



# The Middler

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

Vol. 7, No. 1

Spring 2007

## MIDDLETOWN'S 'STAR' GENEALOGIST

# Frank Farnsworth Starr: He's finally in the spotlight

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

With the recent reawakening of the Middlesex County Historical Society, there is no better time than the present to turn the full wattage of the SMFSD spotlight on Middletown's own first-rank genealogist, Frank Farnsworth Starr (1852-1939).

Starr bequeathed his family files and correspondence to the Middlesex County Historical Society upon his death, and for Middletown genealogy researchers, the collection is a treasure-trove of inside information unlike anything available elsewhere. Yet since he had no heirs, protégés, or advocates to bring his Middletown research to light, his name receded into "mystery man" status except to those genealogists familiar with his monumental research on the Goodwin family of Hartford, Conn.

Who was Frank Farnsworth Starr? This short fact list will make the most workaholic genealogist take notice:

- He worked for 70 years as a professional genealogist.<sup>1</sup>
- He authored over 3500 pages of detailed genealogical writing.<sup>2</sup>
- He hand-copied over 11,000 gravestone inscriptions in the Middletown area.<sup>3</sup>
- He amassed his own index, hand-copied, of pre-1850 vital records from Connecticut towns near and far.<sup>4</sup>
- He devoted over 30 years to researching the related ancestral lines of the Goodwin family of Hartford, Conn., both in the U.S. and in England.

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At right is Middletown's preeminent genealogist, Frank Farnsworth Starr, at age 81 in 1934. (Middlesex County Historical Society)



## New content-rich SMFSD web site ready after months of preparation

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

By the time this issue of *The Middler* hits your mailbox, the SMFSD's rejuvenated web site should be online for your inspection. The new site will replace the previous one at the same location at our RootsWeb server: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ctsmfsl/Index.html>

In this day of instant web sites, the new SMFSD site is the culmination

of months of organization, research, compilation, writing, art production, design, and implementation.

As stated on the Welcome Page, "The goal is that the site serves as a useful starting point for those researching Middletown ancestors, and then becomes a valuable resource that our growing membership of 'cousins' returns to again and again."

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## SMFSD NEWS

### SMFSD exhibits at N.E. Genealogy Conference in Hartford, Conn.

On April 26, 2007 the SMFSD participated in the Society Fair at the New England Regional Genealogy Conference in Hartford, Conn. Held at the Connecticut Convention Center, the event featured four days of seminars on a broad variety of genealogy topics. The Society Fair, open to the public 5-7 p.m. Thursday, was an opportunity for historical societies and hereditary organizations to dispense information to prospective members. Representing SMFSD were **Margery Pierson, Suzanne Welles, Donald & Lyn**

**Brock, Thomas Smith, and R.W. Bacon.** The group coordinated banner & table displays, and showcased SMFSD photos, publications, and the new web site.

- In February 2006 SMFSD Treasurer **Al Dudley** resigned his position due to health issues. He has, however, accepted designation as an honorary board member. His experience, judgment, enthusiasm, and friendship will always be highly valued at whatever level of involvement he chooses in the future.

- **Welcome New Members.** New members since the last issue of *The Middler*: **Ednita Wilcox Lane**, AM-252, Beaumont, Texas (1st settler

**John Wilcox**); **Jean Patricia Bovee Hansbury**, AM-253, Newington, Conn. (1st settler **John Kirby**); and **John Newell Sage**, AM-254, Atascadero, Calif. (1st settler **David Sage**).

- Member **Donald Brock** calls attention to two web sites that SMFSD members might find useful. The first is a clearinghouse for guest lecturers for genealogical societies, for both those seeking speakers and those seeking to speak themselves: <http://www.genspeakguild.org/>. The second is a basic, free “people search” site that would appear to be useful for locating living persons: <http://www.zabasearch.com>. ■

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## SMFSD founder restates the case for Mary Hyanno

October 20, 2006

#### Letter to the Editor:

Now that you and James Cornwall have had your say about Mary “Little Dove” Hyanno-Cornwell, I would like to ask you and James, WHAT WAS MARY’S MAIDEN NAME? Surely with all of the research about all of the First Settlers over the past 10+ years, some info must have been discovered regarding the name of William’s 2nd wife? She did give birth to his nine children, all duly registered by the Puritans in Hartford, who listed the mother’s name solely as “Mary.” This at a time when all such births listed the mother’s maiden name??? WHY??

I’ve been waiting for James’ book for 6+ years but because of his motto, “Genealogy without proof is mythology” I doubt that I will live long enough to ever see it. If I had followed this motto, we would have no SMFSD. So let’s stop the BS ...

If and when you, James Cornwall, or anyone, can come up with proof of

Mary’s maiden name, as well as her marriage to William, I will be one of the first to say “Thank You Lord!”

In the interim, I am going with the circumstantial evidence outlined by Linda Coate-Dudick, and for an explanation of genealogy circumstances please visit <http://ancestrees.com/pedigree/901.htm>.

*pro deo et patria*

**Gale Thomas Howe-Cornwell**  
Founder, SMFSD

**Editor’s reply:** Readers may wish to refer to the thorough inquiry of this topic in *The Middler* of Spring 2006. As a longtime journalist, historian, and museum professional who takes ethics and standards seriously, I cannot proclaim, publish, or perpetuate anything as ironclad fact simply because someone shouts the loudest and longest in an effort to make it so.

As noted in the Spring 2006 *Middler*, indeed Linda Coate-Dudick does fine work presenting the circumstantial evidence for William Cornwell’s marriage to Mary Hyanno of the Wampanoags. She also notes that the possible marriage is just a theory and that “no first-hand evidence has yet been found to support this claim.” This of course, does not foreclose anyone’s further investigation of the subject. ■



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

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# An untapped source for local history context: Special Collections & Archives at Wesleyan U.

