



Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

January 2002

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are at the beginning of 2002, and it seems an appropriate time to thank our volunteers for their dedication and efforts. Thanks go to Secretary Bill Atkinson for keeping our records and to Treasurer Dale Pollart for managing our finances. I thank Marianne Sheldon for handling our publicity. Special thanks go to Dorothy Shillinglaw, our Newsletter Editor. There are many others who have contributed time and effort to hospitality, speaking at meetings, and helping others with genealogy questions. Donna Moughty deserves enormous thanks for the many excellent presentations she has done at our Saturday meetings. In place of the usual President's Message, I asked Donna Moughty to write a letter to the MGS members in this newsletter. Donna is asking for your ideas and your help, and, as you can see, she is volunteering more of her time to gather these ideas together in the hope and expectation of making our society stronger and more useful to you. Here is Donna's letter.

David L. Mordy

Ask Not What Your Society Can Do For You!

It's a New Year and time to think about our resolutions for the coming year. As far as our genealogy goes (I know we've already resolved to lose weight, get in shape, spend more time with our families), is it to get organized, to scan all those family pictures and catalog them, to focus on that one elusive ancestor and find him or her, or to publish either a small section, or your entire genealogy?

As a genealogical society, it's also time to be thinking about our MGS resolutions, and since this is

YOUR society, what can YOU do to help? For the past several years, our society has been in the capable hands of Dave Mordy and a small group of board members. However, if the society is going to continue to flourish and grow, we need YOU.

ME you say??? What can I do? First and most importantly, you can let us know what you think. What do you like? What would you like to see change? Are the meetings convenient and the speakers interesting? Are there topics you would like to have covered or speakers you would like to hear? Would you prefer small group interaction rather than a lecture format? What would you like to see added to the newsletter? Don't hold back? Jump on that computer right now and drop me an e-mail at moughty@mac.com and let me know your thoughts. (If you're not comfortable with e-mail, send a note to me at the society's address, P.O. Box 1111, Darien, CT 06820).

Okay, now what's next? Talk to your friends. If their eyes don't glaze over when you begin recounting your latest find, they're candidates to join the society. We're all responsible for increasing membership. Genealogy is one of the fastest growing hobbies, and genealogy sites on the web are the third most popular ones. As a matter of fact, the 2 February meeting would be an ideal opportunity to deepen the interest of those friends. The first meeting session, "Family History," is

(Continued on page 6)

2002 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal was due 1 January 2002. *This is a reminder* for those who have not yet renewed. You may use the form on the last page of this newsletter, or any piece of paper with the requested information on it. You may bring your renewal to our 2 February meeting, or drop it in the mail addressed to Middlesex Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1111, Darien, CT 06820. ■

MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

2001-2002 OFFICERS

David L. Mordy	President
Charles Scribner	Vice President
Dale Pollart	Treasurer
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Middlesex Genealogical Society was established for the purpose of helping those interested in genealogy to pursue the investigation of their family heritage and to provide guidance in research to that end. The society holds at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year, has established a Genealogy Section at Darien Library and publishes a quarterly newsletter. Annual membership dues are \$15 per individual and \$20 per couple or family.

Original notices of genealogical interest and queries are welcomed for publication in the newsletter.

Middlesex Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1111
Darien, Fairfield County, CT 06820

Homepage:
<http://www.darien.lib.ct.us/mgs>

E-mail: sdshillinglaw@prodigy.net

UPCOMING MGS MEETINGS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2 FEBRUARY 2002: MGS board member **DONNA MOUGHTY** will give two presentations: **12:30-2:00 PM, FAMILY HISTORY: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER;** and **2:30-4:00 PM, GETTING STARTED WITH IRISH RESEARCH.**

Donna has been researching her own family for over 10 years. She lectures on a variety of genealogical subjects and this month is giving a presentation at GENTECH 2002 in Boston. On Saturday, 2 March 2002, 2-4 pm, she will speak on "Family History on the Web" at Fairfield Library: www.fairfieldpubliclibrary.org/techtraining.htm Donna has attended the National Institute for Genealogical Research in Washington, D.C., and is a member of the Association for Professional Genealogists, as well as a number of local, national and international genealogical societies.

