

~ Introduction to Volume II ~

Rationale ~ Conception ~ Background ~ Curiosities & Caveats

Middletown, Connecticut – so named because of its location half-way between Saybrook and Windsor, Conn. – was identified as a viable colonial settlement in 1650. The first 23 families that settled between 1650 and 1654 in what the indigenous Wangunk peoples called “Mattabesett” had previously been among the early colonists of Hartford and Wethersfield, Conn., and Rowley, Mass. By the time of extensive land distribution in 1671, the settlement had grown to 52 “proprietor” families, and by 1700, closer to 100 – on both sides of the “Great River.” Now almost 375 years later, descendants of the early families are spread far and wide. More recently, with genealogical resources more accessible than ever, there is growing interest in Middletown from those who feel an attachment to their ancestral hometown.

Early Families of Middletown, Connecticut - Vol. I: 1650-1654, published in 2012, was a project that grew from (1) my research throughout an extended editorship of *The Middler*, the newsletter and journal of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants (SMFSD); (2) research for profiles of early Middletown families prepared for the SMFSD

website in 2007; and (3) my work in the museum, history, and preservation field, interpreting 17th-century architecture and life for the contemporary public. The book, with chapters on multiple aspects of 17th- and 18th-century social, cultural, and economic history as well as the profiles of the 23 early colonist families, was well received, and was recognized with the Brainerd T. Peck Award from the Connecticut Society of Genealogists. But early on it was clear that I had painted myself into a corner by including “Volume I” in the title. The ink was barely dry on *Volume I* when folks began inquiring about *Volume II*.

The *intent* was to complete *Volume II*, with profiles on 67 more pre-1700 families, plus more chapters of relevant history context, in 2015. That goal proved to be too ambitious, and after 2015 came-and-went, professional commitments and other book projects jumped ahead in priority. Plus there was always that constant pesky necessity of making a living.

Since 2015 my progress on *Volume II* lurched ahead sporadically. But it has been the years of steady work by master researcher and co-author Paula K. Higgins that has finally made *Volume II* a reality.

FIRST SETTLERS - 1650-1654

THOMAS ALLEN	GEORGE HUBBARD
NATHANIEL BACON	JOHN KIRBY
WILLIAM BLOMFIELD	JOHN MARTIN
WILLIAM CORNWELL	THOMAS MILLER
JOHN HALL	JOHN SAVAGE
JOHN HALL, JR.	WILLIAM SMITH
RICHARD HALL	SAMUEL STOCKING
SAMUEL HALL	SAMUEL STOW
GILES HAMLIN	MATTHIAS TREAT
DANIEL HARRIS	ROBERT WEBSTER
WILLIAM HARRIS	THOMAS WHETMORE
NATHANIEL WHITE	

INDIAN GRANTORS - 1672-1673

SEPUNNA-MOE	JOAN,
WEEKPESICK	ALIAS MAMECHIZE
WESTUMPSTIA	WAMPANCH
SPUNNOE	SACHAMAS
TACCUMHAIT	PASKUNNAS
MASSEKUMP	ROBINS
PEWAMPSSKIN	RACHIASK



Above is **Founders Rock** at the entrance to Riverside Cemetery, Middletown’s earliest burying ground, in an early 20th-century postcard view. The 60-ton boulder, with plaques that list the 23 first male settlers (1650-1654) and the 13 Indian grantors (1672-1673), was dedicated at the 250th anniversary of Middletown in 1900. At the 350th anniversary in 2001, a plaque was dedicated that included the first 22 women settlers. At left is a facsimile of the names as they appear on the plaque.

Paula was drawn to the genealogical profile format established for the SMFSD website in 2007. Over the next few years she compiled several dozen early settler profiles for the site, all so comprehensive that they set a new standard for the profile format. When she learned that *Volume II* was ascending on my priority list – a decade after *Volume I* – she sprung into action. While I (in Massachusetts) prepared more period-relevant history chapters, re-drew more land-grant maps, and rooted out more pre-1700 arrivals to Middletown, Paula (in Texas) researched and compiled 41 new profiles of early Middletown families. In your hands is the weighty result of our longtime long-distance collaboration.

Early Families of Middletown, Connecticut - Vol. II: 1655-1700 builds on the rationale and organization of *Volume I*, which itself was conceived as a new kind of template for comprehensive genealogical works – an approach that enriches the micro fact-filled genealogical profiles with chapters of illuminating historical, social, cultural, and economic context; and maps, photos, and graphics.

Regarding the profiles: While the 23 *colonist* families profiled in *Volume I* are those whose names, along with the *indigenous* grantors, are on the bronze plaque mounted on Founders Rock at the entrance to Riverside Cemetery, the list of the 1655-1700 families was initially compiled from town records and householder/proprietor lists in Henry Whittimore's *History of Middlesex County* (1884). That compilation identified an additional 66 male heads-of-household known to have resided in Middletown before 1700. The combined list of 89 pre-1700 heads of household in Middletown has constituted the list of "qualifying ancestors" for SMFSD since the organization's inception in 2000. Research since the completion of *Volume I* in 2012, however, identified 17 additional pre-1700 families. Therefore *Volume II* includes 83 profiles of the as-yet *known* pre-1700 *colonist* families in Middletown. Future sleuths are welcome to hunt for more. (Note that *Volume I* devotes chapters to the significant presence of the indigenous Wangunk people and the enslaved African-Americans in early Middletown.)