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

**Editor's note:** At the SMFSD Triennial meeting in August 2006, attendees spent the better part of two days at four wonderful libraries. Not quite getting my fill, a few months later I elected to visit one library that was not on the SMFSD list, Olin Library at Wesleyan University. I was fortunate to meet Suzy Taraba, head of Special Collections & Archives, who introduced me to the local history holdings. While Olin Library does not boast significant genealogy materials, many of its Middletown items are unavailable elsewhere. Among the unique holdings is the collection of student papers written for Wesleyan local history seminars over the past 30 years. Topics range from family and social history to political, economic, and ethnic issues. The finding aid for these student papers is online: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/schome/FAs/mi1000-133.html>. Other materials can be located via the hard-copy finding aid in the Archives Room, or via the library's general online catalog: [www.wesleyan.edu/libr/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/).

The finding aid to the student papers was prepared by assistant

archivist Valerie Gillispie, who provided information on the collection in the following e-mail interview.

**The Middler:** To your knowledge, has the collection of student papers been used to any degree by family history researchers?

**Valerie Gillispie:** I am not aware of family history researchers who have used this particular collection, but it could be valuable if a paper discussed a topic related to one's ancestors – a certain line of work, geographical area, or religious association, for example.

In creating the finding aid for the papers, I found they are especially valuable for their bibliographies, which let the reader see the how the student researched the paper, and can be helpful for verifying statements or finding more information. Like any source, some papers are better than others, but many students placed their topics within a broader cultural, social, or political context, which can be useful in understanding what Middletown was like in a given period.

**The Middler:** What other holdings unique to the local history collection might be of interest to Middletown genealogy researchers?

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## The origin of the student papers: Professor Schatz's research seminar

A perennial course offering for history majors at Wesleyan has been *The History of Middletown: A Research Seminar*, taught by longtime professor Ronald W. Schatz, Ph.D.

The one-semester seminar teaches history majors to work like professional historians, exploring a topic through primary sources. Similar courses with local history emphasis were taught by earlier professors at Wesleyan.

"There is nothing better a scholar can do than show students how to work with primary documents, particularly if they help define and pursue the subject themselves," contends Prof. Schatz, who has taught at Wesleyan since the 1980s.

Middletown's 350-year history – and its rich repositories of original source records – become the working laboratory for the seminar.

"While good work has been written, much of the town's history remains uncharted," writes Prof. Schatz in the course syllabus. "Students can produce original work, and thus win 'an imperishable name.'"

The principal requirement of the course is to write a major research essay based on primary sources on one aspect of Middletown's history. Discussion of required readings (about 800 pages of books, essays, and articles) makes up 25% of the grade. Among the required readings are works familiar to genealogical researchers: *Middletown: Streets, Commerce, and People 1650-1981* by Peter Hall (1981); *A Pictorial History of Middletown* by Elizabeth Warner (1990); and *History of Middlesex County* by J.H. Beers & Co., (1884).

Past student papers are held in the Olin Library Special Collections & Archives. The online finding aid with the complete list of titles is at: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/schome/FAs/mi1000-133.html>. ■



Olin Library at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn. (Adapted from early postcard view)

# New director outlines genealogy materials at the Middlesex County Historical Society

**Editor's note:** The MCHS was closed for nearly a year after the retirement of its previous director. In fall 2006, the society hired longtime museum professional Donna K. Baron as Executive Director. Formerly curator at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield, Conn., she worked for 20 years at Old Sturbridge Village in various positions, ultimately as curator of collections. In the following interview, she discusses topics of interest to Middletown genealogy and local history enthusiasts.

**The Middler:** Since the Mansfield House Museum was closed for an extended period, what have been the priorities in your first few months?

**D.B.:** First and foremost, we established regular office and museum hours so visitors and researchers know when they can reach the Historical Society. Also, I am working to create written finding aids and inventories so the Society has records that anyone can use to access information and objects.

**The Middler:** What are your long-term priorities for the society?

**D.B.:** First, we are working on new exhibits. We began there because exhibits take time and we had at least partial funding in place. For major exhibits, we will open one on the history of medicine in Middlesex County in November 2007 with support from the Aetna. Then in the fall of 2008 we will open a long-term exhibit drawing on our Civil War collections.

We are using several different approaches to expand our membership. Current members will receive a survey so that we know who they are, what they already like about the Historical Society, and what else they would like to have it do. Our new membership committee is investigating new activities and benefits.

Public outreach is our third approach. We are working with the Chamber of Commerce to promote the Historical Society's resources. We plan to be a

presence during community Main Street events so residents know that we are here. By getting the word out through *The Middler* and soon in the *Nutmegger* (newsletter of the Conn. Society of Genealogists), we are trying to encourage family history researchers to take advantage of the collections. Gradually, we want to build partnerships with colleges as well as strengthen links with public schools.

**The Middler:** For genealogists, the Frank Farnsworth Starr (1852-1939) collection is a treasure trove. Tell us more about the collection.

**D.B.:** Frank Farnsworth Starr's materials are important because he began working as a genealogist in the mid 19th century and worked for about 70 years. He found and collected copies of records (church, vital records, cemetery inscriptions, etc.) that were not appreciated in his lifetime. While some of these original records were included in later surveys and collections, some had been lost in the intervening time. Therefore, Starr's church records include Baptist records that were largely missed in the Barbour collection. His records of Middletown gravestone inscriptions (done in the 1870s) include many stones that had been lost by the time of the Hale survey in the 1930s.

Having arranged to have copies made (often by hand-copying) of all sorts of records, Starr then set up family files that include typed copies of relevant records as well as his own

correspondence with descendants and genealogists around the country.

**The Middler:** Aside from the Starr collection, what other materials are in the archives – unavailable elsewhere in other repositories – that might be of interest to Middletown family history researchers?

**D.B.:** Depending on which local family is being researched, the archives may have all kinds of interesting information. Places to look include collections of family letters ranging in size from a single document to several boxes; 35 family Bibles with genealogical data; a few framed family registers; a few diaries; and scores of individual account books and business records. Among the public records, the collection includes justice of the peace reports, alms house records, orphanage records, some church records, some naturalization records, and city selectmen's records.

**The Middler:** I know SMFSD members want to be museum-sensitive visitors, so can you tell us the "ground rules" of scheduling an appointment and using this collection?

