



# The Middler

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

Vol. 11, No. 2

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

Fall 2011

## A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

# African-Americans in Middletown 1661-1850: Enslaved Africans contributed to town's growth

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

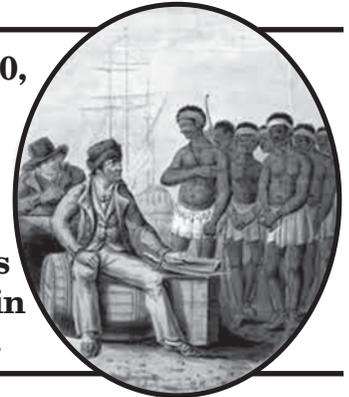
Since its inception in 2000, SMFSD has encouraged the study of the people and events of 17th and 18th-century Middletown, Conn. From the outset it has never been a secret that (1) enslaved Africans were on the scene with the early settlers since the 1660s, and that (2) enslaved Africans contributed labor to Middletown's growth into the 19th century.

In 2009, two changes to SMFSD bylaws were unanimously approved by member vote. These changes redefined SMFSD's pre-1700 qualifying ancestors to include any Native

Americans and African-Americans documented in Middletown before 1700. Previous issues of *The Middler* included articles on Native Americans in early Middletown. This issue explores the African-American presence in Middletown from the 17th century to the early 19th century. The aim is to provide a baseline of information useful to those who wish to explore the subject further.

**A general view of slavery in Connecticut.** For over a century, the sanitized view of slavery in Connecticut was that it had minimal impact in comparison to plantation slavery of the southern states. In the past decade,

**By 1770, there were two slave dealers on Main Street.**



however, there has been increased awareness of slavery in early New England, and of how the labor of enslaved Africans in the South supported the economy of the North.

This increased awareness in Connecticut was spurred by articles in *Northeast*, the Sunday magazine of the *Hartford (Conn.) Courant*. The series was expanded into a book in 2005, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*. The attention garnered by *Complicity* was followed by news coverage of the Documenting Venture Smith Project, which continues its research into the life of this remarkable man. Venture Smith (1727-1805) was brought to New

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## SMFSD's Triennial Meeting in 2012 to coincide with CSG's October Seminar

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

Planning began in spring 2011 for SMFSD's 2012 Triennial Meeting, and in an effort to offer attendees an even richer experience, the dates will

coincide with the annual one-day genealogy seminar presented by the Connecticut Society of Genealogists.

Scheduled for October 2012, the multi-day Triennial Meeting will offer the research opportunities and social events of past gatherings, but with the added option of the CSG seminar – and the experience of the fall season in New England. (Prior meetings in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009 were held in late August or early September.)

The dates of the 2012 Triennial Meeting are not set at this writing, but details will be posted on the SMFSD web site as soon as they are known. Look for information in the spring 2012 *Middler*. ■

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### ~ DUES are DUE! ~

Annual Membership dues (\$20) are due November 1, 2011. Please send payment to:

Mike Campbell

SMFSD Treasurer

3570 Willow Street

Bonita, CA 91902-1226

**Do it  
Today  
!!!**

**Thank  
You  
!!!**



## SMFSD NEWS

### SMFSD welcomes three new members; answers a variety of genealogy inquiries

• **Welcome new members.** SMFSD extends an enthusiastic welcome to three new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Barbara Walls Hanson**, AM-294, Scottsdale, Ariz. (1st settler George Hubbard); **Mary Jane McLaney Jones**, LM-295, Savage, Md. (1st settler George Hubbard); and **Martha John McLaney Wiseman**, LM-296, Westminster, Md. (1st settler George Hubbard).

• **SMFSD volunteers answer genealogy inquiries.** One service that SMFSD volunteer board members render is answering genealogy inquiries that come our way from time-to-time via our web site. Or registrar, Don Brock, receives the bulk of membership inquiries, and dispenses tips on how

prospective members can document their descent from early Middletown settlers for his review. *Middler* editor R.W. Bacon – also the compiler of SMFSD web site content – fields some membership inquiries, but mostly responds to occasional questions about individuals or family lines. Most interesting recently were inquiries about the veracity of a tidbit in a 2005 book by British scholar Malcolm Gaskill entitled *Witchfinders: A 17th Century English Tragedy* (Harvard University Press). The book is a 384-page scholarly look at the 1640s witchcraft craze in East Anglia, and its most notorious “witchfinder,” Matthew Hopkins. On page 100 the author refers to an accused Bacon family and surmises that “within

a few months, another Nathaniel Bacon – an adolescent from nearby Bramford and possibly the Bacons’ son, fled England for Connecticut, never to return.” However, the scholar’s footnote references only a very sketchy genealogy web site with no source documentation! Your persnickety editor informed the curious that Gaskill’s slip from scholarly rigor into barely plausible conjecture was unfortunate, and that the most current findings on the origin of Middletown first-settler Nathaniel Bacon (1630-1705) in Bramford, Suffolk, England, are on the SMFSD web site.

• **Changes at Godfrey Library.** Beth Mariotti is the new director at Godfrey Memorial Library, SMFSD’s archives repository. She replaces James R. Benn, who served in the position for one year. Ms. Mariotti, of Branford, Conn., is a professional genealogist with experience researching New England, Italian, and Jewish family history. ■



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SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN  
FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS

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

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### For more of Liz Warner’s local history, check out “Middletown Patch” online

It is impossible to research Middletown, Conn. history and genealogy without encountering along the way the masterful book originally published in 1990, *A Pictorial History of Middletown* by Elizabeth A. Warner.

For a decade Ms. Warner wrote a column, “Middletown in the Past,” for the *Middletown Press*. Now, for those eager for more of her insights into Middletown history, there is the local news web site, Middletown Patch, which features new articles online ([www.middletown-ct.patch.com](http://www.middletown-ct.patch.com)).

Recent topics of Ms. Warner’s local history articles include schools, dairy farming, manufacturing, storms, fires, cemeteries, geographical features, neighborhoods, public buildings, and architectural preservation.

A native and still a resident of Middletown, Liz Warner has taught history at the Independent Day School in Middlefield for over 25 years. She also works as an architectural histo-

rian and National Register specialist with Cunningham Preservation Associates. Her book, *A Pictorial History of Middletown*, carries a modest and misleading title, since it is so much more – a thoughtful, broad, and flowing narrative summary of Middletown’s history.

