



# The Middler

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

Vol. 9, No. 1

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

Spring 2009

## SMFSD TRIENNIAL MEETING in MIDDLETOWN

# Middletown first settler descendants, cousins, & genealogy enthusiasts to meet Aug. 27-30

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

Middletown first-settler descendants, cousins, and central Connecticut genealogists should reserve August 27-30, 2009 (Thurs. - Sun.) for the SMFSD Triennial Meeting. Once again the headquarters hotel will be the Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Conn.

Activities will include library research visits (in Hartford & Middletown, Conn.), member networking, cemetery explorations, guest speakers, and social gatherings. (For some genealogy enthusiasts, this event is akin to a kid being locked in a candy store for days!)

A schedule and registration form for the 2009 Triennial Meeting can be found on page 11.

At this writing, most of the lineup of activities is set, but SMFSD officers report they are still working – at long-distance – to fine-tune event offerings to make the best use of time, and to ensure a positive, rich, and varied experience for all attendees.

Here is a tentative day-by-day outline of our Triennial Meeting:

**Thursday, August 27:** Arrival, check-in, & registration at hotel; board

***A complete schedule & registration form for the 2009 Triennial Meeting can be found on page 11.***

When you attend the SMFSD Triennial Meeting this August, you'll travel this route from Middletown to our Cromwell, Conn. hotel headquarters several times, although it won't look quite like this late 1920s postcard view.



CONNECTICUT RIVER AND CROMWELL ROAD, MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

meeting at the hotel; research night at Godfrey Library, with dedication of plaque in recognition of SMFSD founder Gale Cornwell (1926-2007)

**Friday, August 28:** Library visit(s);

## ***Can't make it to Middletown? Conn. genealogy resources abound***

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

Sure, everyone wants to make the genealogical junket to the SMFSD Triennial Meeting in Middletown, but time, distance, or schedule doesn't permit it for everyone. Thankfully, there is plenty of Connecticut geneal-

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optional activity for non-genealogists; optional Middletown explorations; general business meeting; dinner; after-dinner program.

**Saturday, August 29:** Library visit; cemetery visits; wine & cheese social hour; banquet; after-dinner speaker.

**Sunday, August 30:** Optional Middletown explorations; optional museum visit; farewell until 2012.

We hope to see you in Middletown! ■

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## SMFSD NEWS

### SMFSD exhibits at N.E. Regional Genealogy Conf.

The SMFSD participated in the Society Fair on Thursday, April 23, 2009 at the New England Regional Genealogical Conference in Manchester, N.H. The event was a showcase for genealogical societies at the 5-day conference, held April 22-26, 2009 at the Radisson Hotel and Expo Center of New Hampshire. The SMFSD mounted its exhibit of display panels, distributed membership brochures, and showcased the organization's web site on a laptop computer. As a visual aid, next to the computer was the bulging 300+-page binder – the hard-copy content of the

web site. Representing SMFSD to interested attendees were officers Barb Stenberg, Sue Welles, Marge Pierson, and Don Brock, plus *Middler* editor R.W. Bacon.

- **Our tireless member Paula Higgins** has researched and prepared two more in-depth profiles for the SMFSD web site: Nathaniel Collins and Jasper Clements. Thank you!

- **SMFSD Secretary Marge Pierson** was recently appointed as one of three historians for the Society of Mayflower Descendants in Illinois.

- **In the Winter 2009 issue of *New England Ancestors***, the 20,000-plus circulation magazine of

the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), SMFSD was mentioned in an article by Stephen Payson Shaw, "Hereditary Societies Today." (An added bonus is that this issue is the "keeper issue" on Connecticut resources!)

- **Welcome new members.** SMFSD extends an enthusiastic welcome to three new members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Terry Lee Bowe**, AM- 269, Charleston, W. Va. (1st settler Alexander Bow); **Harold B. Whitmore, Jr.**, AM-270, Wilmington, Delaware (1st settler Thomas Wetmore); and **Carolyn Nelson Bozeman**, AM-271, Milton, Fla. (1st settler George Hubbard). ■

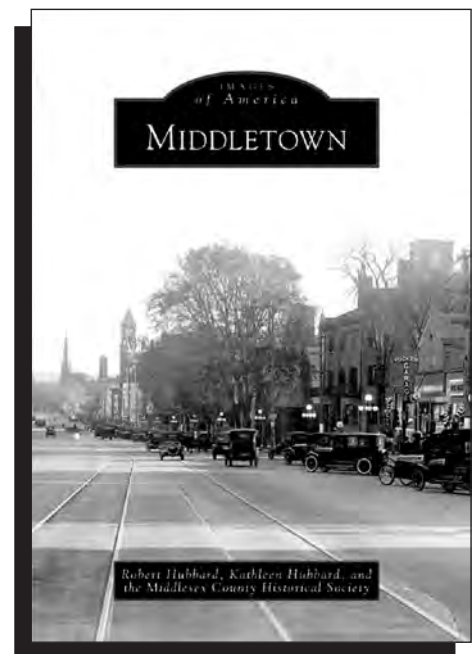
### New 'Images of America' volume offers collection of vintage Middletown photos

In March 2009 Arcadia Publishing released the newest in its "Images of America" series, a volume of late-19th and early-20th century photos of Middletown, Conn.

The co-authors are Robert Hubbard, an associate professor at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, and Kathleen Hubbard, an educator in the Middletown school system. Most of the photographs in the 128-page paperback are from the Middlesex County Historical Society collection.

