



# The Middler

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

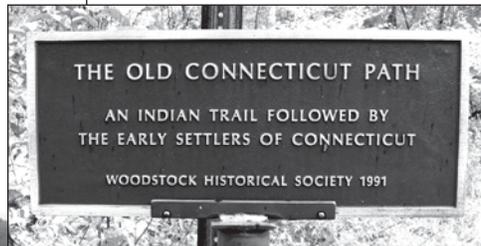
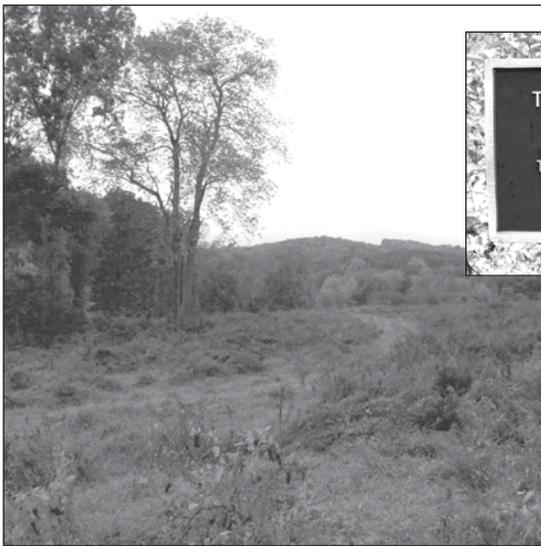
Vol. 13, No. 2

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

Fall 2013

## GENEALOGY...and GEOGRAPHY

### Connecticut Path project energizes researchers to get out of the library and explore fields & forests



At left is a section of the original Old Connecticut Path as it branches off the road across private property in Woodstock, Conn. Above is a bronze plaque located where the path emerges from the woods about a mile away. Rev. Thomas Hooker & followers may have traveled along this Native American path in 1635.

### Descendants can explore the 17th-century route from Boston to Hartford

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

Over the past year, the fabulous Internet-based initiative that invites exploration of the “Old Connecticut Path,” the 17th-century Boston-to-Hartford overland route, has received extensive publicity in New England genealogy circles – and well-deserved acclaim from those who have consulted the web site online or explored the route in person.

Jason Newton, a retired educator and psychologist with multiple family roots in the “Nutmeg State,” began the project in earnest in 2009, pursuing his interest in discovering how his many central Connecticut ancestors made the trek from the outskirts of Boston to Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor. Today the comprehensive web site includes the history and geography of the route

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### Tribulations of Middletown’s Joshua Stow shed light on change in early-19th-century

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

The spring 2008 issue of *The Middler* featured an article on the westward migration of Middletown families to Stow, Ohio, in Connecticut’s “Western Reserve.” The article included a profile of Joshua Stow (1762-1842), devoting

most of it to his activities beginning in 1796 as a pioneer, land surveyor, founder, and investor of the Ohio town that bears his name.

But there is so much more to the story of Joshua Stow that will enhance understanding of the political and social atmosphere in Middletown in the early 19th century – a period when so many descendants of the early settler families were deciding to “get out of town.”

Joshua Stow’s story is (1) a story of an introspective youth in the post-Revolutionary era of independent thinking; (2) a story of an adventurer who relished his expeditions to Ohio

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### ~ DUES are DUE! ~

Annual Membership dues (\$20) are due January 1, 2014 for the 2014 calendar year. Please send payment to:

Mike Campbell	
SMFSD Treasurer	<b>Thank</b>
3570 Willow Street	<b>You</b>
Bonita, CA 91902-1226	<b>!!!</b>

**‘Due’ it Today !!!**



## SMFSD NEWS

### SMFSD welcomes five new members; proposed bylaw change approved

• **Welcome new members.** SMFSD welcomes five new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Kathryn S. Maxon**, AM-336, Andrews AFB Md. (1st settler George Hubbard); **Gary Stephen Petersmeyer**, AM-337, Los Altos, Calif. (1st settler John Savage); **Kimberly DePrimo Holstrom**, AM-338, Sturbridge, Mass. (1st settler John Blake); **John Grant Cornwell**, AM-339, Upperco, Md. (1st settler William Cornwell); and **William Howe**, LM-340, San Diego, Calif. (1st settler William Cornwell).

• **SMFSD bylaw change approved by membership.** The proposed bylaw change detailed on the ballot in the spring 2013 *Middler*

was passed by a unanimous vote of the membership. The vote changes the Section 7 of the SMFSD bylaws to read: "Dues and fees shall be a set by the Officers and are payable annually to be effective from January to the end of the calendar year. A member who has not paid dues by February 28 of the then current year shall be in arrears and ineligible to vote." This change will simplify financial record-keeping. Thank you to all members who voted by e-mail and postal mail.

• **Facebook presence helps SMFSD visibility.** Although your editor neither twitters nor chatters, is neither linked-in or spaced-out, and is so *overbooked* that there is no time for Facebook, such conditions do not rule out rave reviews in this space for SMFSD's relatively new Facebook presence. About one year ago after the SMFSD Triennial Meeting, our secretary **Cindy Nicewarner** built a public Facebook page as an additional way for people to discover the organization. Even your editor must admit that the site offers great potential for member networking. If you have not yet checked it out, you can do so at <https://www.facebook.com/SocietyofMiddletownFirstSettlersDescendants>. ■

## GODFREY LIBRARY NEWS

### Early Middletown church records added to Godfrey Scholar database offerings

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

Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown, Conn. recently added 202 years worth of *searchable* Middletown church records to its popular Godfrey Scholar database.