The Middletown Patch site is part of a growing ‘Patch’ network of local news and information sites designed for communities deemed underserved by existing local media. The sites are edited and managed by professional editors, writers, and photographers who live in the respective communities, in consultation with an advisory board of community members. The editor of Middletown Patch is Cassandra Day, a veteran reporter and editor for newspapers in Connecticut, including the *Middletown Press*. ■



Visit [www.middletown-ct.patch.com](http://www.middletown-ct.patch.com), then search “Liz Warner” to read her articles.

## Meet Marge Pierson, SMFSD secretary since 2006, and avid genealogist with multiple areas of study

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

This is the third in a series of profiles that give our members across the U.S. an opportunity to get to know more about the “cousins” and fellow genealogy enthusiasts who keep SMFSD going. This fall *The Middler* interviews Marge Pierson of Deerfield, Ill., who has been secretary of SMFSD since 2006. Marge volunteers behind the scenes managing the membership database and planning our Triennial Meetings, and front-and-center representing the organization at genealogy conferences.

**The Middler:** When did you first get the “genealogy bug?” Did others in the family do prior research?

**Marge Pierson:** Around 1976 I started corresponding with two of my father’s cousins. The correspondence continued with numerous tidbits jotted down for me on the insides of recycled used envelopes. One told me of wonderful reunions of the Doolittle Society of America and of her DAR and Mayflower Society memberships.

My mother passed away unexpectedly in 1981 just as she was beginning to dig more deeply into her family’s past, but we had 19 more years to learn from my father about his family.

In retrospect, it is obvious that my interest began in childhood. One year, we visited upcountry Maine where my mother’s ancestors lived from after the Revolutionary War until my grandmother moved to Portland, Maine. My paternal grandmother with whom we lived in Chicago often told me stories about her childhood.

**The Middler:** What’s your favorite library or archives for research?

**Marge:** I love any genealogy library with a pertinent collection and open stacks. I have been fortunate enough to visit many of the finest libraries and archives in the country. I have never researched at the renowned Newberry Library near my home in Chicago, because I don’t like closed stacks.



“A woman of many hats.” In addition to behind-the-scenes work on the membership roster, SMFSD secretary Marge Pierson represents the organization at the biennial New England Regional Genealogical Conference. Marge also leads the planning of SMFSD’s Triennial Meetings.

The Godfrey Library in Middletown, Conn. is a treasure trove, with a more peaceful environment than is found at the comprehensive Connecticut State Library in Hartford. It also has some evening hours.

**The Middler:** What geographical areas do you focus on the most?

**Marge:** On my mother’s side, Maine and Massachusetts. Most of my mother’s ancestors lived in Maine since at least 1800, their families arriving in Massachusetts during the Great Migration (1620-1643).

On my father’s side, Michigan, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. My father was raised in Illinois, his parents in Michigan, and their parents all in New York. All these families moved to New York from Connecticut or Massachusetts soon after the Revolution. Most had a connection to Middletown, Hartford, Wethersfield, Farmington, or Wallingford/Cheshire, and were also descendants of Great Migration immigrants.

**The Middler:** Who is your favorite ancestor? How about your favorite Middletown ancestor?

**Marge:** My background is mostly one of two basic stories no matter which way I trace my family tree. So, aside from reading history to better understand my Puritan ancestors’ experiences, I like to study the few exceptions.

Peter Grant (c. 1631-1713) was one of the 400 Scotsmen captured by Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar who survived the forced march to London and were sent to America to be indentured. He was indentured to the Iron Works at Saugus, Mass., and later became a prominent citizen in Berwick, Maine. The Saugus Iron Works operated from 1646 to 1668 and is now a reconstructed National Historic Site well worth a visit for anyone interested in early American history – general or technical.

Rev. John Wheelwright (1592-1679) and Rev. John Hull (1594-1665) were maverick preachers who disagreed with the Puritans and therefore left for Maine. John Wheelwright was the brother-in-law of the dissident Anne Hutchinson who helped found Rhode Island. Of course the story of Thomas Hooker is similar, and the founding of Hartford continues to fascinate me.

As far as Middletown ancestors go, I am probably most intrigued by Samuel Doolittle, the ancestor through whom I first discovered SMFSD. I would like to know more about the motivation and experiences of those including Samuel and his wife who left Middletown to found Whitestown, N.Y. (*The Middler*, Fall 2007).

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**“The best thing about our society is the camaraderie and sharing experienced when we gather every three years.”**

**– Marge Pierson**

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## The passion for family history shines through in a new book by SMFSD member Donald A. Sage

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

The newest published work on descendants of Middletown first-settler David Sage (1639-1703) comes from SMFSD member Donald A. Sage and his grandson, Caleb Sage Hendrickson.

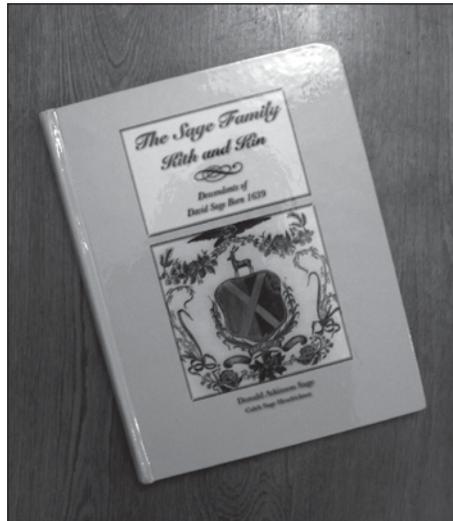
*The Sage Family Kith and Kin - Descendants of David Sage, b. 1639* was privately published in Andover, Minn. in September 2011. The 266-page hardbound book – large-format, printed on coated paper and copiously illustrated with color photos, maps, and diagrams – is already in the collections of several of the largest genealogy libraries.

You editor had the privilege of getting pleasantly lost within the pages of family narrative, and wandering through the past centuries of the author's own Sage family line.

Your editor's impression?: The author's passion for the subject of family history, his extended family, and life itself comes shining through brightly in this project. The book is not a comprehensive genealogy of *all* descendants of the Middletown progenitor, but is an excellent genealogy of a particular family line – a monumental gift to the present and future generations of the author's large family.

The editorial and design oversights that crop up these days in such do-it-yourself publishing projects are more than outweighed by the author's passion, spark, and upbeat tone that make the book so much more than a dry collection of names-and-dates.