The publisher's product description serves as a brief, well-written synopsis of Middletown history:

"In 1650, Middletown earned its name due to its location halfway between the mouth of the Connecticut River and the first Connecticut settlement of Windsor. The town grew from a key Native American village to become a major seaport and the wealthiest town in Connecticut by the mid-1700s. In the early 1800s, as international disputes adversely affected Middletown's seafaring trade, manufacturing prospered. Factories turned out everything from ship hardware and textiles to sleigh bells and sidearms for Union army officers. Trolleys encouraged suburban expansion while railroads and



**Middletown (Images of America Series)** by Robert Hubbard & Kathleen Hubbard (Arcadia Publishing, 2009, 128 pages; ISBN#: 0738562130, 978-0738562131) is available through your library or bookseller.

highways greatly influenced commercial development. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many immigrants from Europe made Middletown their home. Today Middletown is perhaps best known as the location of top-ranked Wesleyan University." ■



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SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN  
FIRST SETTLERS DESCENDANTS  
1650-1700 – Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.  
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#### SMFSD OFFICERS

**Commander** . . . . . Barbara Stenberg  
**Deputy Commander** . . . . . Suzanne Welles  
**Secretary** . . . . . Margery Pierson  
**Treasurer & Historian**  
. . . . . Thomas Smith  
**Registrar** . . . . . Donald Brock  
**Honorary Board Member**  
. . . . . Albert C. Dudley



## If you can't attend our meeting in Middletown, long-distance research opportunities abound

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ogy information that is newly available and accessible at long distance.

Thanks to efficient digitization technology and the Internet, access to genealogy and local history information continues to become easier. Information formerly buried in remote archives, or in delicate copies of rare books, is now just mouse clicks away.

For starters, as noted in the fall 2008 *Middler* newsletter, Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown has made available to the public at no charge three essential books of Middletown genealogy interest: (1) *The Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County* (1903); (2) *The History of Middlesex County 1635-1885, with Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men* (1884); and (3) *A Statistical Account of the County of Middlesex, in Connecticut* (1819) by David Dudley Field. The three

volumes can be accessed at the Godfrey Memorial Library's web site, [www.godfrey.org](http://www.godfrey.org), by clicking on the "Search" tab, then on "Mdlsx Co Hist," which opens a page with links.

Since the last issue of *The Middler*, the free-to-the-public Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) has made available several publications of interest to Middletown researchers.

Newly-available is *Mattabeseck 1650-1900*, a publication of the Middletown Tribune Co. to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Middletown. The 122-page publication is available free in a number of file formats. For details on viewing or downloading, visit: <http://www.archive.org/details/16501900mattabes00midd>.

Other digitized books made available on the site in late 2008 that may be of interest to Middletown researchers:

- *Founders, Fathers, and Patriots of Middletown Upper Houses* (1903); <http://www.archive.org/details/foundersfathersp00rann>.

- *A Brief History of the First Church of Christ in Middletown, Connecticut for Two Centuries and a Half, 1668-1918* by Azel Washburn Hazen; <http://www.archive.org/details/briefhistoryoffi00haze>.

- *A History of Cromwell* (1880) by M.S. Dudley; <http://www.archive.org/details/historyofcromwel00dudl>.

Also freely-available for download are several early organizational pamphlets that detail activities of the Middlesex County Historical Society.

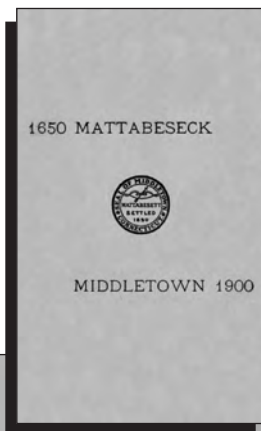
For members of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), a new development of interest to Middletown researchers is the collaboration with the Connecticut Society of Genealogists in making available online to its members the CSG's journal, *The Connecticut Nutmegger*.

NEHGS noted in its announcement that "*The Nutmegger* has served as the journal of record for CSG for 40 years. During this time it has captured a wealth of information, including vital records, probate records, bible records, headstone records, memorials and other useful records. Well-documented family histories and genealogical articles, covering hundreds of families – mainly with Connecticut ties – have been presented. Published articles include commentary on and corrections to previously published family lines, vital records, and town histories. Book reviews, research tips, queries, and other valuable tools for genealogists have been presented."

NEHGS intends to add volumes throughout 2009 until all 28 1968-1996 volumes are online. The *Nutmegger* is searchable by last or first name, or subject keywords. Search results then link to page images. *The Nutmegger* is browseable by entering a year or volume number, and page number.

Of special interest to Middletown researchers is an 8-page article from 1974 (Vol. 7, page 17) entitled "Early Settlers of Middletown," which is the text of a talk presented by Grace W. Bacon, formerly librarian at Wesleyan University, to the Middlesex County Historical Society in Middletown.

So if you can't make it to Middletown for the Triennial Meeting *this time*, please don't mope. There are plenty of Internet resources to explore that will tide you over until your *next* visit. ■



At left is a photo from *Mattabeseck 1650-1900*, a 122-page publication commemorating the 250th anniversary of Middletown in 1900. The photo shows the throng of citizens lining Main Street, eagerly awaiting the start of the big parade. The book is one of several available for free viewing or download at the Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)).

## Want to understand your Connecticut ancestors? Bushman's 'Puritan to Yankee' is a classic source

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

Upon assuming editorship of *The Middler* in 2005, one initiative was to help members achieve a better understanding of their ancestors' lives by rooting out authoritative sources of historical context. At that time I set out on a multi-year plan to survey and review books that in my view as a museum professional – and as your humble editor – serve to enhance understanding of Connecticut life in the Colonial period.

One such book is *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* by Richard L. Bushman. This cogent, well-reasoned book became a classic soon after its publication in 1967, won the Bancroft Prize in American History, and paved the way for the author's long career as a scholar and professor, most notably at Columbia University.

