



Middletown Springs Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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Middletown Church Records

by Joann H. Nichols

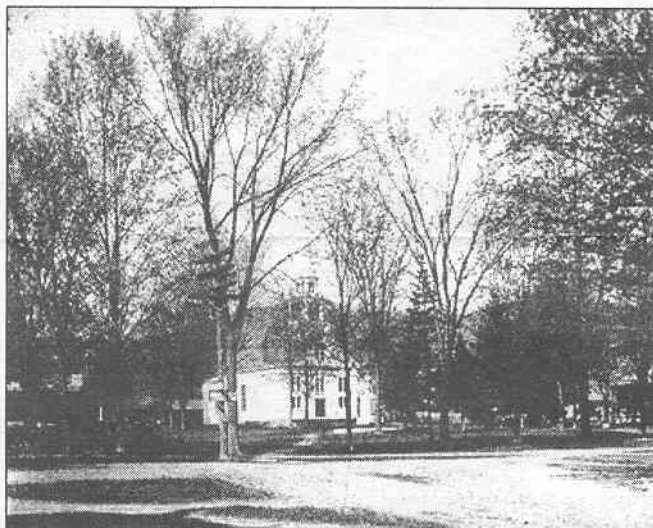
One of my favorite ancestral families is my Rudd line. In researching this line I discovered that they had lived in Middletown. A friend, who had done some research on this line, told me about the Middletown Baptist Church records which are at the Vermont Historical Society. I have spent a lot of time up there looking at these records. They have now been microfilmed and I have a copy of the microfilm.

Since I wasn't able to find all my Rudd families in the Baptist Church, I thought I would try to find the Congregational Church records to see if they had anything on the family. There is a manuscript at the VHS which is a transcript of the Middletown Congregational Church first book of records. This was prepared by Frances Krouse of Middletown Springs. After seeing this I contacted Phil Crossman who was a pastor at the Middletown Springs Community Church in 1997. I made an appointment with him for a cousin and me to go through the records they had at the church.

He brought out so many books I was amazed. Since we didn't want to hold him up from his own activities, we didn't stay as long as we would have liked. I did find some items in an old book which is the second book of records. There were also some small pages sewed together that seemed to have some of the records from the first book of records.

Ever since I saw those books I have wanted to see them again! I knew there must be more records that I had not found. The Genealogical Society of Vermont has a grant program which encourages towns and organizations to have old records microfilmed and preserved. I checked with them and got their stated support to have the records microfilmed.

I contacted David Wright, President of the Middletown Springs Historical Society, and he put me in touch with Nan Gilmour, who oversees the records at the church. Together we were able to find a great many of the old books and I went to Middletown one Friday and picked them up. The books at the church had been catalogued by the His-



The Congregational Church and the Park, circa 1910. Photo by Dana Carpenter from the Historical Society collection.

torical Society and the books at the Historical Society were also made available. I worked all weekend to organize the loose documents and put the books in the order in which I wished to have them microfilmed, typing up a document to be microfilmed with the books and documents. I had made arrangements with General Services in Middlesex to come up on the following Tuesday and leave them to be microfilmed.

In the process of organizing the records, I realized that some of the books which I had seen back in 1997 were not there. So I

commented on this in my introduction to the books. I notified Nan Gilmour and David Wright that some of the books were missing. As luck would have it, David saw Phil Crossman one day and mentioned it to him. Phil remembered that he had the books in a briefcase, and said he would take them to Middlesex so they could be microfilmed with the other items.

I was notified when the missing books were brought to Middlesex and went back up to reorganize them before they were microfilmed. I then came home and typed up a new introduction and sent it up to be used at the beginning of the film. Unfortunately, it appears that the original introduction I had supplied is the one that they filmed.

Anyway, there are now two microfilms containing records from the Middletown Congregational Church, some records from the Methodist Episcopal Church and some other organizations from the town. There are also some journals of Sylvanus Haynes who was an early pastor in the area. The loose documents are interesting, some being letters of excommunication, others being transfers in and out of the church.

Oh, yes, I have found more Rudd information in the second book of records; Bathsheba (Johnson) Rudd's date of death is in there!