FAMILY HISTORY: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER, 12:30 PM, will get you started on the right foot and help to prevent time-consuming errors. It will cover home sources, basic forms for collecting and documenting research, and basic record types. While geared to new family researchers, it is an excellent refresher for those who have been researching for a while.

GETTING STARTED WITH IRISH RESEARCH, 2:30 PM, will focus on the research necessary to identify places of origin in Ireland through U.S. records. It will discuss major Irish record collections and major repositories in Ireland. While many Irish records were destroyed in the 1922 Public Records Office fire, a large number of Irish records still exist and can be researched.

6 APRIL 2002: PANEL DISCUSSION on WHAT'S NEW IN GENEALOGY. Panelists: **FRED HART JR., C.G.,** professional genealogist and author; **PHEBE KIRKHAM,** Reader Services and Information Department head at New Canaan Library; and **NANCY MALLING,** MGS board member and leader of the Genealogy Club at Lapham Community Center in New Canaan. Twice a year Nancy also teaches a three-week genealogy course at Lapham Community Center.

18 MAY 2002. Speaker to be announced.

ALL MEETINGS SATURDAY, DARIEN LIBRARY. Meeting times: **2 February 2002, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm; 6 April and 18 May 2002, 2 pm.** Refreshments are served. **COME—AND INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN US! ■**

NEED HELP WITH RESEARCH? Make an appointment through the Information Desk at Darien Library for a personalized consultation with an MGS volunteer.

THE FAIRFIELD SWAMP FIGHT

by Jane Edmundson

Researching an ancestor often involves researching history, but sometimes historical records conflict. Jane Edmundson sought insight into the life of her ancestor Thomas Stanton, an interpreter of Native American languages in the 1600s. She shares with us some of her puzzling findings when she explored the murky records of the Fairfield Swamp Fight, a small, but final, engagement of the 1637 Pequot War.

The Pequot War of 1637 ended in a minor battle in Fairfield, Connecticut, with major results for both sides, 80 English colonists and 300 survivors of the Pequot tribe. For the English it meant the removal of a serious threat to their settlements in Connecticut. For the Pequots it meant their end as a political entity and it *almost* meant their end as a people. On 26 May 1637 the English had attacked and burned a large Pequot village in Mistick, killing indiscriminately perhaps 700 men, women, and children. More Pequot men were killed in skirmishes and as prisoners, about thirty in all.

Reading close to thirty accounts of the battle has been a startling and unsettling experience. Trying to summarize the inconsistencies and contradictions has been a humbling one. I have learned how easy it is to copy, however unwittingly, the mistakes of others and how difficult it is to put a mass of "facts" into comprehensible order. At the same time, it seems to be an opportunity to show how unreliable historical writings can be. How often, after all, do you have 30 separate accounts of one event to compare?

There are only two eyewitness accounts and several contemporary second-hand reports of the Fairfield Swamp Fight (also called the Sasco or the Great Swamp Fight) and even these differ, but the troubling element of the differences is the way the historians have elaborated, exaggerated, "borrowed" from each other without attribution, and unapologetically changed fairly well established "facts" to fit their points of view. A professional historian could spend a lifetime tracing all this, and often seems to in order to prove a pet theory. *My* pet theory is that secondary sources are not to be relied on and must certainly be checked. Here I will try to illustrate my point by comparing only a few historians, one eyewitness of the expedition and battle, one contemporary writer,

one of 1677, one of 1850, and some more recent members of the "profession."

First a little background: After the disastrous burning of the Pequot fort at Mistick in May 1637, the Pequots were understandably demoralized, some scattering into the countryside, some going to Long Island, and some going with their great sachem Sassacus westward in hope of sanctuary with a related people, the Mohawks. There were perhaps 300 in the group fleeing westward, 80 warriors and 200 women and children being fairly common estimates. The women and children slowed movement of the group, but their survival was essential if the Pequots were to exist into the future. That is simple biology. Moreover, the Indians were known to love their children, and it was customary in time of danger to protect both women and children. Before a battle they were usually sent off to relative safety in a swamp, for example, but that was impossible in this situation.