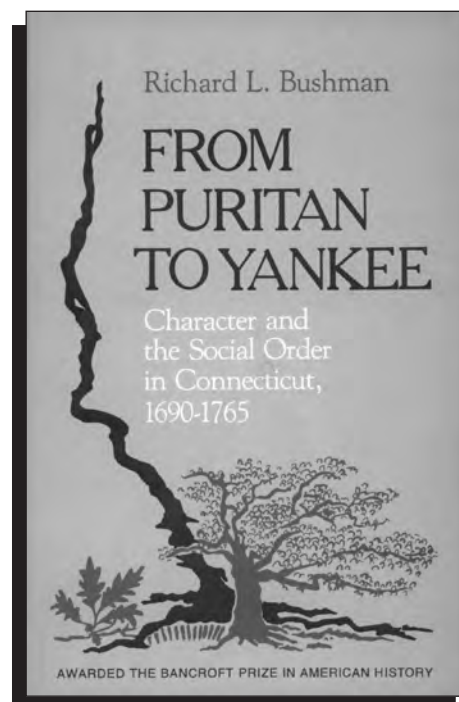
Its premise is that between 1690 and 1765, the weakening of local government institutions, combined with rising individual economic ambitions, transformed what had been a majority of submissive "godly Puritans" into a majority of outspoken, secular, and materialistic "Yankees." In 343 pages the author explores the contributing causes of this change.

"Restraint of ambition was a vulnerable spot among the interlocking institutions and beliefs that contained men through most of the 17th century," writes Bushman in his preface, "for Puritan preachers could not clearly distinguish laudable industry from reprehensible worldliness." As the economy in the colonies expanded in the late 17th century, and opportunities to prosper increased, "laudable diligence" began to morph into acquisitiveness.

The author found Connecticut to be well-suited for the study of the late-17th and early-18th centuries. "No royal governors and few British offi-

cial were present to complicate politics and social life," he writes. "Its relative autonomy made the evolution here described more visible than in the other Puritan colony." After an introductory chapter that describes Connecticut society in 1690, Bushman divides his study into sections on land, money, churches, and politics.

"After 1690, in their ambition to prosper, people disregarded the demands of the social order. Non-proprietors contested the control of town lands with proprietors, and outlivers struggled with the leaders in the town center to obtain an independent parish," writes Bushman. "In the civil government settlers fought for a clear title to their lands and new traders for currency. All these controversies pitted the common men against rulers and the laws. Under these circumstances, the social order became a menace to peace of mind rather than a shield against divine wrath."



*From Puritan to Yankee – Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, by Richard L. Bushman (Harvard University Press, 1967, 343 pages; ISBN#: 0674325516, 978-0674325517) is available through your library or favorite bookseller.

Outlivers? These were families that lived some distance from the center of town, and participated in church and civic matters less frequently. Bushman devotes a chapter to the "outlivers," and the subject has a particular relevance to Middletown due to the shape of many of the 1670 land grants.

In the early years, lots were laid out to keep residents close to the central settlement and meeting house. Later land grants, such as the 1670 grants in Middletown, distributed narrow strips of land, beginning on a road and sometimes stretching miles into the wilderness. At first this permitted families to live near the town center and still work their more distant land. But as families grew, and as distant resources were developed, houses were built on outlying parts of family acreage. Logistically it was difficult for farmers to work outlying lands and participate in town and church affairs.

The result was the disengagement of the more distant residents, the disruption of community, and the weakening of authority.

Of course, individual choice played a role in the "Puritan to Yankee" evolution, notes Bushman. "All outlivers were to a degree at variance with the community and with the ideal of social order, for they chose to promote their economic interests at the expense of their spiritual welfare."

Bushman concludes that by 1730, the rank-and-file settlers felt distanced from church and government leaders. While there was still conformity to the church establishment, the author contends that it had become a facade that just added to confusion and the loss of credibility. New leaders on the scene in the 1760s realized that, in the new order, any loyalties would come voluntarily or not at all.

Some 42 years after publication of *Puritan to Yankee*, Dr. Bushman's premise and analysis are still compelling today – a shining piece of work. ■



## First time at our SMFSD Triennial Meeting? Here are some vistas to look for in Middletown



Above is an early 20th-century postcard view of Riverside Cemetery, the burial place for so many of Middletown's first settlers. At the SMFSD Triennial Meeting Aug. 27-30, 2009 in Middletown, there will be a scheduled visit to this essential destination, as well as a visit to the nearby Mortimer Cemetery.

At right is a c. 1907 view of the Conn. River just above the city. To find this vista, you'll have to run a gantlet of man-made obstacles.



At left is an early-20th century postcard view of a commonplace scene on the broad Main Street of Middletown. Your editor stands ready to award a prize to any Triennial Meeting attendee who captures a photograph of a team of four oxen pulling a hay wagon on Main Street, downtown Middletown, in August of 2009.

### *It's not Plymouth Rock, but it just might be Middletown's equivalent*

A few years ago, while digging through the clippings file at Russell Library in Middletown, I came across a letter-to-the-editor published in the *Middletown Press* on August 21, 1947 that offers anecdotal evidence of the possible landing place of Middletown's first settlers: at the river's edge near the base of one of the supports of the Arrigoni Bridge. The following is an excerpt of the letter, written by Lamont Hall of Middletown:

"The news of the imminent razing of the Bacon homestead on Main Street recalls to the writer the many historical anecdotes related by the late Judge Bacon regarding the Bacon family and the home. (*Ed. note: The reference is to Curtiss Stow Bacon, 1877-1943, judge of probate for 34 years - and 5th cousin of your editor.*)

"About 1652 Nathaniel Bacon and Elijah Kent Hubbard (*more correctly, first settler George Hubbard - Ed.*) came down the river from Hartford in a birch canoe, and tied it to a stump near where one of the foundations of the bridge is today.