Joann Nichols is past President of the Genealogical Society of Vermont and President of the Tinmouth Historical & Genealogical Society. A professional genealogist and Life Member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society, she lives in Brattleboro. Email her at jnichols@sover.net.

Some years ago I did some research at the National Archives in Washington, DC. On the front of the building are the words "What is past is prologue." By learning from the past we can see it as a map of where we came from so that we know where we are going. Middletown Springs has had an interesting history for it's size. The heritage of the community is a legacy for those of us who live here, our children, grandchildren as well as those who come to New England to look at our history. Visitors from many different states as well as international tourists come to see what they cannot see where they live. Understanding what it takes to keep that history from disappearing requires a viewpoint that looks at the past, the present and the future.

In many parts of the United States there is little to see in the way of modern history. Vermont has had a varied and rich heritage that all of us can learn from. Anna Fenton had a way of passing down the history of weather prediction that was more accurate than the people with satellites and computers. History can be practical. Lester Parker can tell you how the season will go for haying and how his family used to change the way they hayed from horses to horsepower. How were the roads built and what is the best way to handle their upkeep? As Bill Reed works on our roads he can tell you he

learned this from others who came before him. It's history.

As a photographer, I have learned that when fire or flood happens to a family the one thing they are sad about is the loss of their photographs. They will never again see those familiar faces and places that make up their personal lives. Middletown Springs has a "family album" of photographs that have been passed down so you can see how people lived their lives. Dana Carpenter left a visual legacy that other communities only wish they had. We need to preserve this visual heritage by employing new technology.

In the past few years the Middletown Springs Historical Society has moved to preserve this fading history by writing the History of Middletown Springs to CD-ROM. Writing in 1867, I am sure that the Honorable Barnes Frisbie could never imagine the book residing on a small metallic looking disk.

Time is always passing quickly. We can only preserve what we think is valuable. You can have the opportunity to contribute to this goal, and without your input some very valuable information could disappear. During our antique appraisal event it was heard more then once by those in attendance ... "If only I knew then what I know now I would have never thrown that item from my family away." Sometimes the value of learning about history comes late. The biggest tragedy is when understanding the value of history does not come at all. What is past is prologue.

In Memoriam

KATHERINE E. DUDLEY, 84, died October 18, 2001 in Rutland. The daughter of Raymond and Jenny Powers of Middletown Springs, she married Cecil Dudley in 1936. Cecil died in 1982.

She served as Postmaster of Middletown Springs for 20 years, retiring in 1986. A long term member of the Historical Society, Kate was a trustee from 1974-77. She was a member of St. Anne's Catholic Church and the Roundabout Club.

Survivors include two daughters, Cecile Carmen of Las Vegas, Nev., and Margaret Corey of Brandon; two sons, James Dudley of Middletown Springs, and William Dudley of Rutland; and a sister, Jane Milizia of Winooski.

JOHN A. EKWALL, 75, died January 12 in Bennington. He was born in Pori, Finland and received an M.E. degree at Helsinki Technical University in 1949. He came to the U. S. in 1950 and was employed at the Hale Co. in Arlington as a pattern maker, time study engineer and superintendent. After serving in other positions in the furniture industry he joined the engineering faculty at North Carolina State University as a professor in their Furniture Manufacturing and Management Program until his retirement in 1990. He spent summers at his wife's family summer home in Middletown Springs, where he was of member of

the Historical Society.

Survivors include his wife Elizabeth (Jean) Ekwall of Bennington; a daughter, Elizabeth Ekwall of Cambridge, Mass.; two sons, Bengt Ekwall of San Diego, Calif., and Mark Ekwall of Astoria, N.Y.; and a sister, Maja Nordquist of Finland.

DAVID S. ROSEN, 91, died March 13, 2001 in Bomoseen. He was born in West Rutland, the son of Michael and Gussie Rosen. He married Pearl Seff in 1932. She died in 1987.