**D.B.:** The genealogical and archival collections are available only by appointment; a week in advance is preferred. The offices are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday. If we know what family or families you are researching, we may be able to pull some material for you in advance. Effective April 1, 2007 we charge a \$10 per day genealogical files use fee for non-members; Society members are able to use the genealogical collections for research at no charge. When you arrive, you will be asked to complete a registration form that provides the Historical Society with information about who you are and outlines our basic rules. When working with Historical Society materials we require that you keep

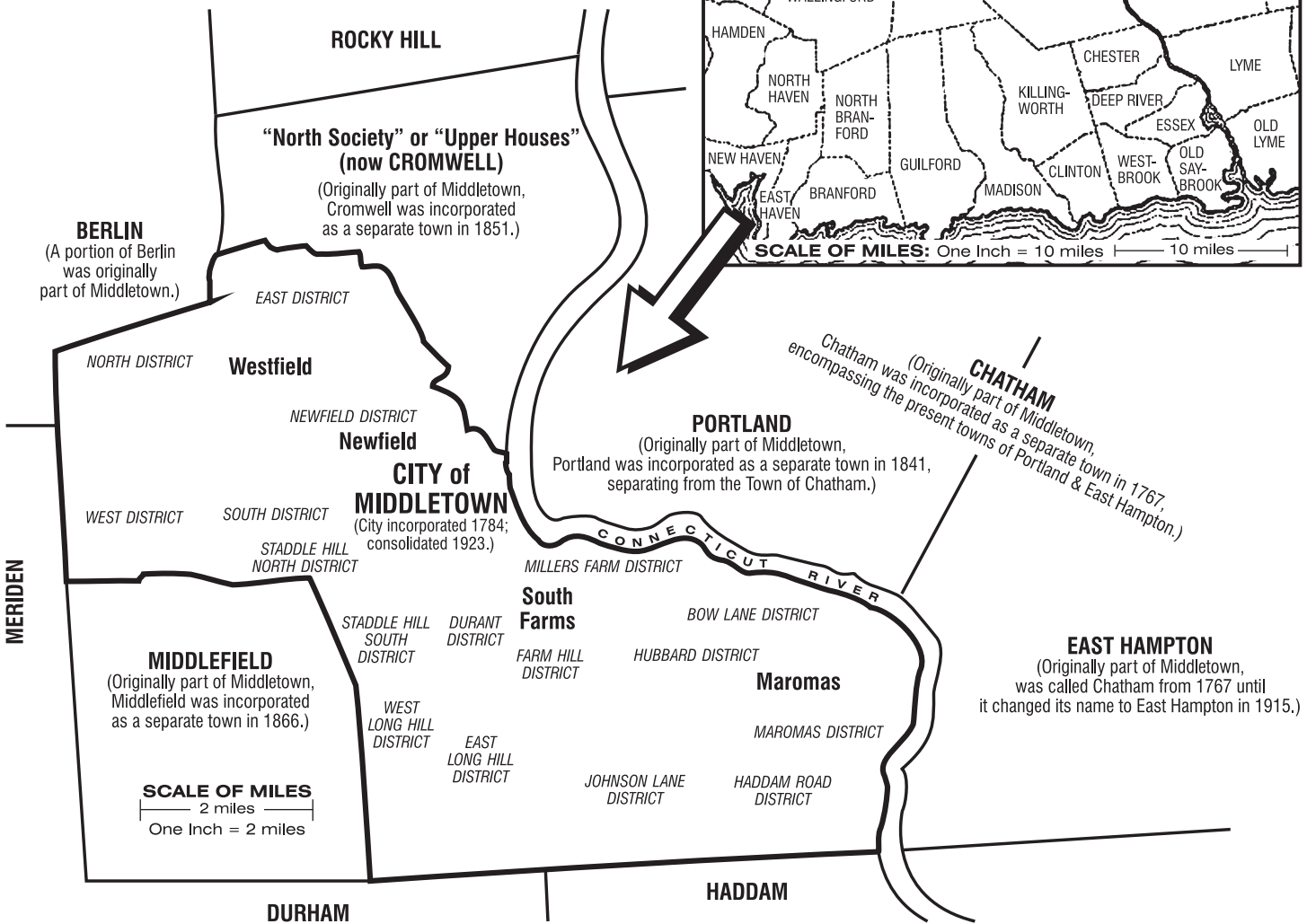
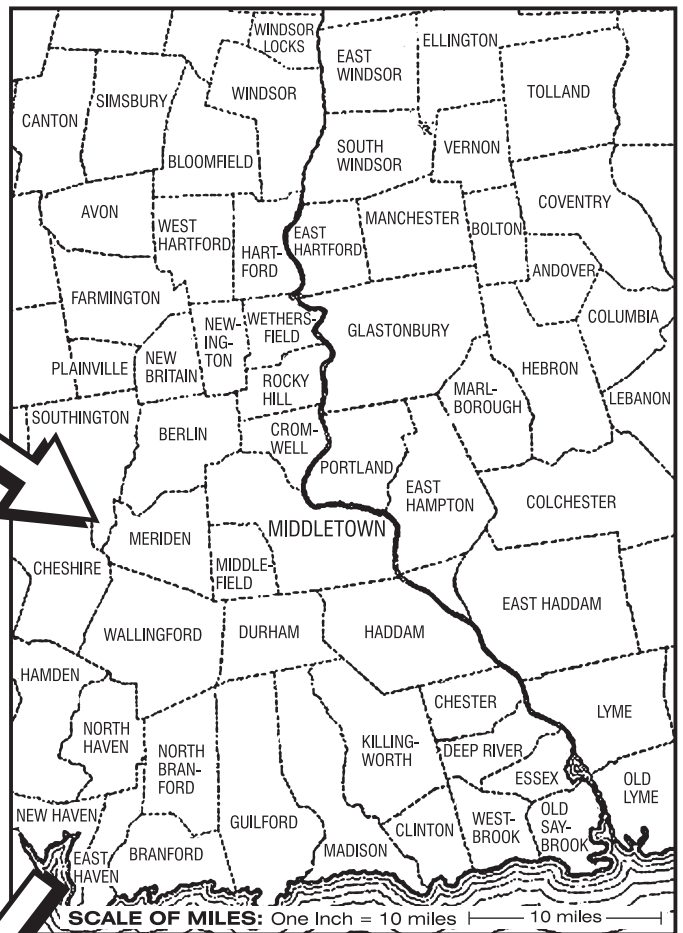
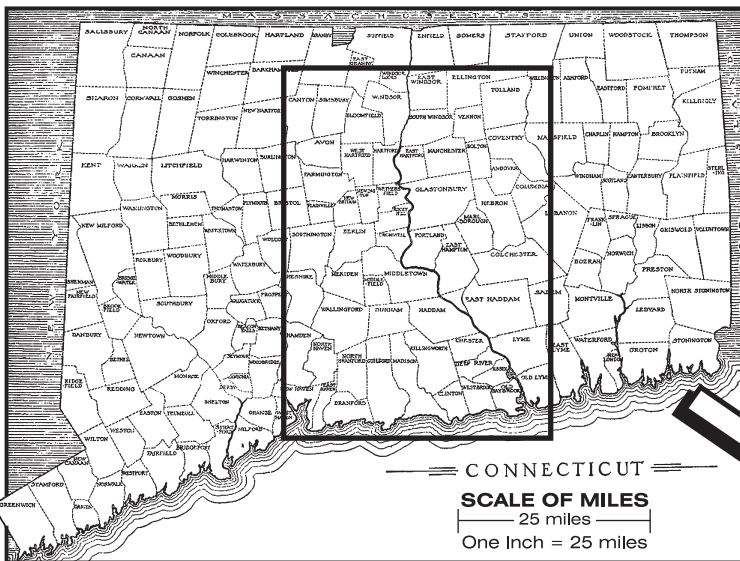
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The General Mansfield House, 151 Main St., Middletown, Conn., headquarters of the Middlesex County Historical Society.