Donald Sage, who lives in Andover, Minn. with his wife, Joyce, details his journey leading up to and through the project in his author's preface. In 1970, his father, Venning Lee Sage (1895-1980), drew by hand a family tree, with the earliest generations based on his copy of *Genealogical Record of the Descendants of David Sage, a Native of Wales, Born 1639, and One of the First Settlers of*



*The Sage Family Kith and Kin - Descendants of David Sage, b. 1639*, by Donald Atkinson Sage and Caleb Sage Hendrickson. (Published Sept. 2011)

*Middletown, Conn. - 1652*, the 1878 genealogy by Elisha L. Sage (1809-1883). With this family tree as a starting point, Donald Sage embarked on a 10-year project to verify all the information using today's resources, add all subsequent descendants born since 1970, gather information for narrative biographical sketches, and round up hundreds of photos, maps, and diagrams. The author credits his grandson, Caleb Sage Hendrickson, as co-author and editor, for wrangling the massive amount of information and shaping the project into book form.

Donald Sage kindly responded to your editor's e-mail interview:

**The Middler:** When did you conceive of the idea of a comprehen-

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**“The professionals in this field have established very good guidelines for continuity and validity, and I wanted this book to qualify as acceptable in every respect.”**

**– Donald Atkinson Sage**

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sive book on your large branch of the Sage family?

**Donald A. Sage:** My daughter, Nancy, and I talked of this in March of 1996, and we purchased the Reunion Family Tree Software. We started out very naively, not really knowing what we were doing, but with her background and some elementary schooling via the libraries, we were led down the family history path. Like most of us in this family history business, it became an obsession with me and I became addicted to it.

My business experience also contributed to my zealous nature in finding answers, and once I had a clue I put on my Sherlock Holmes hat and didn't want to quit until I found the answer. After many years, my daughter's son, Caleb Sage Hendrickson, volunteered to help me when it came to putting what I had been able to compile into a printed product. He was the one who came up with the idea of using the family's western migration as a central theme.

To add a little “flesh to the bones,” and to recognize my father's commitment to his family and our country – and his hidden artistic talents and his influence on my life and generations to follow – I included several appendices which are an integral part of this family history.

**The Middler:** What was the most difficult challenge of the book project?

**D.A.S.:** I wanted to be sure that the information that I had gathered was as verifiable as possible, and therefore I spent many hours proving the sources to the best of my ability. I think that fact-finding and proving the source – primary if at all possible – is really where it begins. I had to go back and research again what I had originally found to be factual and then present it in the proper form. The professionals in this field have established very good guidelines for continuity and validity, and I wanted

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## Middletown's 'Vanished Port' explored by historian for Wesleyan Magazine article ... and a future book

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

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, descendants of Middletown first-settler families saw more than their share of economic, political, and social change. Some found a way to prosper and remained in Middletown, but many eagerly sought opportunity to prosper elsewhere, moving on to New York, Ohio, and points north and west. An article in *Wesleyan Magazine* (2011 Issue 1) by historian and journalist Erik Hesselberg, "Vanished Port: Middletown and the Great Era of the West Indies Trade," provides insight into this period of growth and change in Middletown.

Erik Hesselberg has been a newspaper and magazine editor, and is working on a book about the history of the lower Connecticut River. He is

also a contributor to the Middletown Patch web site, mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *The Middler*.

The author chronicles the growth of Middletown's shipping trade to the Caribbean which began in the late 17th century. Middletown-based traders shipped lumber, cattle, fish, and grain to supply slave plantations in the West Indies, and returned to Middletown with sugar, salt, coffee, fruit, spices, molasses, and rum. This fertile market fueled the development of shipbuilding along the Connecticut River.

By the late 18th century, Middletown was the busiest port between New York and Boston, and the richest colony in Connecticut.

Although the author mentions the early-settler Southmayd family of shipmasters as the largest property

owners in the maritime district at one time, he notes that most of the merchants who drove Middletown's growth were relatively new arrivals: Matthew Talcott and Samuel Bull from Hartford, Lemuel Storrs from Colchester, John & Richard Alsop from New York, the Henshaw family from Boston, Benjamin Williams from Bermuda, and Philip Mortimer and Arthur Magill from Scotland. In the early 19th century there were several hundred homes in the waterfront area, including numerous elegant mansions of merchants and sea captains. All but a few are gone today. A notable survivor, visible from Rte. 9, is the DeKoven House, the former home of Capt. Benjamin Williams.

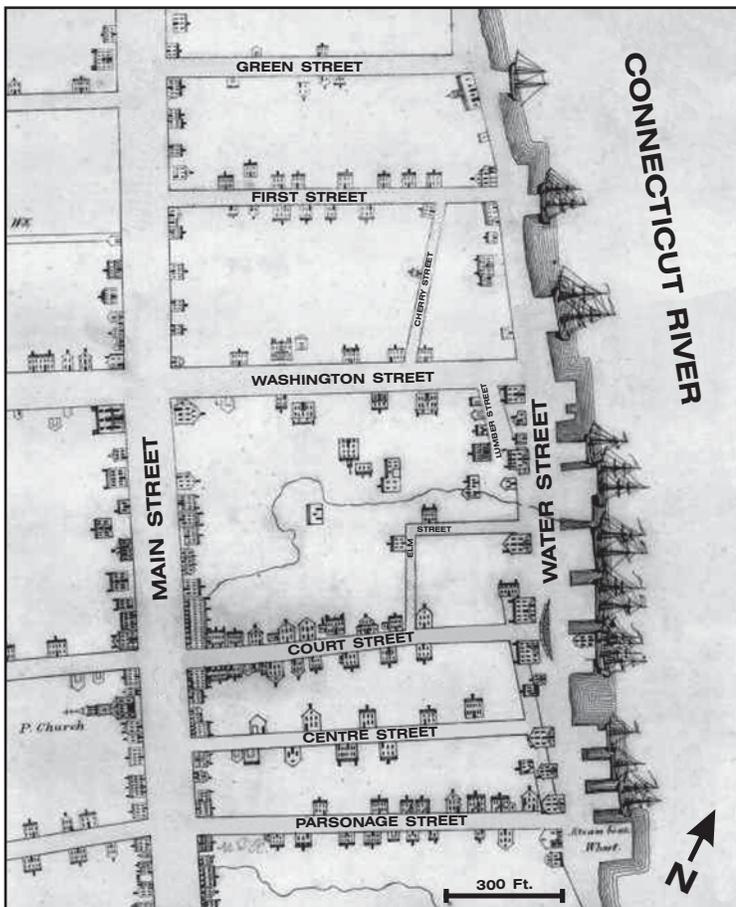
As an indication of prosperity in this era, when Richard Alsop (1727-1776) died in 1776, his estate was valued at more than 35,000 pounds – equivalent to over \$6 million in 2011 depressed dollars, according to consumer price index calculations ([www.measuringworth.com](http://www.measuringworth.com)).