"Bacon said to Hubbard, 'You develop the land to the south, and I'll develop the territory to the west.' This

is possibly why many descendants of Bacon have been located in the Westfield district," theorized the letter-writer, "and why so many Hubbards have lived in the South Farms section."

For me, this anecdote certainly raised my doubting eyebrow, but perhaps the story is no more or less credible than those associated with Plymouth Rock. ■

**R.W. Bacon**



Above is a c. 1907 view of the Middletown-Portland bridge spanning the Connecticut River that was constructed in 1895. This bridge was replaced in 1938 by the Arrigoni Bridge (inset just further north). The bridge support referred to as the landing place is about 200 yards north of this foreground spot.

## Meet Donald Brock, our SMFSD Registrar: A man for whom ‘There’s never been a dull day’

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

**Editor’s note:** This begins a series that profiles a member or officer who contributes their energies to SMFSD. The aim is that members across the U.S. get to know their “cousins” and fellow genealogy enthusiasts.

The first subject is our longtime Registrar, Donald Harris Brock, of Glen Arm, Md. He is the fellow that cheerfully welcomes prospective members, and then reads through and verifies their genealogy data. Middletown, Conn. is Don’s hometown – he grew up on one of the oldest continuously-operated farms in the U.S. – so he brings a valuable perspective to SMFSD. He and his wife, Lyn, are regular attendees at SMFSD Triennial Meetings. What follows are Don’s abridged responses to a recent e-mail interview. (Additional material from this interview – Don’s fascinating and evocative recollections of growing up on a 300-year-old farm in Middletown – will appear in a separate article in the fall 2009 *Middler*.)

**The Middler:** How did you come to be one of our “Life Charter Members”?

**Don Brock:** My aunt was compiling a book of family stories, and I had been exchanging information with her prior to its publication in 2000. Her daughter, my cousin and our Vice Commander, Sue Welles, was also working on the book. I was also aware of Middletown’s 350th anniversary, and was watching to see how the town would celebrate. Aunt Hazel and Sue brought my attention to Gale Cornwell’s website, which included information on forming the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants.

**“I never tire of unearthing a new gem on Middletown’s history through SMFSD.”**

– Donald Brock



Above is SMFSD Registrar Donald Harris Brock, of Glen Arm, Md., at Founders Rock in Middletown during an earlier Triennial Meeting, pointing out one of his many ancestors on the first settler plaque, William Harris.

I sent my lineage to Gale and was approved as a Lifetime Charter Member. Gale worked hard to get SMFSD off the ground. We had great conversations and e-mails on finding members, as well on as planning our first meeting in October 2000.

**The Middler:** What first spurred your interest in genealogy? How did your interest develop over the years?

**D.B.:** My interest goes back to my early childhood in my hometown of Middletown in the 1940s. I was under 10 years-old. My mother would take both my sister, Kay, and I to visit my maternal grandmother Crooks, who lived with our great-grandmother and great-grandfather. We visited them after church every Sunday. My grandmother had been a one-room school-teacher, and she was intent on explaining to me my relationship to my great-grandparents, and reiterated it each week. She was dismayed when she learned that I had been telling everyone how lucky I was to have these two special, “great” relatives. Grandma Crooks persisted in her genealogy teaching, and did not give up on me.

She also came often to visit at the Brock Homestead. Grandmother Crooks, grandmother Brock, and my mother would sit around the large dining room table and visit. I would wander in and out of the room, playing, often under the table. I heard them

talk about family members, antiques, cemetery lots, and much gossip. Some of this stuck in my memory, and I was becoming hooked on learning more.

My 7th grade teacher, Miss Roberts, noted my avid reading in American history. My final history exam was to recite the dates of the American Revolution. I knew all the dates, and was confident I would do okay. On the day of the exam I strode confidently to the front of the class, and recited everything perfectly down to the last date, 1781. Then I froze, and had a senior moment at the age of 12 – I could not remember the event on that date to save myself. I slunk back to my seat. After class, I was dejected and the last one to leave. The stern Miss Roberts called me up to her desk. I expected to fail history and was shaking in my shoes. Miss Roberts put her arm on my shoulder and said that she had given me an “A.” She explained that she knew that I knew this date, and she wanted me to always remember that any *farm boy* like me, throughout his lifetime, should always remember that 1781 was when *Cornwallis* surrendered at Yorktown. I will never, ever forget this date, thanks to Miss Roberts.

My career later brought me to Maryland. My interest in history and genealogy were easy to continue, as I was only an hour away from the best genealogical research centers in the U.S.: the National Archives, Library of Congress, and the DAR Library. So my interest continues.

**The Middler:** You are a member of other genealogy organizations, but what makes SMFSD special for you?

**D.B.:** SMFSD is special to me because it reconnects me to memories of my early roots. I left Middletown in 1956 for the University of Connecticut, and I returned only to spend summers from college. My career relocated me to Maryland in 1968. I now most enjoy

*continued on page 7*



## Meet Donald Brock ...

*continued from page 6*

SMFSD, as I am meeting and corresponding with members who constantly bring me new lineages, along with their unique Middletown family stories. I never tire of unearthing a new gem on Middletown's history through SMFSD.

**The Middler:** After Middletown, what has been your career path?

**D.B.:** I liked marketing and insurance courses during college, and my career just seemed to fall naturally into place after my 1960 graduation from the University of Connecticut. My career with Travelers Insurance Co. took me first to Albany as a field auditor with a vast territory, then back to the home office as an underwriter, and then to Baltimore, Md. as a manager of both marketing and underwriting. Before retirement, I had a second career, a decade with the State of Maryland as a Hearing Officer in the Economic Development & Unemployment Insurance Division.