## Feature Graphic #4 – A ‘Three-in-One’ map for Middletown area research reference

The map at the top left is from 1930, and shows the boundaries of all Connecticut towns. The section enlarged at the right shows Middletown’s geographic relationship to the towns within an approximate 15-mile radius. The map of Middletown, redrawn from an 1858 map, shows the location of the various sections of Middletown that are outside the central city. (Custom graphic by R.W. Bacon, 2007.)



## The spotlight shines on Frank F. Starr . . .

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Why don't we know more about Frank Farnsworth Starr? This writer's investigations for a brief biographical profile suggest that Starr's own reclusiveness, eccentricities, and what may have been a "chilly" personality may have cemented his post-mortem obscurity. The paragraphs that follow attempt to illuminate *the man* behind the meticulous research, voluminous records, magisterial publications – and caustic correspondence.

**Family background.** Frank Farnsworth Starr was born in Middletown Nov. 11, 1852, one of six children of Maj. Gen. Elihu W. N. Starr (1812-1891) and Harriet Wetmore (Bush) Starr (1815-1905).<sup>5</sup> A descendant of early Middletown settler Comfort Starr (1644-1693), his grandfather was Nathan Starr (1784-1852).<sup>6</sup> Nathan Starr, with his father of the same name, grew a small scythe-making business into Nathan Starr Arms, which manufactured swords and pistols under U.S. government contracts until 1845.<sup>7</sup>



Frank Farnsworth Starr at age 37 in 1889. (Middlesex County Historical Society)

Frank F. Starr lived his entire life in the family home on 116 Mount Vernon St. in Middletown. Note the fence in front of the house: Scabbards from the family's former sword factory take the place of standard pickets. In this 1870s photo young Frank Starr is on the sidewalk carrying a sheaf of papers. (Genealogy papers?) (Middlesex County Historical Society)



Elihu W. N. Starr, after his military career, was town clerk and registrar in Middletown for 39 years; city clerk and treasurer for four years; and probate judge for five years.<sup>8</sup> While the family had been prosperous for decades through the manufacturing business, by the time of Frank Starr's birth the business was closed. Undoubtedly the young Frank Starr acquired a familiarity and sensitivity to vital records through his father's daily work, and was interested in history and genealogy from an early age. His mother was also a deputy clerk for a time.<sup>9</sup>

**The precocious genealogist.** Young Frank Starr attended public and private schools in Middletown, and in 1869-70, a business college in Rochester, N.Y.<sup>10</sup> At age 17 at the time of the 1870 federal census, he was living with his family at its Mount Vernon Street home, and his occupation was listed as "assistant town clerk."<sup>11</sup> Sometime in 1870 he was sent to England on a research trip, and upon his return he became a professional genealogist, beginning a career that spanned 70 years.<sup>12</sup>

When he turned 21 in 1873, he was appointed deputy town clerk of Middletown, after being recommended by his father. In this position he had complete access to the types of data that would become the foundation for his life's work.<sup>13</sup>

**Early projects.** Later in the 1870s Frank Farnsworth Starr began a

collaboration with Burgis Pratt Starr (1822-1883), a retired Hartford businessman who was in the midst of compiling a genealogy of the Starr family for publication. Although young Frank was not credited on the title page of the 1879 book, *A History of the Starr Family in New England*, his contributions to the 589-page tome were recognized in his genealogical entry on page 146: "To him the compiler of this work is greatly indebted for his invaluable assistance, from the beginning until now, in collecting the records of the Middletown family, in comparing the manuscript with the original records, thus insuring accuracy; and for the great task of making the complete index to this book."<sup>14</sup> It is clear from the correspondence on file at the MCHS that Burgis Starr regarded the younger man as both friend and essential partner in the book project.

**Middletown research.** As early as 1881 Frank Starr announced in the *NEHGS Register* his intention to undertake a compilation of the genealogy of Middletown's first-settler families<sup>15</sup>, but evidently the project was repeatedly cast aside in favor of more revenue-producing work, even though he continued to amass material on the early families. (Finally, in the fall of 1900, Starr completed a series of informal early settler sketches entitled *Settlers of Mattabeseck*, which was published in

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the Middletown *Penny Press* and in a Middletown *Tribune* supplement, both as part of the town's 250th Anniversary celebration.<sup>16</sup> A transcription of *Settlers of Mattabeseck* is available to members on the SMFSD web site.)