At the peak of the West Indies trade, a typical cargo from Middletown included horses, cattle, lumber, bricks, vegetables, pork, and beef. Ships would head first to Barbados so that on the return trip they would have favorable winds en route to other Caribbean ports. The primary cargo brought back to Middletown was sugar, molasses, and rum. Slaves were also brought to Middletown – in 1756 Middletown's population included 218 slaves. (See the feature article in this issue of *The Middler*.)

The Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812 had a permanent negative impact on American ports, and in the case of Middletown, its later fortunes would be based on its new manufacturing economy.

To read the entire article online, visit *Wesleyan Magazine*:  
[http://www.wesleyan.edu/magazine/magazine/mag\\_archives/#2011i](http://www.wesleyan.edu/magazine/magazine/mag_archives/#2011i).

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**This section of H.L. Barnum's 1825 map of Middletown** shows the numerous wharves along Water Street – long before the incursion of the railroad (1868), Route 9 (1950s), and urban renewal (1950s) that limited access to the Connecticut River.

*Map of the City of Middletown surveyed and delineated by H.L. Barnum, Topographer (1825), is held by the Connecticut Historical Society. The map can be viewed in its entirety at the University of Connecticut's Digital Mosaic web site (<http://images.lib.uconn.edu/index.php>) and searching "Barnum map Middletown."*

## African-Americans in Middletown 1661-1850

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England from what is now Ghana about 1739, was sold to a series of owners, and with money earned through outside labor, bought his family's freedom by 1773. Along the way, he purchased 160 acres of land, making his home on Haddam Neck, a few miles south of Middletown. In 1798 he dictated his life story, which was published by the *New London Bee*. The 2009 publication of *Making Freedom: The Extraordinary Life of Venture Smith*, by Chandler B. Saint and George A. Krinsky, details recent research.

So, there is plenty of information about the big picture of slavery in Connecticut, as well as a first-person narrative. But the details of African-Americans in the earliest decades of Middletown are more difficult to uncover, since enslaved Africans were seldom individually documented in official records. In the 1790 federal census, members of the few free African-American households in Middletown were not counted as males or females, but rather as "other." Names of African-Americans do show up in "runaway slave" ads, in court records, in criminal cases, and in probate records as property.

**A timeline of Connecticut slave laws.** Bernard C. Steiner, in *The History of Slavery in Connecticut* (1893), notes that slavery was never established by statute, but rather was "indirectly sanctioned by courts." The first reference to enslaved Africans in state records was in 1660; their number was estimated at only 30 in 1680. By 1690, however, the number of slaves had increased to the point that Connecticut passed regulatory legislation. The "Black Code" of 1690 dictated that "a negro, mulatto, or Indian servant" found wandering outside the town of his residence without a pass be counted as a runaway. The runaway could be seized by anyone and brought before the nearest authority, and the master was fined. Added to the code in 1703 was a law that prohibited tavern-keepers from serving strong drink to "sons, apprentices, servants, or negroes" unless they had special orders from parents or masters. Added in 1708 was a law that prohibited slaves from selling any goods or property without an order from their masters. Added in 1723 was a law that prohibited a slave from being outdoors after 9 p.m. without an order from his master. The penalty for any of the above was some combination of lashes for the slave, and/or fine to the master.

In 1774 the General Court passed legislation that "no Indian, negro, or mulatto slave shall at any time hereafter be brought or imported into this State, by sea or land, from any place or places whatsoever, to be disposed of, left, or sold within the state."

Ten years later, in 1784, slavery was abolished in Connecticut, but the law, unlike those in other New England states, specified gradual emancipation. The Gradual Abolition Act of 1784 freed no slaves at the time, but rather promised freedom to future-born children of slaves, who would be free upon reaching age 25. Slaves born before 1784 remained enslaved for life. The last slaves in Connecticut became free in 1848.

**Documented evidence of enslaved Africans in Middletown.** Secondary sources about Middletown history refer to enslaved Africans on the scene as early as 1661, when sea captains brought a few slaves from Barbados and sold them at auction. By the middle of the next century, Middletown was the busiest port in Connecticut. To describe Middletown, Historian William Chauncey Fowler (1793-1881), in *The Historical Status of the Negro in Connecticut* (1875), quoted a newspaper article by Edwin Stearns (1804-1867), a 19th-century public servant and civic activist:

"Upon a cursory examination of an old map of the Village of Middletown, about the date of the Revolution, it is estimated that there were nearly 100 families in what now comprises the city limits. The names of all the householders are given, with their occupations, as well as their localities. Among these, are noted twenty-two persons denominated 'Sea-Captains.' There are, also, three persons denominated sea-captains engaged in the slave-trade. There are, also, three notables living in the village, designated 'Slave-Dealers.' These were, D. Walker, Captain Gleason, Captain Easton, or Eason.

"A large and profitable trade, in livestock, was carried on between Middletown and the West Indies; the outward bound cargo would consist of horses, on deck, with hoops, staves, and cornmeal, in the hold; and a full load of Guinea negroes, in return. Captain Easton, who was one of the most successful of these Yankee ship-masters and slave dealers, would take droves of negroes to New Hampshire and Vermont, when the market here was dull, and exchange them for horses and hoop-poles. D. Walker was, probably, a speculator in slaves; and may have sold them to the fathers of the present race of philanthropists."

Newspaper advertisements also identify participants in the slave trade. The above-mentioned "D. Walker" was Dr. Thomas Walker, identified in a 1762 advertisement in the *New London Summary and Weekly Advertiser* for "A parcel of likely young negroes" to be sold in Middletown. In a 1761 advertisement in the same publication, one Timothy Miller, captain of the *Speedwell*, announced "a parcel of likely young windward slaves" to be sold at the house of Capt. Samuel Wells. The above "Capt. Gleason" was sea-captain Joseph Gleason.

Today's researchers have the benefit of consulting the work of Milo D. Wilcox, Jr. (1919-1995), held at the Middlesex County Historical Society in Middletown. A first-settler descendant himself, Milo Wilcox was a retired Middletown city planner when he set to work on documenting the history and genealogy of African-Americans in Middletown. Today a seven-foot high shelf holds binders packed with genealogies of families that lived in Middletown in the early and mid-19th century. More relevant to the subject of this article is the Wilcox bibliography, *The Origins of Negroes in Middletown, Connecticut* (1985).