**The Middler:** In retirement, what activities, genealogical and otherwise, keep you busy these days?

**D.B.:** I am a volunteer librarian at the LDS library, and yes, I am often called "Brother Donald" on Saturdays. I enjoy teaching New England research at their conference, and I also teach genealogy at the College of Notre Dame in Baltimore. I am part of a DNA research group, a member of a Genealogy Computer Users Group, a volunteer at the Baltimore Genealogical Society, and organizer of research trips to Washington, D.C. As a member of the Baltimore Civil War Roundtable, I am their representative Yankee.

Lyn and I met as skiers, and we joke that "it's been downhill ever since." I am a farm boy who grew up to be an insurance man and genealogist, and she a city girl, who grew up to be an illustrator and watercolorist, with degree in fine arts.

I continue to ski with the Baltimore Ski Club, while Lyn has moved on to painting and photography. These interests have proven to be compati-

ble when traveling – I have skied most of New England, western U.S., and Canada, with some recent European ski trips. Travel is our overriding shared passion.

My ski friends and I ride 20-speed bikes and hike in warm weather. This September, after the SMFSD Triennial, we are heading to Maine to hike around Acadia.

Besides teaching genealogy, I take courses at the College of Notre Dame and Towson University. At home, there is enough acreage for the "farm boy" to keep busy caring for the grounds and cutting firewood.

**The Middler:** As SMFSD registrar, you read the weighty submissions of prospective members and verify it for accuracy. Must you do this at a certain time of day in a straight-back chair?

**D.B.:** My registrar duties have gotten easier, actually, as I have accumulated a mini-reference library on Middletown here at home. The references help me, as each new first settler's sources and lines tend to repeat, and I have grown to quickly identify if I have a good prospect for membership. There is never a dull application, however, as the sources cited sometimes bring new information to add to my own archives.

The initial submission information is all over the ballpark, and there is no average. It is true – I sometimes get a single paragraph that anticipates I will totally complete the research – and then send them a copy back in duplicate. The other end of the spectrum are the mounds of paper that come in some submissions with all those extra, extra biographical family details. These may be childhood experiences, hair colors, sibling rivalries, reasons for unfaithfulness – well, you get the

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**"My motto has always been, that help you give out will come circling back to help you, and it so often has been that way for me."**

**– Donald Brock**

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**Don Brock, and his wife, Lyn, share a passion for travel – including to SMFSD Triennial Meetings in Middletown, Conn.**

picture. The most complete submission I have ever received tracked my own Bulkeley line back to Charlemagne, and then continued backward in time, to what seemed like eternity ... to "The Creation of The World."

I get a lot of satisfaction in helping some applicants complete a missing generation link in their submissions that qualifies them for membership. Also, I always try to send along extra sources that I know will interest them, if it is something they may not have yet found and referenced. My motto has always been, that help you give out will come circling back to help you, and it so often has been that way for me.

I am a morning person, and often check my e-mails and do SMFSD e-mails in the early morning, when I feel fresh. I break this up with quick trips outside to savor the country air.. I have never lost my enthusiasm – there has never been a dull day.

**The Middler:** You have spent years investigating your own ancestors. Can you tell us about your own research?

**D.B.:** I try to start from known lines and move backward. I generally find my Middletown lines originated in Boston, and I go back there to research. I have enlarged my scope to research spousal lines, and I also attempt to record all siblings in direct lines. This progression backward for early Middletown families follows the normal migration routes back to Connecticut towns settled earlier than Middletown, like Hartford, Windsor, Wethersfield, and Farmington.

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## FOR THE RECORD – FROM THE RECORD

# In need of specialized occupations, early Middletown motivated talented settlers with grants & incentives

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

Middletown began as a small, relatively self-sufficient settlement of farming families. Within a decade or so, however, the town records of early Middletown reveal the need for specialized occupations. What follows are excerpts from town records (in original spelling) that show agreements, land grants, and incentives offered by the town to attract and hold such individuals.

The longest and most involved agreement was the mill privilege granted to Thomas Miller in 1655:

“These are to certifie whom it may concerne that if ye said Thomas MILLER engageth to builde a sufficient mill to grind the Townes Corne to have it fitt to Grinde with by the tenth of December next ensuing the date hereof and the Towne is to finde the stone worke and Mill stones fitt for ye mill that is to say ... *(The agreement includes a lengthy description of raw materials, parts, & tools to be provided by the town - ed.)* ... to provide all these in seasonable time ... by the twentie ninth of September next ensuing ye date hereof, to bring all in place for him and the said Thomas MILLER engageth for ye Towne that in case ye mill faile and be insufficient by any apparent breack to yt he be discouraged or taken away by death in some short time so that he neglects the Townes work. If that any of these fall out within two years, then the houses and Irone worke remaine the Townes; and the rest of ye mill they shall have Liberty to purchase ... and he the said MILLER if he see cause to sell the mill; the Towne shall have the first proffer, and Refusal of it ...; and this Mill is to bee sett up on the South part Pameccha River thre or fouer schore rods above where the Rivers meet in one.”

In September 1655 the town entered into an agreement with William Smith to keep the ferry:

“September 3, 1655. It is oded alsoe at the same meeting by the inhabitants concerning an agreement that they have made with william SMITH to keep the fery for the yeere insuing to give him a days worke on a hundred pounds and soe through the towne to be required of ye several inhabitants by the townsmen when his is insufficient.”