**The working man's genealogist.** Based on the business papers of Frank Farnsworth Starr's long career, it is likely that he had to keep hustling to make a living as a genealogist. Apparently the family assets shrunk as the decades wore on,<sup>17</sup> and the bachelor genealogist could not afford to sit back at his leisure. The MCHS files include correspondence with private clients for whom he conducted research for a fee. Most clients were seeking records to satisfy requirements of hereditary societies. Starr also worked for other professional genealogists throughout the country. To keep his name before the interested market, he advertised regularly in the NEHGS Register. He also advertised and sold by mail "Starr's Ancestral Register," a fan chart of his own design, complete with instructions for the layman. Wherever he happened to hang his hat, he apparently placed a sign in the window – "FRANK F. STARR, Genealogist and Family Historian. Pedigrees Traced, Genealogies Compiled. Monumental Inscriptions Copied." – one such

original sign is in the files at the MCHS.<sup>18</sup> In the early 1880s he transcribed and compiled the excerpts of original Middletown records for the J.H. Beers Co. *History of Middlesex County* published in 1884.<sup>19</sup>

**The Goodwin years.** In the mid-1880s he began 35 years of research on the Goodwin family of Hartford, Conn., and all its related lines, commissioned by James Junius Goodwin (1835-1915), railroad and insurance magnate and cousin of New York banker J.P. Morgan. Goodwin financed Starr's trips to England for research into original records there, and financed the publication of the many volumes of compiled genealogies for which Frank Farnsworth Starr is best known. In 1891 the publication of *The Goodwins of Hartford, Connecticut* was greeted with high praise in the NEHGS Register, with especially glowing comments for Starr's thoroughness in the 798-page work.<sup>20</sup>

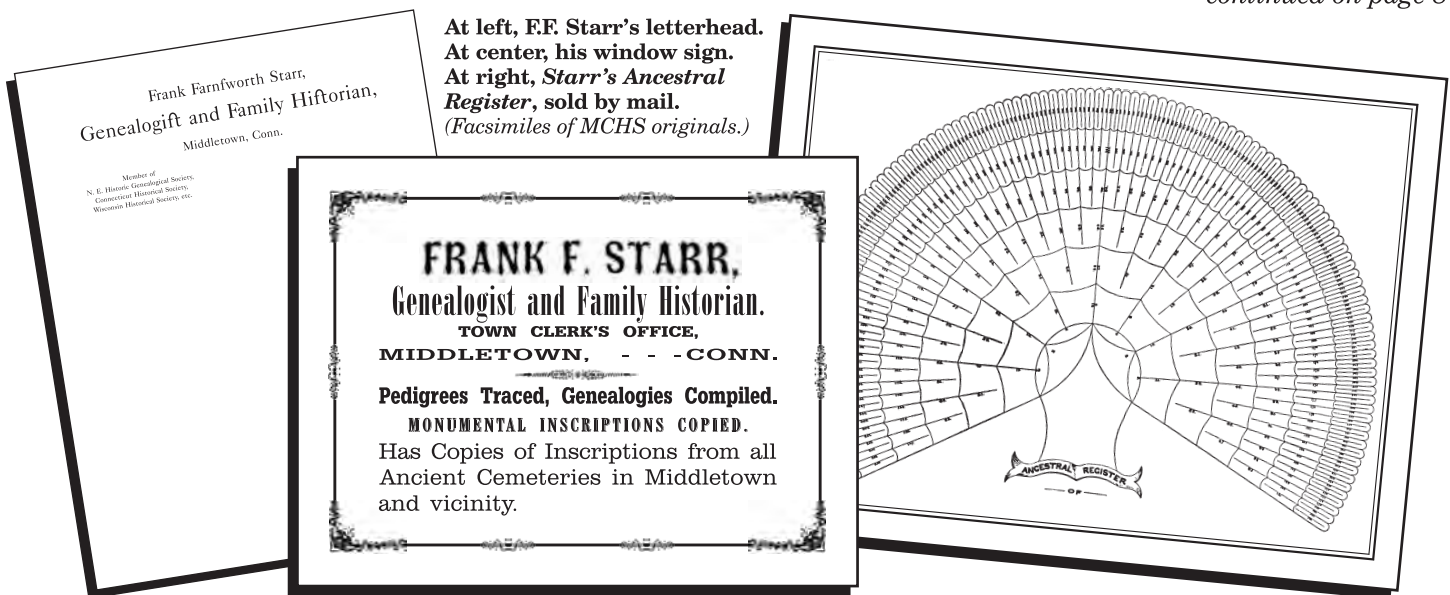
The first 798 pages would be just a warm-up, as Goodwin commissioned numerous separate works (and shorter – between 44 and 218 pages) in the ensuing years on related families such as Cobb, Eells, Morgan, Newberry, Olcott, Roberts, Spencer, and others.<sup>21</sup> In 1915, just a few months before Goodwin's death, Starr's ultimate Goodwin compilation was published:

*Various Ancestral Lines of James Goodwin and Lucy (Morgan) Goodwin of Hartford, Connecticut.* None other than Donald Lines Jacobus (1887-1970), regarded as the "father of scientific genealogy," viewed Starr's two-volume, 800-page work as "meticulous accuracy which perhaps has been equalled but could scarcely be surpassed."<sup>22</sup> Six years after Goodwin's death Starr completed his final work for the Goodwins, *The English Goodwin Family Papers*, a three-volume, 1545-page collection of all the original source records in England that he had consulted in his 30-plus years of research.

**Relentless acquisition of records.** Starr must have realized that Goodwin's support would not last indefinitely, so in between working for private clients and on Goodwin's projects he managed to find time to methodically gather the local materials that would make his work more efficient. In his spare time he hand-copied over 11,000 gravestone inscriptions in the Middletown area dating from 1689 to 1850. Long before the compilation of the statewide Barbour Index of early Connecticut vital records, Starr assembled his own relevant indexes for personal use.