When the English and their Indian allies, caught up with the Pequots, the Pequots went into a swamp in present-day Fairfield, Connecticut, where they were almost immediately surrounded. Four English soldiers, with Richard Davenport of Salem, Massachusetts, plunged into the swamp, and three of them became the only English casualties of the battle. Davenport wrote the only contemporary eyewitness report and the only description of the preliminary action *that I know of*.

When the precipitate English warriors had been extricated, the leaders held a conference about the Pequot women and children, who would undoubtedly be killed if they remained in the swamp. Perhaps their concern was out of shame for the indiscriminate killing of an estimated 700 Pequots at the Mistick fort.

I read all these reports because I had become interested in one character in the drama, Thomas Stanton, the interpreter for the expedition. He came to the New World in 1635, had somehow learned the Algonkian language in a matter of months, and in this way acquired his profession, official interpreter for the colony of Connecticut and after 1643 for the United Colonies. It was in searching for material on his later life that I accumulated many references to the Fairfield Swamp Fight, where Stanton, at the tender age of twenty-two, was to demonstrate, not only his knowledge of the language, but his ability to communicate with and persuade the Indians.

A second eyewitness report, written as a memoir

many years later, was that of John Mason, commander of the expedition:

We being loth to destroy Women and Children, as also the Indians belonging to the Place; whereupon Mr. Tho. Stanton, a man well acquainted with the Indian Language and Manners, offered his services to go in to the Swamp and treat with them: To which we were somewhat backward by reason of some Hazard and Danger he might be exposed unto; But his importunity prevailed: Who going to them, did in a short time return to us, with near Two hundred old Men, Women and Children; who delivered themselves to the Mercy of the English.

Note that here and elsewhere in his memoir Mason says that:

- Stanton volunteered.
- Two hundred old men, women, and children came out.
- Stanton was in the swamp a short time.
- Sixty or 70 escaped.
- “But few” were killed.
- Two or three English were wounded in the preliminary attack.
- There were 180 captives, whom they intended to keep as servants. (Mason did not separate the local Indians from the Pequots, but all *captives* were Pequots, so there must have been 20 local Indians.)
- No definite location is given except that it is *west* of Quinipiac, and “the place where the enemy was.” Two modern writers have placed the swamp *at* Quinipiac and should have known better; they simply were taking an earlier writer’s word for it.

That is the primary evidence of the principal engagement we have today. The rest is secondary, some from contemporary accounts: letters, official reports, memoirs. A letter from Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts to Governor William Bradford of Plymouth, written only two weeks after the event adds a few details (which must have been learned from officers’ reports)—the date, July 13th through the 14th, 80 strong Pequot men, 200 Pequot women and children—but of the points made by Mason, Winthrop says:

- “The Indians [not the Puritan leaders] desired a parley and were offered by Thomas Stanton, our

nterpreter...that they should have their lives...”

- “Whereupon the sachem of the place came forth, and an old man or two and their wives and children, and after that some other women and children,” presumably Pequots, but there is no definite number.
- Stanton was in the swamp for two hours.
- Nine were slain.
- Not 20 escaped.
- “The prisoners were divided, some to the River [Connecticut], and the rest to us; of these we sent the male children to Bermuda....” He neglects to say here that there were two women with the 15 boys sent to Bermuda and that they were to be *sold*. However, he does say in his journal that two women were sent.
- The location was a “small Indian town fast by a hideous swamp” somewhere “towards the Dutch Plantation.”

From these two accounts you can see that accuracy was probably not going to improve.

In 1677 the Reverend William Hubbard published *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, which is the work on which most later histories of the Pequot Wars have been based (Jennings). He obviously had seen both Davenport’s and Winthrop’s letters.

