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

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

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...
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.

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.

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.
Revolutionary War town meeting records

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

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.


“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 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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BOOKS OF INTEREST

Bernard Bailyn’s life of study yields masterwork on 17th-century America: “The Barbarous Years”

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.

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

continued from page 1

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 school sat down and looked over this journal. Had many melancholy reflections ... So many hours mis-spent. 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.

“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
Joshua Stow …
continued from page 4

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 Converse.
The Old Connecticut Path

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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 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.

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),
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 Harral 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.
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.
Leicester, Mass.
Brookfield, Mass.
Springfield, Mass.

(Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon for the SMFSD Middler, Fall 2013.)
The Old Connecticut Path
continued from page 6

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 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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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.
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 driving through torrential downpours 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.
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 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, continued on page 11)

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. DeGrafft 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, 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.

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

U.S. District Court of Connecticut. United States Bank vs. Magill, Stow, and Others. Hartford, Conn.: U.S. District Court of Conn., 1823

Schulz, Carol D. "Joshua Stow: A 19th Century Rebel" (1980). Wesleyan University Middletown PAPERS. #96.


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

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 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.