**A glimpse of personality.** All through the years researching for Goodwin, Frank Starr lived his

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## Frank F. Starr . . .

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bachelor life with his younger sister, Grace Townsend Starr (1857-1932), at the family home on Mount Vernon Street, Middletown. The fence in front of the house, made of empty scabbards instead of pickets, was a reminder of the vanished prosperity of the family manufacturing business. Starr's correspondence from his later years provides a glimpse into his personality. It appears that he was most definitely *not* a warm, social person. (Indeed, evidence of the extreme volume and intensity of his research, transcriptions, and writing suggest that he may have gone days or weeks without social encounters.) Spending two days reading just a fraction of Starr's papers leads this researcher to believe that finding a positive appraisal of *anything* in his letters would be like finding the needle in the haystack. A few excerpts from letters in the MCHS files:

— "The work written by Edward E. Cornwall, M.D., in which he changes the entire spelling of the rest of the family from Cornwell to Cornwall is a blundering piece of work, full of mistakes and worthless as to authority. The arrangement is dreadful, the indexing worse, and makes me about crazy each time that I consult it." (Letter to M.M. Lewis, Dec. 28, 1937)

— "Madam: Your letter of March 5, in an envelope which was never sealed and no money enclosed came to hand last week. There is not nor never was any *Frederick Starr*, genealogist of Middletown. In 1900 I

made a search on various lines of ancestry . . . I made charge of fifty dollars, reasonable price, and he only paid me one half the sum named. . . . A search of one or more cemeteries here will have to be made for her gravestone . . . I am advanced in life and decline to tramp in the snow and cold on such a search." (Letter to Mrs. R.G. Demarest, Bridgeport, Conn., March 10, 1933)

— "Madam: Please tell me just what you wish in regard to the papers on your Bacon line of ancestry. If you expect me to certify that Nathaniel Bacon, the head of the Middletown family, was the eldest son of William Bacon of Stretton, Rutland County, England, I positively decline to do anything of the kind. That statement was first made by that careless, blundering, inaccurate writer Royal R. Hinman in the second edition of his *Puritan Settlers of Connecticut*. Savage, in his *Genealogical Dictionary*, and others have copied the statement and the error has gone far and wide." (Letter to Mrs. D.B. Meacham, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 24, 1916)

— "I warn you that Hinman's *Puritan Settlers of Connecticut*, Stiles' histories of Windsor and Wethersfield, also Adams' work on *Middletown Upper Houses* are all worthless as authorities, being full of mistakes. Searchers coming to the Connecticut State Library to check up their investigations complain bitterly about the above works." (Letter to Mr. John T. Landis, Detroit, Michigan, September 20, 1927)

— "The controversy regarding the parentage of the two Nathaniel

Bacons of Middletown, Conn. and Barnstable, Mass. is caused largely, if not wholly, by the wretched work of Royal R. Hinman in his *Puritan Settlers of Connecticut*, edition of 1852, page 99." (January 12, 1922)

In contrast to the bitter tone of some of his professional correspondence are his poignant personal letters about the anguish, stress, and financial trials of caring for his elderly mother at home, who was beset by dementia in the last years of her life c. 1900.<sup>23</sup>

**Later years.** In the 1920s and '30s Starr apparently kept close to home. He was a longtime vice president of the Connecticut Historical Society. He was on the board of directors of the Middlesex County Historical Society, and on the Commission on Parochial Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. He was still a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and numerous historical societies. Genealogy inquiries received at town hall or the Middlesex County Historical Society were directed to his home office on Mount Vernon Street. Mixed in with private client business in his later years was work-for-hire done for the "mug books" published by M.M. Lewis of New York (The American Historical Society, Inc.). By the late 1920s his professional fee was \$10 per day plus expenses, about \$125 per day by today's standards (based on the Consumer Price Index).<sup>24</sup>

Frank Farnsworth Starr died quietly at his home on September 18, 1939. He was 86 years old and had been in failing health for several months. He is buried at Indian Hill Cemetery in Middletown.

**Obituary reflections.** In Frank Starr's obituary published by the *Middletown Penny Press*, the unidentified newspaper writer called upon what apparently was personal knowledge of the deceased: "Frank Farnsworth Starr virtually lived apart from his fellow citizens of Middletown. His mind and innermost thoughts constantly dwelt in the past. In this respect Mr Starr was

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### THE PENNY PRESS

1650 - CELEBRATION - 1900 — Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Town of Middletown — 1650 - CELEBRATION - 1900

MIDDLETOWN, CONN., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1900

## The Settlers of Mattabeseck

1650 — 1660

BY

FRANK FARNSWORTH STARR

In 1900 Starr wrote a series of informal sketches of early settlers of Middletown for the *Penny Press* and *Tribune*. (Facsimile by R.W. Bacon based on original graphic.)



## Frank F. Starr . . .

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without an equal. Just to mention the name of some old family here and he could tell instantly just who the person was, sketch his background, where he dwelt, whom he married, the number of children born to the family, and other details. Mr. Starr was a familiar figure on the streets of this city. Tall and spare, he generally wore garments akin to the olden days, and his conversation always hinged on activities of the past.”<sup>25</sup>

William W. Wilcox, president of the MCHS, was quoted in the obituary: “Frank Starr had the best memory of historical data of any person I knew in Middletown. I do not believe that anyone in Connecticut could equal him. Certainly, he had a complete record for the last century, even going back 200 years.”<sup>26</sup>

The *Penny Press* called Frank Farnsworth Starr “one of the nation’s foremost genealogists.” The *Hartford Courant* referred to him as “well-known genealogist,” and the *NEHGS Register* as “eminent genealogist.” Eminence notwithstanding, he had to follow the money and make a living like most mortals, and thus was never able to complete what would have been his labor of love, a comprehensive compiled genealogy on all of Middletown’s early families. The good news for today’s Middletown genealogy researchers, however, is that Starr’s papers on the local families are preserved in 12 file cabinet drawers at the Middlesex County Historical Society. The family files vary widely, depending on the extent of client-commissioned work on the family over Starr’s career. For some families there is a mountain of papers that would take a few days to read. For other families there is just a slim file folder. Nevertheless, in this editor’s view, if you have early Middletown ancestors, your research will never be truly complete until you have made your pilgrimage to the Frank Farnsworth Starr collection. ■

**Editor’s note:** This biographical sketch was drawn from information gathered from obituaries in the *Middletown Penny Press*, *Hartford Courant*, *NEHGS Register*; advertisements and book reviews in the *NEHGS Register*; F.F. Starr’s papers at the Middlesex County Historical Society; and his numerous published works. Many thanks are extended to Donna Baron, Executive Director at the MCHS, for her attentive assis-

tance, and for locating the photographs that illustrate this article.