The records, which are from the handwritten record books of Middletown's First Congregational Church, comprise 4146 baptisms, 1957 marriages, 2941 deaths, and 6207 membership listings. The records span between 1668 and 1870.

In 2008, Godfrey provided access to the digitized page images – about 1500 pages and 12,000 names – but the recently-completed searchable index greatly improves access.

Godfrey Memorial Library, a dedicated genealogy library conceived by librarian and genealogist Fremont Rider, and opened in 1951, offers two levels of online Godfrey Scholar membership. Basic membership is \$45 per year; Premium membership is \$80 per year. To compare the two levels, visit [www.Godfrey.org](http://www.Godfrey.org).

Current Godfrey Scholar members can access the Middletown church records by going to the Scholar home page and clicking on the "Church Records" link in the category list. This will lead to a page with separate links to the database and the page viewer. The databases are broken out by category (baptisms & confessions, marriages, deaths, and members), and indicate the date, name, relationship, notes, and page number. Digital images of the record book are then accessed via the page viewer.

Also available to Godfrey Scholar members online are the records of the First Congregational Church of North Middletown (Cromwell), beginning in 1715. (These records are page images in PDF format.)

As SMFSD's nominal headquarters, Godfrey Memorial Library holds the organization's genealogical and organizational records. To read more about library founder Fremont Rider (1885-1962) and the beginnings of the library, see the feature biographical article in the fall 2010 issue of *The Middler*. ■



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

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

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#### SMFSD OFFICERS

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## BOOKS OF INTEREST

# Bernard Bailyn's life of study yields masterwork on 17th-century America: "The Barbarous Years"

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

As a later-in-life graduate student several years ago, browsing in a Harvard Square bookstore after a night class, a little book with a momentous title drew me like a magnet – *The Peopling of British North America*, by Bernard Bailyn, the distinguished scholar and historian. I wondered how such a slim book could possibly cover such an enormous topic. I bought the book, first published in 1986, and then learned that it was merely the introduction for the series to come.

In 1987 Bailyn won the Pulitzer Prize (his second) for *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*. This year, Bailyn, now 91-years-old, has another masterwork on the market, *The Barbarous Years: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675*.

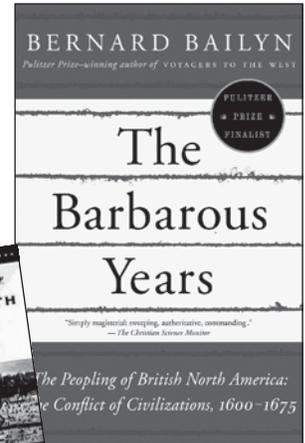
For those who desire to expand their understanding of the 17th

century dynamics in the new American settlements, this book will be a treasure. This should not be the only book on the 17th-century shelf, however, as it falls short in the coverage of Native Americans and African-Americans in that era. But the author's insights, gained from a lifetime of scholarship, and delivered with such grace and clarity, far outweigh the shortcomings.

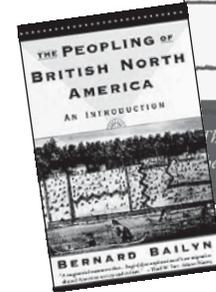
For those interested in New England, Connecticut, and Middletown genealogy, Chapter 12, "The New-English Sionists: Fault Lines, Diversity, and Persecution," provides cogent analysis of the Puritan-led "Great Migration" to New England, as well as the shifting of the British population throughout the 17th century.

"In this new English world of farms and small villages, the divisive forces that in earlier life, which had been confined by long-established institutions and deep structures of

At right, the latest work by Bernard Bailyn, is a masterful 614-page tome, with 64 pages of endnotes to savor!



At left, Bailyn's 1986 introduction is a slim volume of 192 pages.



social control, were set free to work themselves out, to exfoliate, almost without restraint," Bailyn writes. "The fractious history of Puritan New England in its early years ... was the product of many conditions and forces – the geopolitical and cultural diversity of the population's origins, the personalities of the religious and secular leaders, the trauma of displacement and resettlement – but above all it was the result of the basic instability and the inner turbulence of Puritanism itself."

Pages are devoted to John Cotton (1585-1652) (and his "radical spirituality") and Thomas Hooker (1586-1647) (and his "temperate preparationism"), two major figures in the Puritan migration. Neither one represented a Puritan orthodoxy, writes Bailyn, but rather "a broad field of force, within which there were many uncoordinated impulses."

Bailyn describes the loosely associated "companies" drawn to the migration by the magnetism of particular ministers, but notes that "the fabric of the Great Migration was more than a patchwork of ministerial-led clusters." Many group associations were based more on

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## Two-volume set extracts Connecticut's Revolutionary War town meeting records

Middletown genealogy enthusiasts can thank Jolene Roberts Mullen for making life easier after the publication of *Connecticut Town Meeting Records During the American Revolution Vols. 1 & 2*.

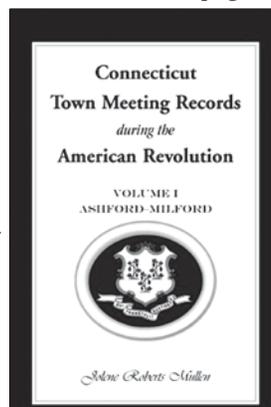
In 2012, her monumental effort of extracting the Revolutionary War town meeting records for all of Connecticut's towns – resulting in a two-volume 1500-page set – was recognized with an award from the Connecticut Society of Genealogists as the outstanding genealogical resource publication in its literary awards competition.

*Connecticut Town Meeting Records During the American Revolution Vols. 1 & 2* collects the minutes of

town meetings from all of the state's extant towns between 1775 and 1783. Volume I in the series includes Ashford to Milford; Volume II includes New Fairfield to Woodstock.