- “The local Indians desired a parley and Stanton obliged.”
- “The sachem of the place with several others, their wives and children, came out...” No Pequots are mentioned.
- Hubbard uses a phrase that must mean a short time.
- Twenty or 30 “of the lustiest” escaped.
- Some of the escapees may have been killed and “Many were killed in the swamp like sullen Dogs.... Many more were killed and sunk [sic] into the Mire.” (Hubbard got this from veterans of the battle.)
- The three wounded Englishmen are named here.
- No number of captives is given, but, “The male children were sent to the Bermudas; of the females, some were distributed to the English towns, some were disposed of among the other Indians, to whom they were deadly enemies...”

Skipping almost two centuries, John W. De Forest published *The History of the Indians of Connecticut...to 1850*, and he said that:

- Stanton offered his services.
- The sachem of the place came out with his people,

and that "One company after another of the old men, women, and children of the Pequots followed...About two hundred persons left the swamp."

- "About two hours."
- "60 or 70 escaped."
- "Dead bodies were found the next day, half-buried in the trampled mud." Note that some writers say the bodies sank, and others say that they were buried, meaning to me that someone had buried them. Also, some of the escapees were found dead on the trail.
- Sassacus was not present, having left with the tribe's wampum

In 1965 Alden T. Vaughan wrote *The New England Frontier, Puritans and Indians 1620-1675* and in the introduction to the second edition admits to being "Less sure than [he] was fifteen years ago that the Pequots deserve the burden of blame," for which remark he has my undying admiration. Jennings, who dismisses the event with a few words, also makes a great admission—that he had gone into his study for *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest*, without the extreme disapproval of the Puritans with which he came out. But to get back to Vaughan:

- No interpreter is mentioned, but in other accounts an anonymous messenger is said to have gone to negotiate.
- The number of women and children that left the swamp is not given.
- No time is given between what must have been the offer of "mercy" and their exit.
- "20 to 30 escaped, and...the rest retreated or were slain."
- In the morning, the English found "Groups of Indians huddled close together...awaiting their fate. They received it with dispatch." (Vaughan had read Hubbard. I have not found this grisly part of the story elsewhere.)
- The story about Sassacus having fled is repeated.

In 1996 Alfred A. Cave published *The Pequot War*.

- Thomas Stanton "Called a parley."
- Two hundred Indians left the swamp.
- A "lull of two hours."
- "The English entered the thicket and systematically shot down the Pequots, some of whom drowned in the muck."

escaped.

- Cave quotes Winthrop that no Englishman was wounded, neglecting to add Winthrop's qualification, "Save those who rashly went into the swamp."
- Unlike Mason, Cave does the arithmetic subtracting the 20 local Indians from the 180 captives, who were "Treated as spoils of war and divided...Fifteen boys and two women were sold to a slave trader."

I regret that there is neither time nor space to give something of the more qualitative flavor instead of the quantitative, less digestible, but more easily compared figures, but savor these two local authors who have tried to spice up the mix of fact and fiction.

One was Frederick Hurd, who spoke before the Colonial Dames in 1905, and said: "For an account of what really happened we seem to be confined to two narratives. This is unfortunate, for they are brief, the situation lends itself to romance, the local imagination is impatient, and Southport pride is creative and boundless." He added that Mason had said he wished he had "put a little more varnish upon it...I wish it had fallen into some better hands that might have performed it to the life."

The second local author was Elsie Danenberg, who wrote *The Romance of Norwalk*, a most aptly named 1926 work from which the higher numbers of slain and escaped come. I really must forgive the author's numerical leaps, however, because she qualifies Stanton's courageous act with the word "heroically." Only one other report that *I have read* qualifies it at all, and only one suggests that the "English mercy" shown the captives was hardly what Stanton had in mind when he risked his life twice in one afternoon. But perhaps those authors hadn't sought him out in indexes and footnotes, stumbling across the Fairfield Swamp Fight at every turn, and therefore didn't know that Stanton had lifelong, though hardly uncritical, friendships with three of the great sachems of his time, that he went among them making almost impossible demands on behalf of the colonial authorities, and that through providence or sheer charisma, which he *seems* to have had in abundance, he still managed to die in his own bed.

