elected “pomologist” for the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, and in 1876 organized a display of Connecticut products for the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.*



SMFSD Membership Information

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

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

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

Membership benefits . . .

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

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

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

If you are a descendant of *any* pre-1700 Middletown settler, and would like to join SMFSD, here is the easy procedure:

- (1) 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 Registrar 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 (Nov. 1 to Oct. 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 & lineage information to: Donald H. Brock, Registrar, Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 10 Windy Hill Rd., Glen Arm, MD 21057.

Convoluting connections ...

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Grace Bacon died in July 2000, but she is still remembered fondly in Middletown – anonymous donations continue to be made to various non-profits in her memory. She is buried in New Farm Hill Cemetery.

In the 1970s your editor was first directed to Godfrey Library for research on his early Middletown ancestors. Like most first-time visitors, I drove up-and-down Newfield Street looking for the vertical driveway. By the end of my

first afternoon at Godfrey, one of the librarians pointed out that some Bacon families lived just down the same road I had worn out looking for the library. A few years later I learned that this land across the road from Godfrey Library and to the north (297 acres) was received by Nathaniel Bacon (1630-1705) as part of the 1670 land grants. (Nathaniel retained his original home and acreage at the north end of Main Street, where my Bacon family line of mariners and craftsmen lived into the late 19th century.) Upon the

Newfield land is the brick home where Grace Bacon was born and where she lived most of her life. **(connections #7 & #8)**

In the late 1970s your editor, then in the middle of a long career in showbusiness, had the good fortune to meet another 7th cousin, Charles Bacon (1906-1985), proprietor for many years of the former Bacon Bros. Hardware on Main Street in Middletown. He and his wife attended one of our performances nearby, and we chatted about family history and the property on Newfield *continued on page 12*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR & REGISTER NOW!

Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants Triennial Meeting – October 17-20, 2012



Meeting Headquarters:

Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Join us for four days of events & research

The 2012 meeting of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants presents an opportunity to gather with Middletown cousins, genealogists, and local history enthusiasts in our ancestral hometown. Complete the registration form below, return it with your check, and then join us for a genealogy-rich program of research, stimulation, and fun. (*Want to learn more about SMFSD? Google-search "Middletown First Settlers" and visit our information-packed web site.*)

Note that this year our meeting dates coincide with the annual seminar of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists. *This event, Saturday, October 20 in North Haven, Conn., requires separate registration and payment.* For information visit www.csginc.org.

SMFSD Triennial Meeting Schedule (subject to change):

Wednesday, October 17: Meet & Greet Day

3 p.m. on Arrival, check-in, & registration at hotel
5:45 p.m. Informal group dinner (location TBA)
8:15 p.m. SMFSD Board Meeting

Thursday, October 18: Cemetery Day

8:30 a.m. Depart hotel for Middlefield Cemetery
9-11 a.m. Middlefield Cemetery tour
Afternoon Lunch (on our own)
12:30-1 p.m. Old Riverside Cemetery tour
1-1:45 p.m. Washington Street Cemetery tour
2 p.m. Cromwell Historical Society
(Tour, early "Upper Houses" settlers program, visit to Ranney family gravesites)
6 p.m. Informal group dinner – Join your new friends! (location TBA)

Friday, October 19: Research/Lecture Day

8:45 a.m. SMFSD Business Meeting & Board Elections at Godfrey Memorial Library
Godfrey Library orientation & update; individual research period
12 Noon Lunch at Godfrey Library
1:15 p.m. Public reception at Russell Library - meet & greet Middletown guests
1:45 p.m. Program at Russell Library: "Middletown as a Seaport" by author Erik Hesselberg
3-5 p.m. Russell Library orientation & individual research period
5:45-6:45 p.m. Wine & Cheese Social hosted by Don & Lyn Brock
7:15 p.m. Banquet at Carmen Anthony's Restaurant, Wethersfield, Conn.
Guest speaker: Dr. Ronald Schatz, Professor of History, Wesleyan University

Saturday, October 20: CSG Conference Day

 (Separate registration & payment: www.csginc.org)

8 a.m.-4 p.m. CSG Annual Seminar, North Haven, Conn. ... or tour/research on your own
6:30 p.m. Informal group dinner – Join your new friends! (location TBA)

For more information contact Mike Campbell at mlc226m@yahoo.com

Accommodations ...