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**Connecticut Town Meeting Records During the American Revolution, Vols. I & II, by Jolene Roberts Mullen, is destined to be a prize reference with a long "shelf life." The two books total over 1500 pages, and hold 75,000 records.**



## Joshua Stow's tribulations ... and real trials ... shed light on early 19th-century Middletown

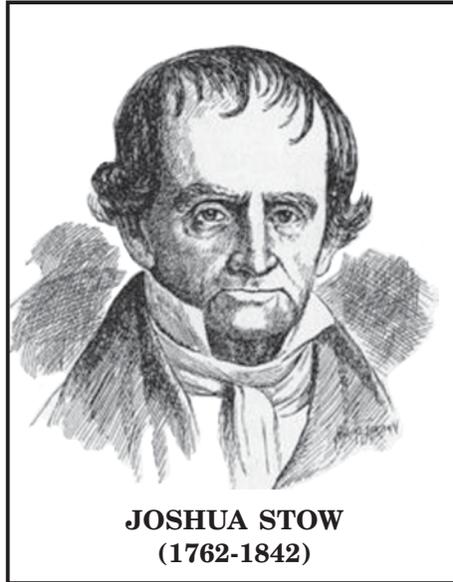
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and back; (3) a story of a dedicated public servant in many capacities; (4) a story of a man caught in the middle of the Jeffersonian vs. Federalist animosity, who was persecuted for his belief in religious freedom; and (5) a story of a banking crisis fraught with political vengeance that shook Middletown in the uncertain aftermath of the Panic of 1819.

Fortunately the life of Joshua Stow is well-documented, not least by the number of scholarly research papers held by the Special Collections & Archives at Wesleyan University in Middletown. This article draws upon sources cited in those papers, plus other publications and court records of the 1820s.

Joshua Stow was born in Middlefield on April 22, 1762, the son of Elihu Stow (1736-1812) and Jemima (Payne) Stow (1738-1805). Joshua was the third generation of his family born in Middlefield. His grandfather, Eliakim Stow (1708-1797), married Lydia Miller (1711-1761), daughter of one of the earliest settlers in Middlefield, Benjamin Miller (1672-1747). Elihu Stow was a farmer and part-owner of a grist mill and sawmill, so as a youth, Joshua worked with his father and brother, learning the entire range of farm and mill operations. Elihu and son Joshua both served in the Revolutionary War, Joshua as a private in Capt. Hopkins' Company, 3rd Regiment, from 1781 to 1783.

From age 23 to 26, Joshua Stow kept a diary, which is now held by the Middlesex County Historical Society. From this diary we know that he studied mathematics, trigonometry, algebra, geometry, navigation, surveying, and philosophy, and that he made special note of an important purchase: a pocket dictionary. During the winter he was a schoolteacher, but his diary indicates some youthful restlessness about his future, as in this excerpt from December 6, 1783: "Kept school in the forenoon, after



**JOSHUA STOW**  
(1762-1842)

school sat down and looked over this journal. Had many melancholy reflections ... So many hours mispent. Consider for the future to amend. At a loss as to which way to spend the rest of my days; whether among books or in seeking after honors and worldly interests ... Many are the temptations of this world and many are the troubles."

In contrast, the diary also notes Joshua's dinner parties, hunting trips, weddings, dances, huckleberry picking, and sending valentine greetings to two different ladies. He was also close friends with Rev. Abner Benedict, Middlefield's Congregationalist minister, and the two engaged in many long discussions about religion.

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**"At a loss as to which way to spend the rest of my days; whether among books or in seeking after honors and worldly interests ... Many are the temptations of this world and many are the troubles."**

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— Joshua Stow

In early 1784, Joshua Stow decided to leave Middlefield, joining a group hired for land surveying in western New York. By 1785 he was back in Middlefield, courting Ruth Coe (1760-1852), daughter of Capt. David Coe (1715-1807) and Hannah Parsons Camp (1720-1808). Joshua and Ruth married on January 28, 1786. They had three children: Julia Stow (1786-1845), Laura Stow (1790-1834), and Albert Gallatin Stow (1801-1830). In addition to farming and working as a land surveyor, Joshua began his public service as Constable of Middlefield from 1789 to 1792. In this period he also served as collector of state and town taxes. In 1800 he opened a sawmill at the falls of the West River, which he operated for eight years, and retained ownership until his death.

In 1795 he began his association with the Connecticut Western Reserve Land Co., of which he was one of the original 48 investors. In 1796 he was one of six surveyors in a party of 50 that went to Ohio to map the Western Reserve into a grid of 25-square-mile townships. The surveying team established the route from Connecticut to Ohio that would be used for years to come: Overland through western Connecticut to the Hudson River, up the Hudson River to Schenectady, N.Y., up the Mohawk River to Oneida Lake, down the Oswego River to Lake Ontario, then along the shore of Lake Ontario by boat and on land, then a seven-mile portage to get around Niagara Falls, then by land and along the shore of Lake Erie to the mouth of the Cuyahoga River in Ohio. Joshua would make this journey, a month long each way, 13 more times over the next 35 years.

One particular township stood out to Joshua, in Town 3, Range 10, north of Akron, Ohio. It was heavily forested, with navigable waterways, abundant wildlife, a moderate climate, and rich soil. He purchased the five-mile square tract, which was subsequently named after him, and it

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## Joshua Stow ...

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later became the new home to many families from Middletown. Over the decades Joshua Stow spent a great deal of money to develop the settlement, but never actually lived there himself, instead hiring his cousin, William Wetmore (1771-1827), to serve as land agent. Judging from the value of his estate upon his death in 1842, Joshua Stow never saw a great return on his Ohio land investments.