Two unpublished papers clarify African-American presence in early Middletown: (1) *A Black Profile of Middletown, Connecticut*, by Leta Pittman (1976), and (2) *The Black Experience in Middletown, Connecticut 1650-1850*, by Melissa Roberts (1976). Both papers run into the same impasse faced by Milo Wilcox ... and your editor: Almost nonexistent documentation of individual African-Americans.

Ms. Roberts discussed the difference between Connecticut slave owners and the plantation owners of the South, noting that in New England, for the most part, slaves lived with families in their homes, in many cases forming the bond of an extended family, and worked alongside their masters in the fields, in the shop, or in the household. She advanced her belief that the Puritan attitude toward slavery was an outgrowth of their understanding of slavery in the Old Testament, and consequently slaves were always referred to as "servants." As members of the family, the "servants" were expected to conform and assimilate the customs and manners of their owner. "Marriages were ritualized and recorded," wrote Roberts, "and once married, slaves as well as free persons were expected to honor the sanctity of the nuptial tie." However, Ms. Roberts, who combed Middletown church records of 1668-1871, does note that "judging from the number of mulatto children in the records of only one Middletown church, one would guess extra-legal intercourse between men of the master class and slave women was not uncommon."

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Riverside Cemetery: (left) Sambo (1700-1776); (right) Fillis (d. 1766).



## African-Americans in Middletown 1661-1850

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Ms. Roberts also addresses the myth of the docile “servant” in New England, noting that enslaved Africans seized opportunities to strike back at the ruling class. The prevailing offense was running away, often with clothing or property from the master’s household. Stealing, breach of peace, and arson, were also known to occur. The most extreme – and depraved – case occurred in 1743, when 16-year-old “Negro Barney” maliciously maimed (i.e. emasculated) Thomas Allyn, the six-year-old son of Jonathan Allyn (1704-1780). Barney admitted the crime, pleaded guilty, and was jailed in Hartford, but the court could find no appropriate statute on the books upon which to base a sentence. This prompted a special act by the General Assembly, which opened the way to two months of torture for Barney, culminating with punishment of “biblical” proportion (i.e. “an eye-for-an-eye,” etc.). Barney did not survive. Thomas Allyn did survive, and died in Middletown in 1777 at age 40. (*Legal Executions in New England, A Comprehensive Reference 1623-1960*, by David A. Hearn, 1999)

Ms. Pittman, in her paper, includes the facts enumerated by Edwin Stearns nearly a century before. “In addition, merchants from other parts of Connecticut would bring their trade to Middletown,” she wrote. “In 1752, John Bannister, a Newport slave dealer, was known to bring to Middletown ‘a fine parcel of negro men, women, boys, and girls, imported directly from the Gold Coast, and they are esteemed to be the finest cargo of slaves ever brought into New England.’”

In early Middletown, there are a few references to African-Americans in diaries and probate records. In 1687, Noadiah Russell (1659-1713), minister in Middletown (and also a slave-owner), noted in his diary that “at night, Mr. Hamling’s negro woman delivered a boy.” A survey of probate records reveals a number of enslaved Africans by name and their owners (presented chronologically): “my servant Joan” willed by Giles Hamlin (1622-1689) to his wife, Ester (will proved 1690); “my negro Mengo,” willed by Capt. Daniel Harris (1618-1701) to his son, Thomas (will proved 1711); “my negro Sampson” willed by Daniel Markham (1652-1713) to his wife, Patience (will contested 1714); “my negro man called Peter,” willed by Thomas Ward (1660-1728) to his wife, Elizabeth (will proved 1728); “my negro girl Rose,” willed by John Stocking (1707-1750) to his mother (will proved 1750); and “my negro boy Cesar and mulatto girl Else” willed by Giles Hall (1680-1750) to his wife Esther (will proved 1750).

By 1756, 218 African-Americans lived in Middletown, out of a population of 5,664. At this time, despite the constraints of servitude, enslaved Africans in Middletown were better off than their brethren in the South. “Particularly in Connecticut,” writes Ms. Pittman, “the system of apprenticeship prevailed over the institution of slavery. Just as masters freed their indentured servants, they would manumit Black slaves. In Connecticut, white servants, Black and Indian slaves, and masters all worked together.”

In the two decades approaching the Revolutionary War, as the number of enslaved Africans in Middletown reached its peak, various sources indicate that some slave owners began to question the morality of owning fellow human beings. Some liberated their slaves after six years. Some specified in their wills that upon their death, their slaves be freed. Elisha L. Sage (1809-1883), author of an 1878 genealogy of the Sage family, noted that Gen. Comfort Sage (1731-1799) and Ebenezer Sage (1754-1834) made a point to record the births of their slaves’ children with the surname “Sage.” Two notable pieces of material evidence from this period at Middletown’s Riverside Cemetery indicate the close relationship between some slaves and masters. The carved headstone of “Sambo, Negro servant to Thomas Hulbert” (d. 1776), still stands at the southeast corner of the cemetery. Inches away is the gravestone of “Fillis, wife of Cuff, Negro” (d. 1766). Given the expense of carved headstones, it is likely that both Sambo and Fillis were valued members of their respective masters’ households. But it was also in this period that newspapers reported conflict between African-American slaves and the ruling class. Advertisements offering rewards for runaway slaves reached their peak in the late 18th century.

Evidence of one particular Middletown slave-and-master bond is in the 1779 manumission document of Mimbo (or Membo) (c.1744-1828), a slave of Judge Seth Wetmore (1700-1788). Mimbo was very likely born in Africa, came to live and work in the Wetmore household as a child, and grew up with the Wetmore’s daughter, Lucy (1748-1826). When Mimbo became blind and infirm about 1815, Lucy (Wetmore) Whittelsey came to her friend’s aid. In her will, Lucy directed her children to care for Mimbo. But as was the custom of the time, both Lucy and her children billed the town for their expenses. Mimbo received a pauper’s burial from the town in 1828.

African-Americans from Middletown who served in the Revolutionary War are listed in the compiled volumes of Connecticut Military Records. They include Kay Cambridge, Cuff Liberty, Philemon Freeman, Peter Tomina, Exeter Freeman, Peter Middletown, Dick Freeman, and Jesse Caples. During and after

the Revolutionary War period, the number of African-Americans in Middletown declined, as many slaves were freed for their service to the cause and moved elsewhere. The figure of 218 in 1756 declined to 167 in the 1790 census, with 110 still enslaved, and 57 free.