In November 1656 Thomas Allen was appointed as the digger of graves

and caretaker of what is now known as Riverside Cemetery:

“November 24, 1656 ... Thomas ALLIN was chosen to dige the graves, that is to say 5 foot deep and to have 3 sheelings a peese for them.”  
“November 27, 1658, it was agreed betweene the towne & Thomas ALLIN ... that the sayed Thomas ALLIN is to have the buring place for his uss ten years & at the end of which terme the sayed Thomas ALLIN douth ingage to leave a good sutfient fence of post & rayle not above ten years standing & in the meene time to keep it from any damages done by swine to set his hand provided that the towne have free liberty to bury their dead and to visit by there graves.”

In February 1658, Samuel Eggleston was engaged to become Middletown’s shoemaker.

“At a town meeting in Febbieary 9, 1658. there was granted to the shoomecker EAGELLSTON a peas of meddow that was intended for a shoomecker formerly, leying from cearch to creak buting on the bogey medow as also a howse lot beyond Goodman MELLER in cace not by and if by then to give him upland answerabell to a howse lot and he ingaging to inhabit it seven yeer upon it as also doth ingag to indeevour to sut the town in his tread for making and mending shooese.”

Also in February 1658, John Hall, Jr. was chosen to assume operation of an “ordinary” – i.e. a tavern. (In 1659 Daniel Harris was also given permission to run a tavern.):

“Feabarray 21, 1658. Att the same meeting John HALL jinier was chosene by the towne to be ordinary keepear and he is willing to acksept of it, upon thows conditions that follow, that is to say, if the towns men according to the vote of the town can prevall with Goodman BARNARD

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**The Middletown history enthusiast may recall that the town could not reach consensus to appoint its first permanent minister until 1668 – well after the miller, gravedigger, shoemaker, two tavern-keepers, and blacksmith were firmly in place.**

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of harford for to forbare what he is in his det already ... Otherways he shall take himself then at libourty from that place.”

In April 1663, Middletown accepted George Durant as an inhabitant and granted him land in return for his serving as the town’s blacksmith:

“At a town meeting the 16 of aprall 1663 the town having accepted georg DURANT living in moldin an inhabitant of Middletown do grant to him a hows lot containing fiv acors which leyeth next goodman BOWS lot with five acors adition jeyning to it at the rear of it and also two acors and a thurd of mddow leying in the lon gmedow between sammevell STOCKIN and John CURBEYS, and also fwr acors of swamp leying a the rear of mr. HAMLING, between Sargant CORNALL and Goodman ALLIN buting upon the weast riverrit and also won peac of bogey meddow lying between William WARDE and Thomas COWCHIS meddow between the two creakes and also six acors of the pond beginning at mr. STOWS lin with a slip of meddw lying by it on the weast side of it, this six acors of pond and slip of medow lyeth on the east side of great river and on peace of upland containing twenty acors leing on the east side of the great river and also won peace of upland liing on the hunting hill containing fifty or thre scor acors to be laid owt as the towns committee and Goodman DURANT shall judg fit for his conveneyene without predijis to the town, which land is to be apart of his proportion of undevided upland.

george DURANT also doth ingadg himself to be hear resident the next micelmus, insueing the deat hereof and also to inhabit upon it and to do the towns worck of smithing during the team of four years before he shall mac sale of it to any other.”

After reading of all the aforementioned agreements, the Middletown history enthusiast may recall that the town could not reach consensus to appoint its first permanent minister until 1668 – well after the essential miller, gravedigger, shoemaker, two tavern-keepers, and blacksmith were firmly in place. ■

**Editor’s note:** The above excerpts from selected early town records of Middletown can be read in their entirety in Henry Whittemore’s *History of Middlesex County: The Town & City of Middletown* (New York, N.Y.: Beers Co., 1884).



# The unbelievably fantastic story of Edith Domey, the 'mystery woman' on our plaque at Godfrey

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

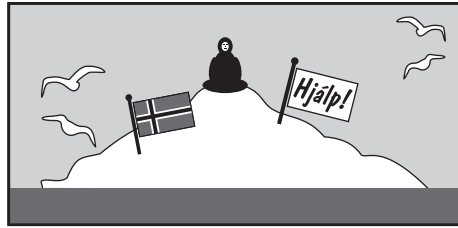
Two years ago, when your editor was in the process of researching Middletown first settlers for web site profiles, one puzzling question was the identity of the wife of first settler William Harris. Some sources refer to "Edith Bligh," and others, citing lack of documentation, say "unknown."

Yet on our SMFSD plaque at Godfrey Library in Middletown, the wife of William Harris is identified as "Edith Domey." After considerable searching, it appears this individual is undocumented anywhere. For a few months in early 2007, this phantom first settler was a nagging mystery. Who is Edith Domey and where did she come from?

Research and inquiries about Edith Domey turned up nothing. But one day, during an ice-bound drive home from a visit to Godfrey Library in winter 2007, it all became clear. I had a genealogical epiphany that in one brief moment crystallized the mystery. Edith Domey has a story stranger than most fiction.

I decided to preserve the tall tale. Finally the years of reading musty old unsourced genealogies paid off, and even prompted me to borrow some fuzzy phrasing (in italics). Here's the outlandish story that begins in a most unlikely place – on the coast of Iceland!:

According to the original keeper of the family lore, whose identity is lost in the mists of time, about 1640 a young teenage Icelandic girl went out for a pleasant spring morning trudge over the harborside ice floe. This was not her lucky day, however, and the huge dome-shaped chunk of ice the size of a small town broke off and floated out into the North Atlantic. She floated for weeks, but since she was good with her slingshot, she was able to bag a few seagulls for food, and managed to stay alive. The iceberg grew steadily smaller as it drifted toward the coast of North America, and the girl could scarcely move from its dome-shaped crown.