Those interested in learning more about the high standard of Starr’s genealogy are encouraged to seek out his published works on the Goodwin family, available at most genealogy libraries: *The Goodwins of Hartford, Connecticut* (1891); and *Various Ancestral Lines of James Goodwin and Lucy (Morgan) Goodwin of Hartford, Connecticut* (1915).

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

MIDDLETOWN, CT. — The undersigned is collecting materials for genealogical record of the families of Ancient Middletown, comprising the present towns of Middletown, Middlefield, Cromwell, Portland, and Chatham.

Any persons having any information concerning any family thereof, is requested to notify

FRANK F. STARR,  
Ass’t Clerk, Middletown, Conn.

Above, a facsimile of Frank F. Starr’s 1881 announcement in the *NEHGS Register*. The Middletown genealogy project was never completed for publication. (Facsimile graphic)

### NOTES

1. “Frank F. Starr, Noted Genealogist, Is Dead,” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*, September 18, 1939.
2. New England Historic Genealogical Society Research Library, Online Catalog: <http://library.neghs.org>. (“Frank F. Starr” and related searches of the catalog will yield a list of Starr’s works held at the library.)
3. “Frank F. Starr ...” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*.
4. “A Brief Listing of Genealogical Resources,” (Middletown, Conn.: Middlesex County Historical Society, March 1986). (A finding aid with a description of the F.F. Starr Collection.)
5. Burgis Pratt Starr. *A History of the Starr Family of New England*. (Hartford, Conn.: Case, Lockwood, & Brainard Co., 1879), pg. 145-146.
6. Starr, *A History of the Starr Family*, pg. 143-144.
7. Elizabeth A. Warner. *A Pictorial History of Middletown* (Virginia Beach, Va.: Donning Co. Publishers, 1990) pg. 38.
8. Starr, *A History of the Starr Family*, pg. 145.
9. “Frank F. Starr ...” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*.
10. “Memoirs - Frank Farnsworth Starr” (obituary), *New England Historic and Genealogical Register*. (Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, July 1940), pg. 284-285.
11. Elihu W. N. Starr household, 1870 U.S. Census, Middlesex County, Conn., population schedule, Town of Middletown, Middletown Post Office, page 316, dwelling 447, family 695; National Archives micropublication M593, roll 108.
12. “Memoirs - Frank Farnsworth Starr” (obituary), *NEHGS Register*, July 1940, pg. 284-285.
13. “Frank F. Starr ...” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*.
14. Starr, *A History of the Starr Family*, pg. 146.
15. “Announcements”, *New England Historic and Genealogical Register*. (Boston, Mass.: New

England Historic Genealogical Society, July 1881), pg. 281.

16. Frank Farnsworth Starr. “Settlers of Mattabeseck,” Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*, October 11, 1900.
17. Frank Farnsworth Starr letters in the Starr family file at the Middlesex County Historical Society indicate a concern about finances, especially the letters to his brother, Henry, concerning their elderly mother’s increasing confusion and handling of family assets. Viewed March 23, 2007.
18. Window sign for F.F. Starr’s genealogy business, Starr family file, Middlesex County Historical Society; viewed & photographed March 23, 2007.
19. J.H. Beers. *A General History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*. (New York, N.Y.: J.H. Beers & Co., 1884), introduction.
20. “Book Notices” (unsigned review of *The Goodwins of Hartford, Connecticut*), *New England Historic and Genealogical Register*. (Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, April 1891), pg. 171.
21. Samuel Hart, D.D. “James Junius Goodwin, LL.D.” (obituary), *New England Historic and Genealogical Register*. (Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, January 1916), pg. 51-55.
22. Donald Lines Jacobus. *Genealogy as a Pastime and Profession*. (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968), pg. 66.
23. Frank Farnsworth Starr letters in the Starr family file at the Middlesex County Historical Society. Viewed March 23, 2007.
24. Frank Farnsworth Starr business letters quoting his fees are among the genealogy papers in the F.F. Starr Collection at the Middlesex County Historical Society. Viewed November 10, 2006 & March 23, 2007.
25. “Frank F. Starr ...” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*.
26. “Frank F. Starr ...” obituary, Middletown (Conn.) *Penny Press*.

## Preservation news . . . etc.

At the 1746 **Judge Seth Wetmore House** in Middletown (below left), on the National Register of Historic Places, the wrecking ball had been approaching for months, but at the 11th hour in March 2007 a preservation-minded buyer emerged who will restore and live in the house.

The Hartford *Courant* was moved to editorialize: "Not all of Connecticut's historic buildings are so lucky. Each year, some old home, barn, factory building, or stone wall falls prey to the bulldozer. Few such properties can boast the pedigree of the

Wetmore House. But their loss is still part of an overall weakening of the historic landscape; with each demolition, the state loses some of its architectural heritage, variety, and richness."

Below right is the first building of "Bartlett Hollow at the **Bacon Homestead**," on Newfield Street, Middletown. This land is part of the 297 acres acquired by 1650 settler Nathaniel Bacon in 1670. At left in the distance is the 1699 Bacon house, still separately owned. To make way for the 25-home development, an 1825 farmhouse was razed. In a logo featuring the iconic barn, the land remains identified with the first-settler family. For information: [www.summitresidential.com/communities/BartlettHollow](http://www.summitresidential.com/communities/BartlettHollow). ■



## Olin Library Special Collections . . . *continued from page 3*

**V.G.:** We have many of the same local history books available in other repositories. However, our records of Wesleyan alumni, faculty, and staff are unique to our institution. We often help people find information about an ancestor who had a relationship with the school.