Your editor undertook an analysis of the first federal census of Middletown in 1790 (total population 5,375), and counted 57 households (out of 947) with slaves (6%). Eight households had three or more slaves; 49 households had one or two slaves. The individual with the most slaves was Philip Mortimer, with 11, most of whom likely worked braiding rope in his 1200-foot ropewalk structure that extended westward from the downtown through what is now Mortimer Cemetery. Those with more than three slaves in 1790 were Jabez Hamlin (5), Jabez Hall (5), Mary Alsop, widow of Richard Alsop III (1726-1776) (5), and Comfort Sage (4). Of the 57 slave-holding households in 1790, 25 were pre-1700 Middletown settler surnames, while 32 slave-holding households carried surnames of more recent post-1700 arrivals. Eight of the 57 slave-holding households in 1790 were headed by women. There were five African-American heads-of-household in Middletown in the 1790 census, each with members of the household designated as “other”: Cuff (4), Florah (2), Thainer (3), Ackraw (2), and Peter (4).

The free African-Americans in Middletown in the late 18th century mostly worked as laborers or house servants. There were a few African-American entrepreneurs, however, who worked on the fringes of the larger Middletown economy. Hammet Achmet, who had been a Revolutionary War drummer and a servant to George Washington, made his living at odd-jobs when he came to Middletown, but was also engaged as a drummer to attract notice to local estate auctions. From this he progressed to making and selling his own line of drums.

An advertisement in the *Middlesex Gazette* on April 14, 1797 announced “The business of dying cotton and linen yarn blue will be carried on this season at the house of Mr. Abraham Doolittle, by Cuff Boston.”

According to a 1998 *Hartford Courant* article by Diana Ross McCain, currently director of

continued on page 8

At right is the most common stock art used in newspaper advertisements offering reward for runaway slaves in the 18th century. On page 9 is a selection of Middletown-related slave sale ads and runaway notices.



## African-Americans in Middletown 1661-1850

continued from page 7

the research center at the Connecticut Historical Society, Cuff Boston (c. 1765-1823) lived in the Staddle Hill area, and eventually owned 25 acres in Middletown. Newspaper ads for his dyeing business appeared in the *Middlesex Gazette* for over a decade. His estate, left to his wife and four children, was valued at \$3,000 – a tidy sum for 1823.

Between 1790 and 1800 the number of slaves in Connecticut declined dramatically, from 2764 to 951. But while the laws and policies had changed, life changed little for aging slaves still held in servitude, and even free African-Americans had few options. A book previously reviewed in *The Middler* offers a context-rich glimpse of slavery in this period, *A Century of Captivity: The Life and Trials of Prince Mortimer, A Connecticut Slave*, by Denis C. Caron (2006). Horatio Strother, author of *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* (1962), noted that in Middletown, for decades after the Revolution “the temper of the city was predominantly sympathetic to slavery and opposed to abolition or anything that smacked of it.”

**African-Americans in 19th-century Middletown.** In 1820 Middletown, there were just three remaining slaves among a total of 211 African-Americans. In the 1820s and 1830s, the reconstituted population of African-Americans in Middletown, many of whom were new arrivals, saw three significant developments: (1) the beginnings of the abolitionist movement, (2) the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and (3) the advocacy of “back to Africa” re-colonization.

The leader of the abolitionist movement in Middletown was Jesse C. Baldwin (1804-1887), a man of humble beginnings who prospered in manufacturing, shipping, banking, and insurance. In 1834 he organized, with a few others, the Middletown Anti-Slavery Society. Meetings were sometimes disturbed by angry mobs, and by 1843 the organization had just five dues-paying members: Jesse Baldwin, Chauncey Wetmore, Gardiner Griswold, Daniel Benham, and R.S. Rust. But while abolition fizzled as a movement in Middletown because so many businesses were dependent on

cotton from the South, Baldwin persevered, using his schooners to transport runaway slaves, and using his house to hide them.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was organized in Middletown in 1828, and in 1831, the Rev. Jehiel C. Beman (1789-1858) arrived from Colchester, Conn. to be its minister. His wife and sons became leaders in the African-American abolitionist movement. Jehiel Beman built a house near the church, and an African-American neighborhood grew around it. In 1847, his son, Leverett Beman (1810-1883), purchased the five-acre triangle bound by Cross Street, Vine Street, and Knowles Avenue. The land was originally part of the Samuel Savage farm sold in 1832. Leverett Beman divided the land, and modest wood-frame homes were built and sold to African-American families. Many residents were dockworkers and seamen at the port of Middletown.

The 2002 publication, *Experiment in Community: An African-American Neighborhood, Middletown, Connecticut, 1847-1930*, by Janice P. Cunningham and Elizabeth A. Warner, chronicles this neighborhood, known today as the Leverett Beman Historic District. The Middlesex County Historical Society holds genealogical research of Milo Wilcox on the African-American families that lived there.

Also about 1830, Wilbur Fisk (1792-1839), minister, theologian, and first president of Wesleyan University, began advocating for the re-colonization movement as the best way to solve the “social evil” of slavery. He favored voluntary emigration back to Africa because he believed that abolition, if successful, would cause a split in the church. He formed the Middletown Colonization Society, but response was lukewarm: By 1850 just 10 individuals departed Connecticut for Liberia.

Those interested in identifying individual African-Americans in Middletown in the early 19th century can also search cemetery records. Your editor identified seven African-Americans born before 1800 who are buried in marked graves at Washington Street Cemetery and Mortimer Cemetery. One can conclude that most African-Americans in the earliest days of Middletown were buried in unmarked graves, or with markers that did not survive.

At mid-century, in the presidential election of 1856, Middlesex County was the only county in Connecticut won by pro-slavery candidate James Buchanan. After the Civil War, with full emancipation in theory, in Middletown economic opportunity for African-Americans was still limited, and political power was negligible. In Connecticut, voting rights were extended to African-Americans in 1870, but were bundled with literacy and property requirements. In 1870, there were 152 African-Americans in Middletown’s total of 6,923. For decades to come, the succession of new immigrant

groups to Middletown leap-frogged over African-Americans in competition for unskilled jobs. In the late 19th century, more African-Americans departed Middletown for greater opportunity in larger cities.