When in Middletown, Joshua served as a local and state tax collector (1790-1814), U.S. tax collector for Middlesex County (1814-1819), and postmaster (1815-1818, 1821-1841). As a leading figure of the Jeffersonian party that continually challenged and chipped away at Middletown's entrenched Federalist hierarchy, he was elected by voters as a representative to the Connecticut General Assembly (1805), as a Middletown delegate to the state Constitutional Convention (1818), and as a State Senator (1819-1822). He served appointments as Associate Judge (1818-1822) and Chief Justice (1822-1826) of the Middlesex County Court.

If one looks at the big picture of Joshua Stow's life and activities, it becomes clear that at least some of his appointments were related to longtime political alliances with fellow Jeffersonians who were united against the status quo Federalists. Stow supported Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800, in which Jefferson defeated John Adams. Stow's contemporaries described him as being an outspoken individual who believed in expressing his opinions. So as the Federalists in Middletown lost ground to the forward-thinking Jeffersonians, Joshua Stow stood out as a well-known target for the Federalists to try and bring down. Two episodes stand out, both of which took years to be resolved in the courts, ultimately in Stow's favor. The first was related to Stow's successful initiative in favor of religious freedom, which brought an end to state support of

the Congregational Church in 1818. The second was related to a banking scandal at the Middletown branch of the Bank of the United States – of which Stow was a director.

Joshua Stow's interest in freedom of religion extended back to his youth, and to his philosophical discussions with Rev. Abner Benedict. In 1789 Stow joined the Ethosian Society, basically a lending library and debating club made up of the intelligent young men of Middlefield and Durham, Conn. The club was in existence from 1787 to 1793, and its members freely discussed politics, philosophy, and religion. During this period Stow began his interest in Universalism, and at the same time studied his copy of *Statutes of Connecticut*. According to statute, the Congregational Church was to be supported by taxes collected by magistrates, and no other church could be organized without consent of the legislature.

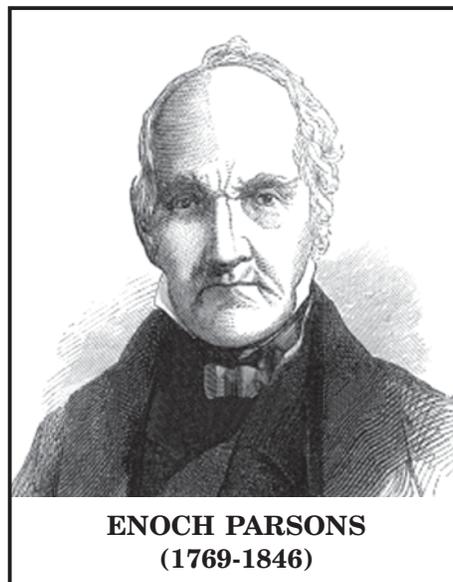
Stow was a member of the Congregational Church in Middlefield, and as its clerk, often engaged ministers of other denominations to preach there. In 1817 he was the leader of the Toleration

Party, which opposed support of the Congregational Church by the state government, and that year the party successfully seated its candidates as Governor (Oliver Wolcott, Jr.) and Lt. Governor (Jonathan Ingersoll) in statewide elections. The time was right for change, and in 1818 Stow was elected as a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention (111 of 201 delegates were from the Toleration Party). His express purpose was to do away with state support of any church and make a statement for religious freedom. Explaining the procedural rules and regulations of the process – and describing all the roadblocks along the way – would consume several more pages of *The Middler*. Suffice it to say here that Stow's tenacity drove the changes through, and the revised Constitution was adopted on September 15, 1818. It was the Federalist smear tactics in the aftermath that led to the court case.

On March 16, 1819, an article in the *Connecticut Constitution* newspaper accused Joshua Stow of "spreading (anti-Christian) infidelity" and of extortion. The newspaper's publisher, Sherman Converse, was also the reporter who covered the Constitutional Convention proceedings and wrote the article. Joshua Stow sued the newspaper and Converse for libel, and after two lengthy trials, the case was decided in Stow's favor in July 1821.

The trials, however, dragged Stow through the mud, with the lawyers for Converse calling upon a succession of witnesses, political enemies of the Jeffersonians, to testify about Stow's "free-thinking" involvement with the Ethosian Society decades before. The jury in the second trial decided in favor of Stow, but being composed of Federalists, awarded only minimal damages. One historical irony is that Stow himself insisted on the publication of all the testimony that revealed the desperation of his adversaries in *A Report of the Case of Joshua Stow vs. Sherman*

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**ENOCH PARSONS**  
(1769-1846)

**In 1820, after the cashier of the Bank of the U.S. in Middletown dipped into the funds and engaged in shady lending practices, bank president Enoch Parsons, an arch-Federalist, sued the bank directors, who happened to be Jeffersonians.**

## The Old Connecticut Path

continued from page 1

from Cambridge, Mass. to Hartford, Conn., plus photos, videos, maps, suggested driving tours, suggested hiking segments, and the sources that are the basis for his interpretation. Newton relies heavily on the scholar who devoted the most study to the topic, Harral B. Ayres (1867-1959), author of *The Great Trail of New England* (1940), and other articles on the subject. The easiest way to get to the web site is to Google-search “Old Connecticut Path.” (The URL is <https://sites.google.com/site/oldconnecticutpath/>) The site is so content-rich that the informative welcome page is best followed by clicking on the link to the helpful “Guide to the Old Connecticut Path Web Site.”