Above is a sketch of Edith Domey on her iceberg that depicts the moment she was sighted by Indians off Martha's Vineyard, Mass. Legend holds that in recognition of her enduring weeks of sitting on an iceberg, the village became known as Chilmark. (Go ahead, you can look it up!)

It must have been an unusual spring that year, because the iceberg floated all the way to the New England coast. Family tradition holds that the girl was spotted on her iceberg by a band of Native Americans. They climbed into their tiny boats and paddled out to rescue the girl from her fast-melting perch. She was brought to a kindly chief who adopted her into the family.

Fortunately the girl bonded instantly with the chief's daughter about the same age. Legend has it they spent hours in the wigwam, chattering endlessly about their hair, nails, and the young Indian boys. When they really wanted a laugh, they poked fun at the clumsy pale-faced Englishmen who tramped around the Indian lands on Cape Cod with greater frequency.

The story said to have been carefully handed down is that one day an Englishman roamed into the Indian village. Normally this was risky. But he timed his visit just right, because it is believed that the chief was about ready to lose his mind if he heard any more of the girls' incessant giggling. The chief seized the opportunity to encourage a marriage of the Englishman to his daughter, but lost to history is whether the relationship was based on animal magnetism, convenience, or profit. It is said that the chief, at wit's end, may have even offered a "package deal." In any case, the teenage chattering of his daughter and the iceberg traveler would finally be out of earshot.

The Englishman and his Indian bride are believed to have journeyed by goat-cart to settle in Middletown, Conn. The Icelandic girl tagged along at first, which, imagination suggests, made the household a happy and chatty place. Thanks to her dramatic retelling of crossing the North Atlantic on the dome of an iceberg, she is said to have become known to the local settlers as "Edith Domey," instead of by her 19-letter Icelandic birth name. In time she became adept at cultivating vegetables. Her specialty is likely to have been lettuce – yes, iceberg lettuce! – her legacy that's evident today in supermarkets everywhere. Her eventual husband? Who knows? It is possible that he was the undocumented early Middletown settler concocted in a previous issue of *The Middler*, Egbert "Egg" White.

So there you have it, the unlikely origin of Edith Domey, a story that, now published, may someday actually be embraced as truth, sent forth to multiply on the Internet, and then proceed to confound genealogists for generations to come.

Meanwhile, we still don't know how Edith Domey, three centuries after her butt-numbing adventure on the iceberg, hopped onto the plaque at Godfrey. ■

**Editor's note:** According to SMFSD Registrar Don Brock, the most thorough work on Middletown's Harris family is by Raola Ford Cooke: *Thomas Harris of Rowley and Charlestown, Mass., and Descendants of Middletown, Conn.* (1987). Cooke identifies the wife of William Harris as "Edith Bligh," but with scant documentation. If anyone has any information, family history, or even tall tales(!) about Edith Domey, please contact the editor at [rwbacon@comcast.net](mailto:rwbacon@comcast.net).

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**We still don't know how Edith Domey, 350 years after her adventure on the iceberg, hopped onto the plaque at Godfrey.**

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## SMFSD Membership Information

*If you descend from anyone on this list, we welcome you to join us*

The following is a list of those individuals (and presumably spouses & families) said to have settled in Middletown, Conn. before 1700. The list is based on information from *The History of Middlesex County* (Henry Whittemore, Beers Co., 1884), which was in turn derived from the *List of Householders & Proprietors*, Middletown, March 22, 1670. (Names in boldface are the original 1650-54 settlers of Middletown listed on the SMFSD plaque at Godfrey Memorial Library.)

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

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

If you are a descendant of anyone on the above list, and would like to join SMFSD, here is the simple 1-2-3 procedure:

(1) Send an outline/worksheet of your lineage to the Registrar. The applicant shall do their own genealogical research, and the resulting lineage should be accompanied by copies of reference material by generation. The Society seeks to verify submitted information, but does not research family lines.

(2) Send a check payable to the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants (1650-1700) for the non-refundable \$10.00 application handling fee.

(3) The application is then reviewed by the Society for approval. Documentation need be furnished only through the line of descent from the 1650-1700 founder. 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 do any additional research, and to complete any gaps in the records.) When approved, the new member can choose to pay annual or lifetime dues:

(A) Annual dues from November 1 to October 31 are \$15.00 (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.

**Please send membership inquiries and/or lineage information to:** Donald H. Brock, Registrar, Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, 10 Windy Hill Road, Glen Arm, MD 21057.



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR & REGISTER NOW!**

# ***Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants Triennial Meeting – August 27-30, 2009***

**Meeting Headquarters:**

**Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Connecticut**



## ***Join us for three days of events & research***

The 2009 meeting of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants presents an opportunity to gather with Middletown cousins, genealogists, and local history enthusiasts in our ancestral hometown. Our board has secured a superior headquarters hotel and planned a genealogy-rich program. Complete the registration form below, return it with your check, and then join us for research, stimulation, and fun. Our tentative schedule (*subject to change*):

### **Thursday, August 27:**

3 p.m. on Arrival, check-in, & registration at hotel; SMFSD board meeting at hotel;  
6-9 p.m. Research night at **Godfrey Memorial Library**;  
**Dedication of plaque in recognition of Gale Gornwell** (1926-2007), founder of SMFSD.

### **Friday, August 28:**

7-8:30 a.m. Breakfast at the hotel.  
9 a.m. Library research visit to **Connecticut State Library**, Hartford, Conn. – *or library of choice!*  
Morning Optional activity – visit to Gillette Castle State Park & Museum, E. Haddam, Conn.  
Afternoon Lunch (on our own); Optional Middletown or Hartford area explorations TBA.  
4 p.m. SMFSD business meeting (at the hotel)  
6:30 p.m. Dinner (location TBA)  
8:00 p.m. History/genealogy-themed illustrated lecture & performance: *A Vaudeville Retrospective & Tracing Circus & Vaudeville Ancestors*; **Presenter: R.W. Bacon**, author & historian.