Stated at the outset, the aim of this article is to provide a baseline of information for further research into African-Americans in Middletown from the mid-17th to the mid-19th century. However, for the curious reader, here is a brief recap from the late 19th century to the present:

**The 20th century.** By 1900 the population of Middletown swelled to 9,589, but the number of African-Americans declined to 127. In 1910 the number dwindled to 73; in 1920 the census counted 57. In Ms. Pittman’s paper, she noted that the first African-American families from the South moved to Middletown in 1923 from North Carolina, and that through the 1920s-30s there were just a few African-American families in residence. During WWII in the 1940s, there were more factory jobs to be filled, and by 1950 the African-American population in Middletown increased to 544 of 29,411. In the 1960s, a survey indicated that 68% of African-American families were from a cluster of towns in North and South Carolina. In 1970 African-Americans made up 6.7% of Middletown’s population; in 2010, the figure was 12.8% of 47,648.

Today it is improbable that anyone included in those recent percentages above has African-American ancestors who lived in pre-1700 Middletown. For those searching for the identity of Middletown’s earliest enslaved Africans – or for evidence of slaveholding ancestors – your editor advises beginning with the sources cited following this article, and then visiting the Milo D. Wilcox, Jr. collection at the Middlesex County Historical Society. It will be a grain-by-grain dig for scant evidence, so make sure you bring the tenacity of an obsessed archaeologist! ■

(Thanks to Debbie Shapiro at the Middlesex County Historical Society and Denise Mackey-Russo at Russell Library for their assistance in locating relevant sources for this article.)

At right is Leverett Beman (1810-1883), who purchased land in 1847 to build an African-American neighborhood. Below is one of the cluster of modest homes.



**THE** Buſineſs of DYING Cotton and Linen YARN blue, will be carried on this Seaſon at the Houſe of Mr. Abraham Doolittle, by CUFF BOSTON

Above is a Middletown Gazette advertisement (4/14/1797) for the dyeing business conducted by Cuff Boston (1765-1823), a free African-American entrepreneur.

## Feature Graphic #15: Selected slave notices from Middletown, Conn.

### Ten Dollars Reward.

**R**UNAWAY from on board the sloop Jane, at Weathersfield, on the night of the 4th inst. a black Boy named JOHN, about 13 years of age, a native of Annabus, Coast of Guinea, speaks Spanish and but little English, is very black. Whoever will deliver the said Negro to the subscriber shall receive the above reward and all reasonable charges paid.

YCHABOD WETMORE.

Middletown, Nov. 11.

Middlesex Gazette, Nov. 18, 1813

**T O B E S O L D,**  
On very reasonable Terms, by  
**Dr. Eliot Rawson,**  
to a good Master,

### A likely Negro Woman

25 years old, with three likely children.  
Middletown, Dec. 4, 1776.

Conn. Courant, Hartford, Dec. 30, 1776

**T O** be sold for want of Employ, a NEGRO MAN and WOMAN, about 30 Years of Age, who can be well recommended. Also, a NEGRO GIRL, about two and half Years of Age, and a BOY about six Months old.—Cash, Public Securities or any Kind of Grain, will be received in Payment. For further Particulars enquire of the Printers of this Paper.

Middletown, May 6th, 1786.

Middlesex Gazette, May 15, 1786

**R**AN away last Monday Night from the Subscriber in Middletown, a Negro Man about 19 Years old, large of his Age: Had on a blue duffl Great-Coat, a grey close bodied Coat, to a green double breasted jacket, leather Breeches and a woollen check'd shirt. Whoever will take up said Negro and convey him his Master, Lieut. John Bacon, at Middletown, or secure him in the Goal at New-London, shall receive Twenty Shillings reward, and necessary charges; if committed to New-London Goal, the above reward will be Paid by the Goal keeper.

N. B. Said Negro was seen last Wednesday Night in New-London. All Masters of Vessels are forbid carrying him off, on the Penalty of the Law.

New London Summary, October 8, 1762

Middletown, northwest part, March 27 day, 1769.

**R**UN-away about two months ago, from his Master, a negro man named BRISTO, a good Fiddler and has a Fiddle with him, a short thick negro, about 30 years old, and had on a mix'd colored coat, blue and black, a black waistcoat and breeches, and can talk good English, and read well, and once had five fingers on each hand, one on each hand were cut off, and a small scar to be seen and holes in each ear, and can tell a simple story for being from home, if any person will take up said negro and bring him to said master, shall have **TWO DOLLARS** reward, and all necessary charges paid, by me.

DANIEL WILCOX.

Connecticut Courant, Hartford, April 3, 1769 (typographic facsimile)

The Middlesex Gazette (Middletown) began publishing in 1785.  
The Connecticut Courant (Hartford) was first published in 1764.

October 8, 1762.

**T O** be sold for Cash or 6 Months Credit, with Security; One Negro Boy, about 17 Years old; Two Girls ditto, about 10 or 11 Years old, have been in the Country about 3 Months, by Timothy Miller, at his Houfe in Middletown. N. B. Beef, Pork, or Grain, will be taken as Cash.

Connecticut Courant, Hartford, Sept. 22, 1776

### FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.

**R**AN away from the subscriber, last evening, a Negro Boy, about 19 years old, five feet six or seven inches high, straight and slender built, has a blemish in his left eye and a scar across his chin—Whoever will take up said Boy and return him, shall receive the above reward, and all necessary charges.

JONATHAN DENNY.

Middletown, Aug. 19, 1793.

American Mercury, Hartford, Sept. 2, 1793

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## Meet Marge Pierson ...

*continued from page 3*

**The Middler:** Do you have multiple connections to pre-1700 Middletown settlers?

**Marge:** I have documented my descent from William and Mary Cornwell, Samuel Doolittle, George Hubbard and Elizabeth Watts Hubbard, and Thomas Ranney. I believe I also descend from Nathaniel and Ann Miller Bacon, Thomas and Sarah Hall Wetmore, John Hall and Ann Wilcox Hall, John Kirby, Daniel Markham, Thomas Miller, and John Wilcox. Three of my paternal great-grandparents descended from 16 founders of Hartford.

**The Middler:** Have you spread the genealogy bug to others in the family?

**Marge:** A younger first cousin once removed is greatly interested and appreciates my help. Our two daughters are only mildly interested at this time, but we are hopeful for the future. People tend to develop this interest around age 50.

So far, our efforts to interest our grandchildren in history have apparently failed. We are called upon whenever there is a homework assignment touching on family history. We took two to Washington, D.C. and Williamsburg several years ago, so hopefully some of our interest in the past has been absorbed. Comments over the years: "I know how you spend your time. You collect dead relatives," and "Why do you help your friends learn about people on 'the Flower?'"