Napoleon said that history was a set of lies generally agreed on, and Henry Ford said that history is bunk. These evaluations might be more than a little extreme, but it seems fair to say on the basis of the foregoing that history is riddled with inaccuracies, some

accidental, some intentional, some from sheer laziness. And be forewarned—of *this* bit of bunk, as well as of all others.

A very *brief Bibliography* (I came across one bibliography for this period that contained almost 10,000 entries):

- Bradford, William, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, The Complete Text, with Notes and Introduction by Samuel Eliot Morison, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1952.
 - Danenberg, Elsie Nicholas, *The Romance of Norwalk*, The States History Company of New York, 1926.
 - Davenport, Richard, to Hugh Peters, July 1637, *The Winthrop Papers*, Vol. III, The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1944.
 - *History of the Pequot War, the contemporary accounts of Mason, Underhill, Vincent and Gardener*, reprinted from the *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society, with additional notes and an introduction by Charles Orr, The Helman-Taylor Company, Cleveland, 1897.
 - Hubbard, William, *History of the Indian Wars in New England from the First Settlement to 1677*, ed. by Samuel G. Drake, Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1865, Kraus Reprint Co., New York, 1969.
 - Jennings, Francis, *The Invasion of North America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
 - Leach, Douglas Edward, *Flintlock and Tomahawk, New England in King Philip's War*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1958.
 - Segal, Charles M. and Stineback, David C., *Puritans, Indians and Manifest Destiny*, C. P. Putnam, New York, 1977.
 - Vaughan, Alden, *New England Frontier, Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, Nettle Brown & Co., Boston 1965. ■
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1901 UK CENSUS ONLINE

As reported in our last issue (November 2001, Vol. XVII, No. 4, page 7), the 1901 UK Census went online at www.census.pro.gov.uk on 2 January 2002. The UK's Public Record Office designed this site to handle a million visitors per day, but in the first two days there were 34 million attempts to access the site. It was simply overwhelmed and was shut down. Anyone who had started and not completed a credit card session up until 6 January will not be charged for the session.

Efforts to expand capacity are under way, and additional servers are being brought in. If you have been unsuccessful in connecting with this site, it would be wise to defer your next attempt until technical improvements have been made and demand eases somewhat. ■

U.S. CENSUS IMAGES ONLINE

Within the past year Ancestry.com has completed digitizing all available Federal Census images and has made them available online for an extra subscription fee. (Darien Library does not have the extra census subscription, but New Canaan Library does.) While this is a notable achievement, indexes for these images are only available for 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830 and 1840 censuses. Partial indexes exist for the 1850 and 1920 censuses. The 1860, 1870, 1880, surviving 1890 fragments, 1900 and 1910 censuses have not yet been indexed. Work continues on indexing, but in the meantime digital images of unindexed censuses are browsable. (Note: Where indexes exist, entries are directly linked to the digital images they represent.)

Release of the 1930 Federal Census is scheduled for April 2002, so it will not be available until then. Indexing of the 1930 census was begun by the WPA in the 1930s, but World War II interrupted the task and the 1930 index was never completed. ■

Ask Not What Your Society Can Do... (Continued from page 1) an excellent way to introduce them to the joys of genealogy (and to get yourself a research buddy).

So far this hasn't been too hard. Now for the biggy! What can you offer to MGS? This includes those of you who may not be local, because the Internet makes your help possible as well! Can you be a research buddy to a new member? Can you share your research successes (or failures) by writing an article for the newsletter? Would you host a small group to discuss some specific aspect of genealogy? Would you bring refreshments or be a greeter at a meeting? Do you have any experience in marketing or public relations? If so, would you take on advertising and publicity? Do you have computer skills? We're looking for someone to keep our Website up to date. We have a cemetery project started many years ago that needs to be completed. Would you be willing to work or manage such a project with other volunteers?

As you can see, there is plenty to be done and your support is greatly needed. Please contact any of the officers or board members to let us know how you'd like to help. This will definitely make your society a stronger, better organization.