### **Saturday, August 29:**

7-8:30 a.m. Breakfast at the hotel.  
9 a.m. Visit **Russell Library's Middletown Room** (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) – *or library of your choice!*  
Afternoon Lunch (on our own); optional Middletown area explorations TBA.  
2 p.m. Cemetery visits (Riverside Cemetery & Mortimer Cemetery, Middletown, Conn.)  
4:30 p.m. SMFSD wine & cheese social at the Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Conn.  
6:30 p.m. Dinner (TBA); **Speaker: August DeFrance**, Pres., Middletown Old Burying Ground Assn.

### **Sunday, August 30:**

7-8:30 a.m. Breakfast at the hotel; check-out; ... & farewell until the 2012 Triennial Meeting.  
OR ... Depart for optional museum tour TBA

**Accommodations:** *Please make hotel reservations independently* by contacting our meeting headquarters, the Marriott Residence Inn, 860 Cromwell Ave. (Rte. 3, off Rte. I-91), Rocky Hill, CT 06067, at 860-257-7500 (<http://marriott.com/hotels/travel/bdlrr-residence-inn-hartford-rocky-hill/>) and mentioning the SMFSD meeting. Rates: Our group rate is \$109 for both "studio" & "1-bedroom" rooms. Rate include full breakfast buffet daily.)

**For more information contact Suzanne Welles at [karilsmom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karilsmom@sbcglobal.net)**

## ***Optional destinations . . .***

In addition to our scheduled activities, there are optional destinations of interest\*:

- Cemetery visits
- Middletown Heritage Trail (self-guided 20-station downtown walking tour)
- Exploration of ancestral properties/neighborhoods
- Middlesex Cty. Hist. Soc. ([www.middlesexhistory.org](http://www.middlesexhistory.org))
- Haddam Historical Society ([www.haddamhistory.org](http://www.haddamhistory.org))
- City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Middletown

## ***In the Hartford area . . .***

- Conn. Historical Society ([www.chs.org](http://www.chs.org))
- Connecticut Society of Genealogists ([csginc.org](http://csginc.org))
- Ancient Burying Ground, Hartford
- Wethersfield, Conn. (fine examples of mid-18th-century architecture)

\*Admission charges may apply.

Learn more about SMFSD by visiting our information-packed web site at:

***[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/Index.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/Index.html) ... OR just Google "Middletown First Settlers"***



## **REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date arriving: \_\_\_\_\_ Date departing: \_\_\_\_\_ Do you need transportation to & from events? Y N

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

\_\_\_ Thurs. Eve. at Godfrey Library \_\_\_ Fri. at Conn. State Library \_\_\_ Fri. Dinner at TBA

\_\_\_ Fri. Eve. Program \_\_\_ Sat. P.M. Cemetery Visits \_\_\_ Sat. at Russell Library

\_\_\_ Sat. Wine & Cheese Social \_\_\_ Sat. Dinner at TBA \_\_\_ Sun. Optional Museum Visit

Event Registration .....# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$30 ..... = \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

***Please note that the registration fee  
does not include any  
restaurant meals or lodging.***

*Please make hotel reservations independently  
by calling our meeting headquarters hotel,  
the Marriott Residence Inn, Rocky Hill, Conn.,  
at 860-257-7500, and mentioning  
the Society of Middletown First Settlers meeting.*

***Send this form with your check to: Suzanne Welles, 60 Avalon Avenue, Oakville, CT 06779***



## Meet Donald Brock ...

*continued from page 7*

A favorite research area has been Middletown military units from the French & Indian War through the American Revolution. Another favorite topic is Middletown first settler Nathaniel White, because of his interest in schools – he left a share of his estate for education. His tombstone is the only possible remaining original brownstone in Riverside Cemetery.

My favorite reference source for Middletown research is the work of Raeola Ford Cooke. She has donated her research to the LDS library in Salt Lake City, and it is available on microfilm. I have hard-copies, and I refer to her work more than any other when reviewing new memberships. A partial list of Middletown families she has traced: Harris, Johnson, Sumner, Henchman, Bidwell, Wilcox, Stow,

Whitmore, Clark, Arnold, Rice, Miller, Prout, Hubbard, Roberts, and Pease.

My current areas of focus are family photos, Native American research, and the many DNA technological advances.

**The Middler:** How have family & friends responded to your research?

**D.B.:** Lyn and I enjoyed weekend day trips to Washington, D.C. when we were first married in the 1970s. We parted early, she heading to the National Gallery of Art, and I to the Library of Congress. We usually met later in the day for a light meal and glass of wine. I will always remember Lyn asking me in Georgetown, on an early trip, “Did you wind up your genealogy research today, and are you now finished with it?”

Well, well – 30-plus years later – that has not been the case, as I continue with more avid research than ever.

The best response of all was Lyn’s reaction to my proud announcement

that I had verified my lines back to Charlemagne. She seemed seriously impressed, but then announced to me, “When you find your line back to Fred Flintstone, let me know, and we will then really celebrate big time.”

Often I traveled to Middletown for Memorial Day vacation weekends. My young nieces looked forward to our going on day trips, but I once heard them say: “Will Uncle Don be visiting family cemeteries this year, *again?*”

At a recent family reunion, there were photos exchanged that were never seen before. I was surprised to hear a muffled voice say: “but these relatives are all *dead!*”

The above are isolated reactions, balanced by the many positive, generous contributions I have received. I have had so many helping hands – and I truly plan to repay the generous help given me, in some way, in the future. ■