**The Middler:** Your husband, Joe, is also a researcher and writer. Does your research ever intersect with his?

**Marge:** Joe and I dated at Grinnell College at Grinnell, Iowa, where he majored in history and I majored in American Studies. Whenever we travel we focus on historic sites and museums, trains, and gardens. We seldom go to a research library together. I do most of the research on Joe's family.

Joe's great love aside from his family is the Chicago & North Western Railroad and all things related. He is Archive Chairman for the Chicago &

North Western Railroad Historical Society, and gives presentations to local groups about Midwest railroad history. He has produced many books, among them *The Chicago & North Western Final Freight Car Roster*, *Chicago Great Western Depots Along the Corn Belt Route*, and *The Chicago & North Western Business Train*. In progress is *Frost & Granger: Depots and Buildings*, a book about the noted 19th-century architectural firm.

Joe is also on the board of our local Deerfield Area Historical Society.

**The Middler:** Do you belong to other genealogical organizations?

**Marge:** Yes. I serve as one of three co-historians for the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of Illinois, and as registrar for the North Shore Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. I also hold memberships in the First Families of Maine, First Families of New Hampshire, Sons & Daughters of the Pilgrims, the Doolittle Society of America, and the Sykes Family Association. I belong to several local genealogical societies.

**The Middler:** How does your educational and career background relate to your genealogical research?

**Marge:** It really doesn't, except for research done for my undergraduate major in American Studies. I was employed as a grade school teacher, day care provider, and an assistant in a hospital development office before working for 23 years as a computer systems programmer analyst.

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**“Hopefully our Triennial Meeting programming will allow us to connect with more people in the Middletown community. It is partly with this in mind that we decided to hold our 2012 meeting in October rather than in August.”**

– Marge Pierson

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**The Middler:** You have been tireless in managing the SMFSD member roster and mailing list – and you have also been an essential point-person in planning the SMFSD Triennial Meeting. What goals do you have for SMFSD and its events?

**Marge:** My committee and I aim for a memorable event that will attract even more members and friends. We are seeking the right balance between socializing and learning about the Middletown area today and in the past. We know some will attend for the opportunity to do research, but if we lean toward group activities, members can always elect research instead or come early or stay late. I think it is important that each Triennial Meeting is unique, offering some new experiences and insights for past attendees.

**The Middler:** What would you say to new or prospective members to get them enthused about membership?

**Marge:** The best thing about our society is the camaraderie and sharing experienced when we gather every three years. Our publication (*The Middler*) and the first settler profiles published on our website are simply outstanding. Some of us also meet at the biennial New England Regional Genealogical Conferences, making those events more fun.

Our society also contributes to the Middletown community by making donations to area historical museums and to Godfrey Memorial Library. Hopefully our 2012 Triennial Meeting programming will allow us to connect with more people in the community. It is partly with this in mind that we decided to hold our 2012 meeting in October rather than in August.

**The Middler:** Aside from genealogy – and SMFSD database management – what keeps you busy these days?

**Marge:** Enjoying our grandchildren, visiting our daughter in Wisconsin, flower gardening, square dancing, book clubs, socializing with friends, and planning one or two vacations a year. I like to read historical fiction and non-fiction, especially early American history, and have collaborated on historical presentations to the DAR. ■



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

### Membership benefits . . .

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

- Two issues per year of *The Middler*, the SMFSD newsletter full of information useful for research about Middletown's first settler families and local history.
- 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.

### Vanished Port ...

*continued from from page 5*

Today there is scant evidence along the riverfront of Middletown's port era. The Connecticut Valley Railroad connected Saybrook and Hartford with tracks along the river's edge in 1868. In the 1950s, construction of Acheson Drive (Rte. 9) and urban renewal led to the demolition of buildings along the waterfront formerly associated with the maritime trade.

**Editor's note:** Your editor has explored this period of Middletown's

history in essays published on the SMFSD web site. With the growth of Middletown as a port in the mid-18th century, there was an uncomfortable disconnect between new arrivals looking to profit, and descendants of

**There was a disconnect between the new arrivals looking to profit, and descendants of early settlers whose biggest asset was their exhausted farmland.**

early-settler families whose biggest asset was their exhausted farmland. Further, with each successive generation, acreage available for each new household grew smaller. Among other forces, this led to the exodus of many people from Middletown in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

**Full disclosure:** Five generations of your editor's family were sea captains in Middletown – from 18th century West Indies trade to early 20th-century steamboat days. Today, the only boat in the household is my wife's one-seater kayak. ■



## A new Sage genealogy ...

*continued from page 4*

this book to qualify as acceptable in every respect.

**The Middler:** In this age of elevated privacy concerns, did you encounter any resistance when gathering information?

**D.A.S.:** Only one family member refused to give me the details of his life. I advised him that I would respect his wishes. I found some skeletons in the closets. In those cases I verified the information that differed from that handed down to the descendants, and recorded what I found to be true.

**The Middler:** Have you had the pleasure of visiting the libraries and archives in Middletown and Hartford?

**D.A.S.:** Unfortunately I was unable to research in person in Middletown. My brother, Robert Earl Sage, visited Middletown and saw the burial site of

David Sage. My grandson Kristoff Hendrickson and his wife, Katie, have also visited Middletown.

I have been blessed with on-site help from volunteers, and I am indebted to their professionalism. Someday I would like to attend the triennial meeting of SMFSD and get lost in the history and riches at Middletown and Cromwell.

**The Middler:** Will the book be available at genealogy libraries?

**D.A.S.:** We have distributed the book to the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; the New England Historic Genealogical Society Library, Boston, Mass.; the Connecticut Society of Genealogists Library, Glastonbury, Conn.; the Allen County (Ind.) Public Library; and the National Genealogical Society Library, Washington, D.C. SMFSD Registrar Donald Brock will give his copy to the Russell Library in Middletown. My grandson and co-

author, currently a graduate student at Yale University, will deliver a copy in person to Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown. The Minnesota Historical Society will also receive a copy. The NEHGS will review the book in the next issue of *American Ancestors*, and the NGS will review it in a future issue of *NGS Magazine*.

**The Middler:** Finally, what are you doing with those 100-hours-a-week now that the project is complete?!

**D.A.S.:** If my eyes and overall health hold up another 10 years (My life expectancy number is what? Don't tell me!), I want to put in print as much as I can of my wife's family history. Job-one right now is to clean out superfluous information – and make room for more. I don't think I will ever quit until I can't see the keyboard. Isn't that about it for all of us addicted to this cause/purpose? ■