Donna Moughty ■

17 NOVEMBER 2001 MEETING, ORGANIZING YOUR RESEARCH FOR PUBLICATION

Frederic J. Davies, author, retired educator and amateur genealogist, shared with us his experiences in collecting data, documents, stories, maps, photographs, etc., organizing them and turning them into a book about his family, *The Davies Border Alliance*. His purpose in writing the book was to flesh out the lives of family members within the historical and sociological milieu in which they lived long ago.

Fred reviewed some of the available genealogical programs in terms of their helpfulness in organizing material for publication. Any of the major programs will do the job. There are differences among them, but choice is usually based on long familiarity and ease of use for the author.

A genealogical program *must* have a strong sourcing capability. It is the obligation of the genealogist, of course, to use that sourcing capability and cite each source accurately.

Each of Fred's direct ancestors has his own chapter, which Fred likes to start with a story or anecdote, hopefully one that places this ancestor within the historical and social context of his time. If photographs and maps are available, they are used. (Fred has found a scanner to be immensely helpful.) He uses charts to clarify relationships among family members, but covers lightly those family members that will have chapters of their own. An index is absolutely essential.

Fred discussed various printing and binding options, and also the possibility of publishing an e-book on disk. He recommended determining what is feasible through consultations with printers. Price will surely be a factor, as demand will almost certainly be too limited to recover printing costs. Fred published an early version of his work on 8½x11 paper, with a soft cover, in a comb binding provided by the printer. His most recent version was, again, on 8½x11 paper, but this time pages were three-hole punched and put in a loose-leaf binder so that they could be replaced easily and chapters added as additional information became available.

According to Fred, this was one of the most daunting tasks he had ever faced. He felt, however, that it was extremely important that the results of his research be available to others who could continue and expand on his efforts. ■

DID YOU KNOW? Enumerators for the 1790 Federal Census had to provide their own paper and make two copies. For their work they were paid 2 cents per person counted.

Information from "The 1790 Census—Enumerating a New Nation," Researching with Rhonda at RootsWeb: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/classes/1790class.html>

UPCOMING SEMINAR

Genealogy 101 on the Road, an intensive course for beginning and intermediate genealogists taught by Marcia D. Melnyk of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, is coming to The Stamford Historic Society at 1508 High Ridge Road, Stamford, on 23 February 2002.

Marcia Melnyk is the creator of NEHGS's Genealogy 101 course and has authored *The Handbook for New England Research* and *The Weekend Genealogist*. She is a past volunteer librarian at an LDS Family History Center and is president of the Italian Genealogical Society of America. Her Genealogy 101 presentations will include:

- Forms: Forms for Organization; and Forms for Streamlined Research.
- Oral History: Fact or Fiction from the Past; and Preserving Memories for the Future.
- Using Library Sources and Vital Records: On the Shelf; and On the Internet (with reference to Family History Centers).

Cost is \$50 for NEHGS and SHS members, \$55 for nonmembers. (Note: Prices in the SHS brochure are incorrect, but Karine Rosal at NEHGS in a 14 Jan. e-mail to your editor offered MGS members the member's rate.) For an additional \$20 fee, private, 20-minute consultations with Marcia Melnyk can be arranged for Friday or Saturday afternoon (22-23 Feb.).

Complimentary deserts and beverages will be available throughout the day, but lunch must be brought from home or purchased at a nearby deli.

For more information, please call SHS at (203) 329-1183, or NEHGS, toll-free, at (888) 286-3447. ■

QUERIES

will return in subsequent issues.

Deadline for next newsletter
19 March 2002

Middlesex Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1111
Darien, CT 06820

2002 MEMBERSHIP

- Renewal
- New

ANNUAL DUES

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Please consider adding a contribution toward our genealogical resource maintenance and expansion, e.g., FamilySearch, subscriptions, books, CDs, etc. _____



Middlesex Genealogical Society
PO Box 1111
Darien CT 06820-1111

MEETING
SATURDAY, 2 FEB. 2002
12:30 PM, FAMILY HISTORY
2:30 PM, IRISH RESEARCH
DARIEN LIBRARY