Readers who live relatively close to the route of the Old Connecticut Path may wish to be on the alert for Jason Newton’s presentations on his project. Area libraries and historical societies hosted several presentations in 2013, and 2014 engagements are

## The Old Connecticut Path is relevant to the 17th-century settlers of Middletown because so many of the early families made the journey from the Boston area before arriving in Middletown.

already set for North Grosvenordale, Conn. (March 19); Ellington, Conn. (April 24); and Hopkinton, Mass. (April 27). Details are posted on the Old Connecticut Path web site.

The Old Connecticut Path is relevant to the 17th-century settlers of Middletown because so many of the early families made the journey from the Boston area before arriving in Middletown. By the mid-17th century, the connected Native American paths that cleverly wound through wetlands and around hills formed a route that was in regular use and referred to as

the Great Trail or Connecticut Path. The premise of Jason Newton and others is that Rev. Thomas Hooker and his 100 followers, along with 160 head of cattle, plus pigs, chickens, and goats, very likely trekked the Connecticut Path in the spring of 1636 en route to establishing the settlement at Hartford. It is important to note, however, that Jason Newton and others acknowledge that a firm conclusion about Rev. Hooker’s 1636 route cannot be substantiated. Rev. Hooker kept no journal of the two-week journey, and it is equally possible, according to other scholars and historians, that his group followed the “Bay Path” from Boston west to Springfield, and then south along the Connecticut River, as this was the preferred route to central Connecticut at the time. (See the map on page 7 that indicates the route of the Bay Path and Connecticut Path, and lists the towns through which the two routes passed.)

William DeLoss Love, in *The Colonial History of Hartford* (1914),

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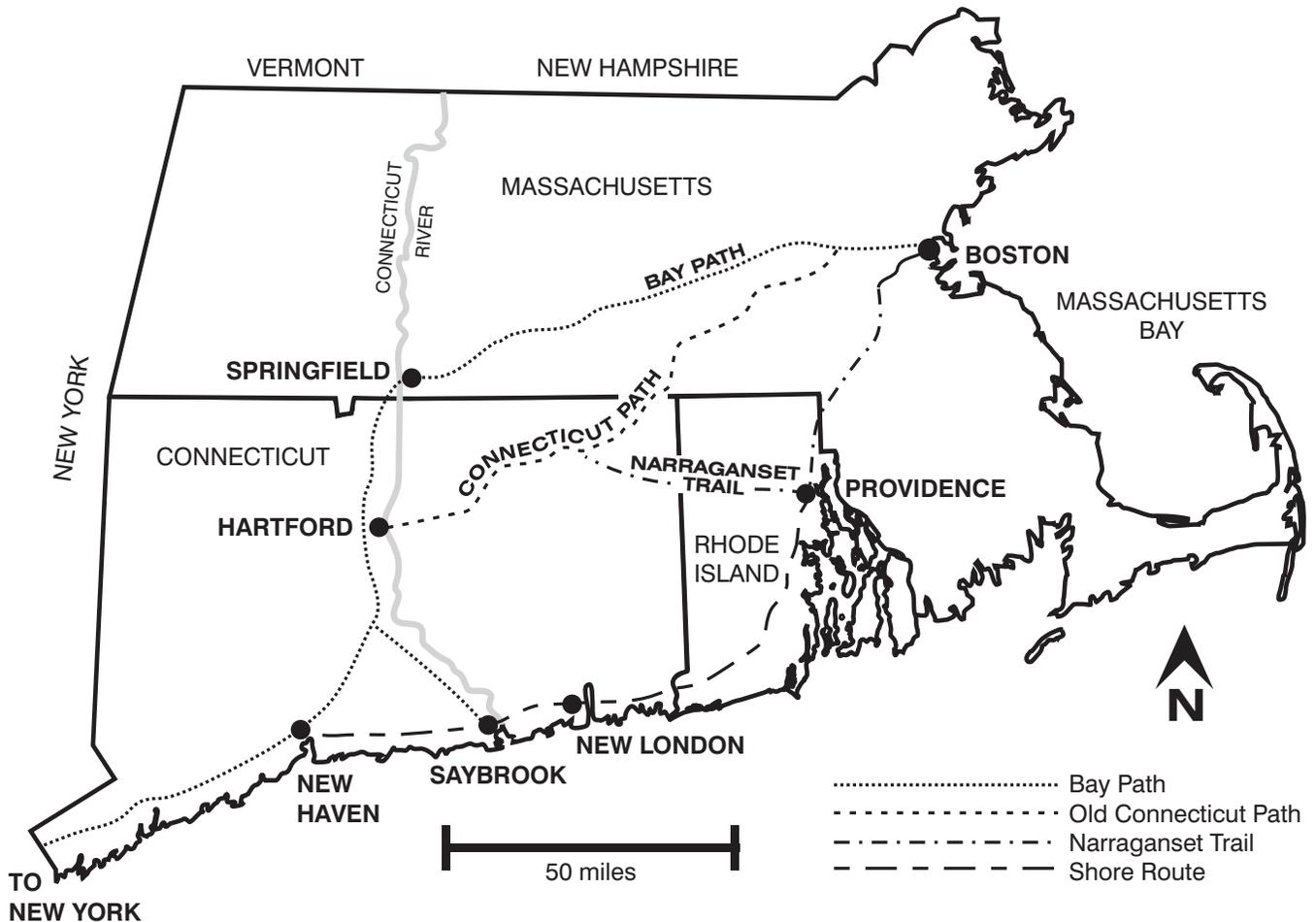


At left is the Old Connecticut Path plaque placed by the Woostock (Conn.) Historical Society in 1991. At center is the view up a private driveway – formerly a section of the Path. At right is the view across the road from the plaque, where the Path heads west into the woods. (Photos by R.W. Bacon)