Make hotel reservations independently by contacting our meeting headquarters, the Marriott Residence Inn, 680 Cromwell Ave. (Rte. 3, off Rte. I-91), Rocky Hill, CT 06067, at 860-257-7500 and mentioning the SMFSD meeting for our group rate.

More destinations of genealogical interest

In addition to SMFSD activities, here are more destinations of genealogical interest to visit *before or after* the SMFSD Triennial Meeting*:

- Middletown Heritage Trail (self-guided 20-station walking tour)
- Middlesex County Historical Society
- City Clerk's Office, Middletown
- Exploration of ancestral properties

In the Hartford area . . .

- Connecticut State Library
- Connecticut Historical Society
- Connecticut Society of Genealogists
- Ancient Burying Ground, Hartford
- Wethersfield, Conn. (mid-18th-century architecture)

*Admission charges may apply.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date arriving: ____ Date departing: ____ Do you need transportation to & from our events? Y N

Please check events you will attend (for planning purposes):

Thursday Cemetery Tours Thursday at the Cromwell Historical Society
 Friday at Godfrey Library Friday Lunch at Godfrey Friday at Russell Library
 Friday Wine & Cheese Social Friday Dinner at Carmen Anthony's Restaurant
 Do you plan to register for the CSG Seminar Saturday, October 20? (separate registration)

Event Registration# ____ @ \$32.....= ____

Fri. Lunch at Godfrey# ____ @ \$10.....= ____

Fri. Banquet at CA's.....# ____ @ \$38.....= ____

(Cost includes gratuity; excludes beverages)
Banquet at Carmen Anthony's Restaurant in Wethersfield includes choices from their special menu of appetizers, entrées, and desserts.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED.....\$ _____

*Please make check payable to
The Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants.*

**Please note that the registration fee
DOES NOT include
other restaurant meals or lodging.**

*Please make hotel reservations
by calling our meeting headquarters hotel,
the Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Conn.,
at 860-257-7500, and mentioning
the SMFSD meeting to get our group rate.*

Send this form with check to: Mike Campbell, SMFSD Treasurer, 3570 Willow St., Bonita, CA 91902



Convoluting connections ...

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Street. He and his family lived on the opposite end of the 1670 land grant tract from Grace Bacon, his first cousin.

(connection #9) Parts of the house, built by Nathaniel Bacon, Jr. (1675-1759), date to about 1700. Charles Bacon invited me to take photos of the houses and barns on the original Bacon property on a subsequent visit.

About 20 years later in the 1990s, armed with a better camera, I passed through Middletown and parked on a side street off Newfield, not far from a late-Victorian brick home. I chatted with a 30-something man who was trying to start his lawn mower. I mentioned that I would be taking photos of what was left of the Bacon family's 1670 land grant. He brightened up and said he had been a longtime customer of Bacon Bros. Hardware, and

had nothing good to say about the new building supply megastores. Then he gestured at the brick house, and said "Old Miss Bacon still lives there, but I don't see her out much."

I walked up-and-down past the Bacon farm fields – and past Grace Bacon's house (**connection #10**), snapping photos as I went. If she saw me, she probably worried that "the poor man *walking* on this street must be off his medication."

In 2006, a large tract of land that had been in the Bacon family for over 300 years was sold for development of "Bartlett Hollow at the Bacon Homestead," which was to be a 25-home subdivision for the over-55 set. An 1825 barn was razed to make way for an activities building. When I came upon this surprising scene during a research visit to Middletown, I pulled off the road, tromped over

snowbanks and through the mud to get the lowdown from the head man perched on top of a roaring bulldozer. Lucky for me he was one of the co-developers who could provide me with all the information I needed for a brief article in *The Middler*. Grace Bacon's house became the real estate office for the project. (**connection #11** – *The Middler*, spring 2007.)

A few years later, the economy stalled progress on the subdivision. The name has been retained and it appears that sales efforts continue. To date about 10 homes have been built. Grace Bacon's house, no longer with a book-lined first floor, has been transformed into an insurance office.

Change is inevitable, and time marches on with relentless regularity. But for your editor, the connections in Middletown history and genealogy keep getting more convoluted. ■