**The Middler:** The index of student papers is online with its own page. But how does one find other unique local history holdings such as the pamphlets, ephemera, manuscripts, and maps?

**V.G.:** We do have a printed version of a guide to Middletown materials, and we do have the online collections list. However, the best way to find what we have in Special Collections is to search the online catalog (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/>) or contact a librarian.

**The Middler:** Do the open stacks at Olin Library have local history materials, in case a visitor is at the library for "one-stop" research?

**V.G.:** The library is filled with information, and the best way to search it is using our online catalog, available on the library's web page: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/>. There is certainly plenty of Middletown and Connecticut information in our open

stacks, but it is not gathered in one particular area, so the catalog search is the best way to find materials..

**The Middler:** SMFSD members want to be archives-sensitive visitors, so can you tell us the "ground rules" for arranging to use this collection?

**V.G.:** Our regular reading room hours are 1-5 p.m., Monday through Friday (Mon.-Thurs. in summer). It is always helpful to know when someone is coming in to research ahead of time,

so we can retrieve appropriate materials and save the patron time. Appointments can be scheduled by e-mail ([sca@wesleyan.edu](mailto:sca@wesleyan.edu)) or by calling our main number (860-685-3863). All research must be conducted in our secure reading room, and coats, bags, and other items must be left in our closet or lockers. Laptops, notebooks, and pencils are welcome. Visitors need to fill out a visiting researcher form and present a photo ID. ■

## MCHS director outlines genealogy materials . . . *continued from page 4*

papers in the same order in the file folder as you find them, use only pencil to take notes, and do not remove or re-shelve anything. Photocopies are available for \$.25 a page and our staff or volunteers will make the copies for you. Researchers are encouraged to join the Historical Society, and donations to help maintain the collections are always welcome.

**The Middler:** Does the historical society have any provision or policy for conducting research for a fee – for those who cannot get to the library?

**D.B.:** If you are not able to come to Middletown, we are happy to try and help you long-distance, although we are dependent on volunteers and it make

take several months to get extensive material back to you. The first half hour of staff/volunteer time is free. During this period we should be able to determine how much relevant information may be in our files and estimate how many hours of research it represents. We will provide this estimate and ask you to complete a research request form that will limit the number of hours and photocopied pages. For members of MCHS the rate is \$12 an hour. For non-members the rate is \$25 an hour. These fees help cover staff time and are used to purchase supplies and equipment used for storing and maintaining the genealogical collection. ■

**Editor's note:** Contact the MCHS by mail (151 Main St., Middletown, CT 06457), phone ( 860-346-0746), or e-mail ([middlesexhistory@wesleyan.edu](mailto:middlesexhistory@wesleyan.edu)).



## 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.

## New SMFSD web site . . . *continued from page 1*

At the SMFSD Triennial Meeting in August 2006, members voted to expand the content on the web site. A password-protected "member area" with exclusive content was discussed as a membership incentive.

*Middler* editor R.W. Bacon volunteered to assemble content, design the site, and find a professional to implement the design. When it became clear that the cost would exceed the authorized amount, a "Plan B" was adopted. In this plan, your editor, with the aid of a course in HTML coding, and long-distance consultation with member Eric Stenberg, would build the site.

The result is a simple but logical, content-rich site. As a confection for visitors, relevant copyright-free graphics from the editor's collection complement the content. Undoubtedly the site will require refinements, so your patience during the extended fine-tuning period is appreciated.

Here is what is on the site:

**Welcome Page.** This page introduces visitors to SMFSD and gives a brief orientation to the content.

**Brief History.** This page introduces a four-part narrative history of Middletown 1650-2000. Also on this page is a link to a gateway with links to eight local/regional history books.

**First Settler Sketches.** This page is a gateway to brief sketches of the 23 first settlers. Clicking on the name of a first settler takes the visitor to a separate page with information on birth, marriage, death, emigration, and occupation/public service.

**Membership.** This page contains complete membership information and registrar contact information.

**Research Links.** This page is a guide to the libraries & archives in the Middletown & Hartford, Conn. area, with links to their respective web sites.

**SMFSD News.** This page is for the latest news of interest to members and non-members alike.

**Contact SMFSD.** The contact page has information on contacting officers, the *Middler* editor, and the registrar. This page also links to the SMFSD RootsWeb message board.

### In the "Member Area":

**Member Area Introduction.** This page introduces visitors to the content in the password-protected area. At this writing the password procedure has not yet been determined.

**Local History.** This page contains links to "exclusive content," i.e. copyright-free (pre-1923) reprints of articles, book excerpts, etc. of interest to Middletown researchers. A major offering is an annotated bibliography of Middletown history & genealogy. Another important transcription

available to members is F.F. Starr's *Settlers of Mattabesock*. (1900).

**In-Depth First Settler Profiles.** For In-Depth Profiles, dozens of standard genealogical references and local histories were consulted, and information compiled into separate PDF files, in some cases several pages long. There is an In-Depth Profile for each of the first 23 settlers. Excerpts from Savage, Cutter, Starr, Field, etc., are in addition to information on birth, marriage, death, parents, children, emigration, occupation/public service, residence, and probate.

**Genealogy Resources.** This page includes: (1) a more in-depth guide to libraries & archives than the "public" page above, including unique holdings and helpful tips; (2) Starr's *Settlers of Mattabesock*; (1900); (3) the annotated bibliography of Middletown history & genealogy; and (4) local & regional genealogy Internet research links.

**Middler Archive.** This page contains links to the archive of past issues of *The Middler*. Eventually all issues will be available.

**SMFSD Events.** This page contains summaries and photo-montages of past SMFSD events.

If after using the new web site, you have any comments or suggestions, please contact me via e-mail: [rwbacon@comcast.net](mailto:rwbacon@comcast.net). ■