## Feature Graphic #17 – The Bay Path and The Old Connecticut Path

The custom graphic showing the 17th-century routes from Boston to central Connecticut is based on the following sources: (1) Jason Newton's Old Connecticut Path web site (<https://sites.google.com/site/oldconnecticutpath/>); (2) the Woodward & Saffrey Map of 1642; (3) the Philip Lea Map of New England (1685); (4) the unpublished "History Notes" of Charles Leavens; (5) The Old Connecticut Path, Woodstock, Conn. – National Register of Historic Places Form; and (6) *Historical Journeys of Pioneer Years – Southern New England Trails & Activities*, by Herral Ayres, in the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeology Society*, October 1944. (Graphic by R.W. Bacon for the SMFSD Middler, Fall 2013)

### Mid-17th-Century Routes from Boston to Central Connecticut



#### Towns Traversed by the Old Connecticut Path (+/- 120 miles)

Cambridge, Mass.  
Watertown, Mass.  
Waltham, Mass.  
Weston, Mass.  
Sudbury/Wayland, Mass.  
(Bay Path branches off west)  
Framingham, Mass.  
South Framingham, Mass.  
Hopkinton, Mass.  
Westborough, Mass.

Grafton, Mass.  
Sutton, Mass.  
Oxford-Webster-Dudley, Mass.  
Thompson, Conn.  
Woodstock, Conn.  
Eastford, Conn.  
Ashford, Conn.  
Willington, Conn.  
Tolland, Conn.  
Coventry, Conn.  
Bolton, Conn.  
Manchester, Conn.  
East Hartford, Conn.  
(Or Tolland to Vernon, South Windsor, & Windsor)

#### Towns Traversed by the Bay Path to Springfield (94 miles)

Boston, Mass.  
Roxbury, Mass.  
Watertown, Mass.  
Weston, Mass.  
Sudbury/Wayland, Mass.  
(Conn. Path branches off to the southwest)

Marlborough, Mass.  
Westborough, Mass.  
Shrewsbury, Mass.  
Worcester, Mass.  
Leicester, Mass.  
Brookfield, Mass.  
Springfield, Mass.

(Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon for the SMFSD Middler, Fall 2013.)

## The Old Connecticut Path

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devotes a 17-page chapter to this very subject, “The Pilgrimage of Thomas Hooker,” and suggests that Rev. Hooker’s group followed the “Bay Path” route taken many times previously by John Oldham. Love’s view was that (1) the romanticized account of the trek published by Gov. Thomas Hutchinson in 1764, and (2) the confusion over the changing names of the various paths, combined to blur the already scant evidence of Rev. Hooker’s overland adventure. The Connecticut Path and the Bay Path followed the same route west from Boston, through Cambridge, Watertown, Waltham, and Weston to Sudbury/Wayland, where the two routes diverged. The Bay Path proceeded west to Springfield, passing through Worcester, while the Connecticut Path took a more southwest course, crossing into the northwest corner of Connecticut after navigating the lowlands around Lake Chaubunagungamaug in Webster, Mass.

In case anyone needs more confusion: Even if Rev. Hooker’s group did follow the Connecticut Path, the jury is still out on exactly where he crossed the Connecticut River. The Old Connecticut Path web site includes maps of three possible routes that local historians have been jockeying over for a few hundred years.

Regardless of Rev. Hooker’s route in 1636, there is clear evidence that the Connecticut Path was in use as a route to Boston just a few years later, and is included on the Woodward & Saffrey map of 1642. So, for *Middler* readers with central Connecticut ancestors who made their way *somehow* from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 17th century, an exploration of the Old Connecticut Path web site will be an intellectual treat, and an in-person, boots-on-the-ground visit to the route itself will be a sensory one.

At the web site, Jason Newton writes of his efforts to trace the 17th-century Connecticut Path that serviced the early settlers for over a century, but then fell into disuse, superseded first by nearly parallel stagecoach routes, and in the 20th century, by roadways suitable for automobiles. “Although the Old Connecticut Path served as an important route for almost a century, it has now largely vanished from view. In some places, the Path is hidden in plain sight; in other areas, only dim traces remain. Rediscovering the Old Connecticut Path has required exploring woods and forgotten byways to find traces of the Path and confirm the markers described in histories,” he writes. “After 375 years of human settlement and development, places still exist along the Path where it is possible to experience the wilderness

**An exploration of the Old Connecticut Path web site will be an intellectual treat, and an in-person, boots-on-the-ground visit to the route itself will be a sensory one.**

as it might have appeared to the earliest travelers. The most evocative places are found between Sutton, Mass., and Tolland, Conn.”

Newton writes that his study of the Old Connecticut Path continues to be guided by three questions: (1) Can the route of the Old Connecticut Path be reconnected all the way from Cambridge to Hartford?; (2) After 375 years of human settlement and modern development, are there still wild places along the Path where it is possible to experience the wilderness as it might have been seen during the of the migration of the earliest travelers?; and (3) Are there artifacts left by the earliest travelers and settlers that mark their passage along the Path? The voluminous content assembled at the Old Connecticut Path web site begins to answer these questions.

Through his own investigative experience, Jason Newton has been able to clarify the value of rediscovering the Old Connecticut Path. He notes that finding and experiencing the Path (1) renews a connection with the Native peoples who created the Path; (2) connects us with the settlements that grew along the Path; (3) allows us to walk in the footsteps of ancestor families who were among those who took the first steps in our country’s westward expansion; (4) reveals the changes that man has made to the environment over 375 years; (5) provides the opportunity to renew ourselves by getting outdoors to travel through

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At left, this section of the Old Connecticut Path has been beset with evidence of our 21st-century civilization. Farther along the same road, but still on the route of ancestors on the Old Connecticut Path, your editor could not help but wonder if some 17th-century Pollyanna once blurted out “It’s all downhill from here!”