As in *Volume I*, the aim of the profiles is to bring together in a standard, repeatable format the verifiable facts about each individual, including relevant snippets from the standard genealogical sources now in the public domain. Note that the profiles of the early families do not claim to be the

"final word" on the family history, but instead aim to provide an informed starting point, a foundation for more focused research. For more about the profile format and the standard sources, see the introduction to the early settler profiles on page 21.

Of the 83 profiles in *Volume II*, 77 were researched and compiled by Paula K. Higgins, a paragon of genealogical completeness. In my editing of those profiles, even as an old-school no-nonsense editor with 60 years of experience, there were torturously painful choices of what to condense or excise to keep this book under 500 pages ... or 700 pages.

Paula left to me the profiles of four of the "toughest nuts to crack" – two of whom left firm evidence of their presence in Middletown, but then appeared to vaporize from the planet. But historians actually find joy in the cracking of "tough nuts," so the hunt was on to flesh out the lives of William Biggs, John Hunnewell, Thomas Lewis, and John Thomas. Research yielded unexpected discoveries as well as new unanswered questions.

Two profiles were enriched by author-genealogists who were past contributors to the SMFSD *Middler*. Jim Collins compiled the profile of Samuel Collins (1636-1696) and Mary (Marvin) Collins (1636-1714) for the spring 2016 *Middler*. Jack L. White and Kem E. Marcum compiled the profile of Daniel Marham (1641-1712) and Patience (Harris) Markham (1650-1732) for the fall 2016 issue.

For *all* of the profiles in the book, because I was the editor and gatekeeper of whatever was *added in* for reasons of clarity or *taken out* for reasons of space, I gracefully accept all the blame.

Regarding the history context chapters: From my vantage point, as one who engages the public in the history and museum field, my observation is that many ardent genealogists, in a voracious quest to gobble up more names and dates, often miss out on the historical, social, and cultural context that can lead to a better understanding of our world, past *and* present. My view is that history and genealogy complement each other: For the historian, the micro genealogical study helps draw human portraits of the *individuals* who made the history. For the genealogist, the macro study of historical and cultural context facilitates understanding of the mind, the motives, and the machinations of the research subjects – who may have led, followed, responded, or ignored the forces of change in their lives.

Therefore, just as in *Volume I*, this volume includes maps, timelines, and chapters on topics relevant to the late 17th-century and early-mid 18th-century period. Some content is repeated from *Volume I*, such as general Middletown history, land grant maps, and the map guide to early Middletown cemeteries. New topics in *Volume II* include the dynamic of a “2nd generation” town; indigenous Wangunk and settler relations; agriculture; the growth of a commercial port; Middletown in the Revolutionary War; and the 1780s-1840s westward migrations of descendants of early Middletown families. (See *Volume I* for chapters on topics of earlier 17th-century context such as Puritanism, social order, early public services, infrastructure development, domestic architecture, and Native American and African-Americans in Middletown.)

All this research in Middletown began for me in the 1970s. Although I was born in Hartford and carried the Bacon surname, as a young man I had zero knowledge of any roots in Middletown. But then

one day I encountered a veteran genealogist. When I revealed a hint of curiosity about my family line, she suggested that I go directly to Godfrey Library in Middletown that very day. I sensed her urgency. I drove straight to that gem of genealogy libraries, arriving about an hour before closing. Within the hour, my previously unknown Bacon-surnamed ancestors tumbled out of the books laid before me. In the decades since, it has been no surprise to discover connections to almost half of the pre-1700 families. Research intensified as the editor of *The Middler* (2005-2018), fueled by the encouragement of all my Middletown cousins in SMFSD.

And now, with this long-awaited second (and final!) volume on early Middletown history and genealogy in your hands, I offer my wish that you find it informative, useful, and illuminating. ■

– **Reginald W. Bacon**
Newburyport, Mass.
July 2024

~ Acknowledgments ~

A project that integrates genealogy and history does not come to fruition without the expert assistance of devoted professionals in the library, archives, and museum field. Therefore thanks go to the many who have welcomed me cheerfully into their world through the past decades.

Extra-special thanks go to the following individuals – some now in well-earned retirement – who always pointed me in the right direction when faced with a research inquiry: Denise Mackey-Russo at Russell Library in Middletown; Debbie Shapiro at the Middlesex County Historical Society; Sharon Dahlmeyer-Giovannitti at Godfrey Memorial Library; Jeannie Sherman and Mel Smith at the Connecticut State Library, and Suzy Taraba at the Wesleyan University Special Collections & Archives.

For the genealogical content, the profile format for *Volume I* and *Volume II* was inspired by Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, who conceived and executed the ongoing Great Migration Study

Project. The genealogical rigor has been inspired by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG, author of *Evidence Explained* (2007; 4th ed. 2024). The work of Donald Lines Jacobus (1887-1970) set a high bar. Middletown’s star genealogist, Frank Farnsworth Starr (1852-1939), is acknowledged for both his thoroughness and endearing Yankee crankiness.

For the maps and the chapters on history context, special contributors are acknowledged in the text and endnotes, including Jessie Alsop, Richard Bushman, Augie DeFrance, Erik Hesselberg, Timothy Ives, Paul Loether, Lois Kimball Mathews, Gary O’Neil, Howard Russell, and Albert Van Dusen. For the general overview of Middletown history, appreciation is extended to Peter D. Hall, Dione Longley, Diana Ross McCain, Doris Sherrow, and Elizabeth Warner for their work and insights.

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