At left is a meandering section of the Old Connecticut Path that is now a private driveway. At right, just across the road, is the site of a former stagecoach stop and inn. The 18th-century coach road route passes nearby.



## ***The Old Connecticut Path*** *continued from page 8*

time as we drive, walk, or bicycle along the way; (6) provides incentive to preserve the Path for the enjoyment of future generations.

This fall, your *Middler* editor consulted the Old Connecticut Path web site, and after reading some maps and watching some video clips, decided to take a one-day solo jaunt to explore the Path between Woodstock and Eastford, Conn. This is one of the driving tours that plots an auto route that parallels the Old Connecticut Path as closely as possible, and notes all the places where the Path intersects. Even though almost all of the Old Connecticut Path is on private property in this Woodstock-to-Eastford section, my goal was to get out of the truck and tramp around (without trespassing, of course) as much as possible.

Woodstock, Conn. is about a two-hour drive from home in Newburyport, Mass., and after

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**The map and directions were thorough, although SmartPhone users will be able to take advantage of more web site features that amount to interactive guidance.**

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driving through torrential down-pours en route, it was a relief to see the clouds give way to an open blue sky upon my crossing into the “Quiet Corner” of northeast Connecticut. I was fully prepared with maps printed from the Old Connecticut Path web site, plus the crystal-clear step-by-step text directions. The map and directions were thorough, although SmartPhone users will be able to take advantage of more web site features that amount to interactive guidance. The deficiencies of my old “dumb-phone,” however, did not prevent me from hopping out of the truck many times along the route to take photos. There was just one period of odd discomfort: As a rare and unlikely pedestrian briskly walking along the gravelly shoulder of a high-speed road through the boondocks (on my way to an Old Connecticut Path photo-op some distance from my truck), I must have appeared to the drivers whizzing by like a wandering escapee from either a prison yard or psych ward.

For your editor, a museum professional who has always advocated for experiencing history with the five senses, this driving tour, with stops at all the Old Connecticut Path intersections, was excellent. For this grizzled researcher, so often buried in books and papers, it was still moving to tramp around the geography that was traversed by early Connecticut settlers in the 17th century. Perhaps most interesting was observing the

layers of human-built changes to the environment on, around, and over the Old Connecticut Path. One irony is that a section of the Path in Woodstock that was built by Native Americans along the top of an extended beaver dam in order to bridge wetlands is still in place after over 350 years, while another section of the Path, built over modern concrete drainage culverts, graded smooth, and paved with gravel to make a private driveway, now washes out a few times every year.

The web site and all of its features are highly recommended – from afar one can enjoy dozens of video tours of the Path delivered in Jason Newton’s low-key and informative style. But if the northeast quadrant of Connecticut is within reach, the driving and walking tours of the Path will be enjoyable boots-on-the-ground history/genealogy activities for those with central Connecticut ancestors. ■

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**If the northeast quadrant of Connecticut is within reach, the driving and walking tours of the Path will be enjoyable boots-on-the-ground history/genealogy activities for those with central Connecticut ancestors.**

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## Joshua Stow ...

continued from page 5

Converse, for a *Libel: Containing a History of Two Trials Before the Superior Court, and Some Account of the Proceedings Before the Supreme Court of Errors*. The author: Joshua Stow. The publisher ... on his own dime: Sherman Converse.

The second episode involved a number of prominent early Middletown industrialists in a bank scandal. In 1817, Joshua Stow was appointed to a directorship of the Middletown branch of the Bank of the United States, with responsibility for the Office of Discount & Deposit. His fellow directors included Henry Carrington (1781-1871), Elisha Coe (1763-1831), Arthur W. Magill (1783-1855), Simeon North (1765-1852), and Nathan Starr, Jr. (1784-1852). Arthur Magill was appointed cashier, and in 1820 it was discovered that he had engaged in reckless and illegal lending policies. Apparently Nathan Starr, Jr. and some of Magill's friends were extended enormous credit, and Magill himself was dipping into the bank funds. Magill was suspended immediately, and later served a sentence in the New Haven jail. His transgressions, however, created an opening for the bank president, Enoch Parsons (1769-1846), a staunch Federalist, to exact political



**NATHAN STARR, JR.**  
(1784-1852)

vengeance on the directors who happened to be Jeffersonians. Parsons sued Magill, Starr, Coe, and Stow, as equally responsible bondsmen, for mismanagement of bank funds.

Nathan Starr, Jr. was an ardent Jeffersonian, and had served in the state legislature a few years before, but now he was caught in an obvious breach of ethics, if not a violation of law. Starr immediately paid back his share of the debt, but the others defaulted. Since Starr was a co-signer for his deadbeat friends, Parsons seized the opportunity to bring Starr to his knees, eventually seizing his property in 1827. (Starr's brother-in-

law, Elihu Townsend, came to the rescue and purchased the Starr Arms factory and 58 acres on Staddle Hill, and sold it back to him for a dollar.) Joshua Stow came out of all this unscathed, save for the political harassment. Eventually settlements were received from Magill in 1831 – after getting out of jail he set out for western New York and it took years for authorities to catch up to him. He died in Illinois in 1855. As for Parsons, the Federalist bank president, he is remembered in the collections of the Middlesex County Historical Society: On the back of a missive from Parsons in the Starr family collection, are the handwritten notations, “Satan,” and “Old Splitfoot’s Letter.”

In the 1830s Joshua Stow remained politically active, supporting Andrew Jackson in the 1831 presidential campaign. In 1838 Stow was listed among the members of the newly-formed Universalist Church in Middletown.

Joshua Stow died at age 80 at his home in Middlefield on October 11, 1842. Almost all of his estate was spent paying debts he owed, the largest sum to the School Fund, i.e. proceeds due to the fund from the sale of lands in the Western Reserve. His wife, Ruth, was provided for with the 75-acre farm (with buildings,

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## Early Families of Middletown, Conn. - Vol. I receives 2013 Peck Award for Family History

*Early Families of Middletown, Conn. - Vol. I: 1650-1654*, published in late 2012, was recognized with the 2013 Brainerd T. Peck Award from the Connecticut Society of Genealogists.

The CSG's literary award for excellence in family history was announced in May 2013. The award certificate – and cash prize – were presented to the author at the CSG annual meeting May 17, 2013 in Glastonbury, Conn.

“This all-encompassing book is a wealth of information for any researcher interested in treading the grounds of this very early settlement,” wrote Russell A. DeGraff in his book review for the spring 2013 issue of *Connecticut Genealogy News*.

“The author has outdone himself ... the book is replete with scores of photographs, charts, graphs and drawings. Not only is the reader treated to early settler profiles,

CSG 2013  
Brainerd T. Peck  
Award recipient.



but also to reproductions of land grant maps, a history of Middletown, and multiple time lines. This is a must-read for anyone interested in a city and its inception.”

The reviewer's enthusiasm, for which the author is grateful, nearly precludes a more dispassionate description, which can be found along with several excerpts at [www.VarietyArtsPress.com](http://www.VarietyArtsPress.com).

*Early Families of Middletown, Conn. - Vol. I: 1650-1654* (8.5 x 11, softcover, 194 pages, 2012) is available from Variety Arts Press, P. O. Box 489, Newburyport, MA 01950. Order directly from the publisher at the above address or via the web site at [www.VarietyArtsPress.com](http://www.VarietyArtsPress.com). Cost is \$50.00 postpaid in the U.S. ■

**Editor's note:** As a fine-print point of information, the author of the above book is your *Middler* editor, R.W. Bacon.



## 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 Stancliff . . . 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:** Hal Whitmore, Registrar, Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 1301 N. Harrison St., Apt. 201, Wilmington, DE 19806; or via e-mail to: [hbwhitmore@yahoo.com](mailto:hbwhitmore@yahoo.com).

### Joshua Stow ... continued from page 10

livestock, carriages, sleighs, tools, furniture, etc.), plus modest yearly bank dividends. She lived comfortably for another 10 years until her death at age 92.

Joshua Stow is buried in Middlefield Cemetery. Upon his gravestone is the following inscription:

**Author of the article securing  
Religious freedom in the  
Constitution of his native state.  
To every species of tyranny and domination  
A constant and formidable foe.  
Now first in peace, for the impartial page  
Shall greet thee as an honor to our age.  
Long in these climes thy memory shall remain  
And still new tributes from new ages gain.**

### SOURCES:

- Stow, Joshua. *Report of the Case of Joshua Stow Vs. Sherman Converse, for a Libel: Containing a History of Two Trials Before the Superior Court, and Some Account of the Proceedings Before the Supreme Court of Errors.* Middletown, Conn.: S. Converse, 1822.
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- Schulz, Carol D. "Joshua Stow: A 19th Century Rebel" (1980). Wesleyan University *Middletown Papers*. #96.
- Norwood, Dael. "A Constant and Formidable Foe: Joshua Stow and the Fight for Religious Freedom in Connecticut" (2001). Wesleyan University *Middletown Papers*. #77.
- Barry, John. "The Starr Family of Middletown, Conn.: A Study in Social Mobility and Social Experience" (1979). Wesleyan University *Middletown Papers*. #9.



## **Revolutionary era town meeting records ...**

*continued from page 3*

The work has culled the names of all individuals mentioned in the meeting records in the Revolutionary War period: those elected or appointed to a town office, those warned out of town, those who freed a slave or became a freed slave, those who required town support, those who financially supported the Revolutionary cause, and those who left town for military service. Also included are the lists of individuals who took the freeman's oath and those who took the oath of fidelity/allegiance. In all, the books hold 75,000 record entries.

Both volumes include a map of Connecticut towns, a reference to parent towns, and a full-name index. (The index to Volume I takes up 158 of the 742 pages!)

The Middletown section has entries from 114 separate dates spread over 32 pages of fine print, and hundreds of familiar Middletown surnames. Taken in total, the mundane records of appointing fence-viewers and horse-branders, interspersed with references to the war effort, paint a clearer picture of ongoing real life in the Revolutionary era.

## **Bailyn's masterwork on 17th century America ...**

*continued from page 3*

kinship, friendship, or geographical proximity. "In genealogical terms, much of the emigration, especially from greater East Anglia, the West Country, and eastern Yorkshire, can be conceived of as tangles of extended kinship groups," he writes, citing 55 identified networks that

The set was published by Heritage Books, Westminster, Md. ([www.HeritageBooks.com](http://www.HeritageBooks.com)), although oddly, the books do not show up on the company's web site. The books are listed on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), however, and it appears the purchase is directed through the "back door" at Heritage Books. The books can be purchased separately, in hardback or paperback. ■

represent one-third of all emigrants from that region of southeastern England.

Those who like to dig deeper will appreciate the 64 pages of annotated endnotes – over 10% of Bailyn's 614-page tome.

The book is likely to be found at most public libraries, and also available from your favorite bookseller in both hardback and paperback editions. ■