Dave started a trucking business soon after high school, hauling milk and lumber during the Depression. He operated Rosen and Berger Auto Parts for many years. He helped found the Castleton Medical Center 40 years ago. He was a trustee of the College of St. Joseph in Rutland, which awarded him an honorary degree in 1986. Dave served as a Castleton selectman, a director of Ethan Allen Bank, Vermont National Bank, Rutland Railroad, Rutland Hospital and Ethan Allen Council, Boy Scouts of America. He was president of the Castleton Lions Club, Castleton Historical Society and the Lake Bomoseen Association. He was a member of the Eagles, Elks, Oriac, Cairo Temple Shrine and the Rutland Jewish Center. He was a Life Member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

Survivors include a daughter, Barbara Levine of Old Greenwich, Conn; a sister, Clara Rosen of Rutland; and a brother, Sidney Rosen of Brandon.

Historic Clock Returns to Town

An ornate Black Forest tall case clock has returned to Middletown Springs thanks to the generosity of Vera Blakely of Orwell. It once belonged to Eugene Gray and was an item of fascination in his home at the corner of East and South Streets. (The brick house, built by his father, Henry Gray, in about 1835 burned in the devastating fire of January 1920 that destroyed most of the buildings on the south side of the town green.)

Eugene's granddaughter, Hazel Grover, recalled being lifted up by her grandfather for a better view of the moving figures in front of the clock face and the painting of the William Tell shooting an apple of his son's head, as the clock went through its hourly musical motions. A music box and bellows organ powered by suspended weights plays several German tunes.

The clock was made before 1850, according to Clock Doctor Alan Grace, who is researching the unusual time and music machine. The possibility that it may have originally belonged to Henry Gray leads to speculation that it is indeed older.

The clock passed to Eugene's eldest son, Fred E.



Alan Grace, the Clock Doctor, disassembles the clock for its return to Middletown Springs.

Emmett Francois

Gray, upon Eugene's death in 1902. When Fred, who lived on South Street, died in 1932 it went to his son, Henry F. Gray. Henry presumably kept the clock at his home in Medford, Mass. while he taught at Tufts University, then brought it to Rutland where he lived until his death in 1974. Having no son, Henry left it to his eldest nephew, Donald Blakely of Orwell, who died in 1988. Recently, Donald's widow Vera Blakely, her daughter Alice Marsh, and son Brian Marsh decided to donate the family heirloom to the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

In January, Emmett Francois, David Wright and Alan Grace travelled to Orwell to accept the clock from Vera and Alice. Alan carefully disassembled the delicate antique and packed it for the trip back to its earlier home. After evaluation and possible restoration, the clock will be displayed in the Museum Room. It is hoped that a video can be made of the clock and music box going through their paces. Museum visitors will then be able to see and hear the spectacle without putting further wear and tear on the venerable timepiece mechanism.



Antiques appraiser Jim Marquis of Wallingford discusses a silver ladle at the Antiques Discovery Workshop on February 2. Many people brought in their heirlooms for advice on how to preserve them, for insurance appraisals, or to discover whether their treasure was priceless or merely of sentimental value.

Emmett Francois

Welcome! New Members

ANNUAL MEMBERS

Sandra Beckett, *Reno, Nevada*
Sean Clarkson, *Middletown Springs*
Jessica Coppins, *Middletown Springs*
Cheryl & Dick Hanson, *Poultney*

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Shirley & James Anderson, *Middletown Springs*
Bea Gray, *Schroon Lake, New York*
Nancy & Phillip Peck, *Waukesha, Wisconsin*

NEW BUSINESS MEMBER

Bob Williams, *Williams Hardware, Poultney*

NEW CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

Larry Clift, *Milton, Wisconsin*
Maxine & Stan Garfinkel, *Middletown Springs*
Ellen Secord & Dan McKeen, *Middletown Springs*

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2002 were due in January.
Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	\$8.00	Contributing	\$25.00
Family	\$12.00	Individual Life	\$125.00
Business	\$50.00	Family Life	\$150.00

Send to: Joel Pliner, *Treasurer*
Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

- Frisbie's *History of Middletown* CD-ROM is available for \$20, post paid.
- Lampshades featuring 12 historic postcard views of Middletown Springs are available for \$48, plus shipping.
- *Historic Architecture of Middletown Springs* pamphlet is available for \$3, post paid.
- *Views Through Time: Driving through the Rutland Region* brochure is available for \$2.50, post paid.
- *Vermont Museum, Galleries & Historic Places* is available for \$11.50, post paid.

Donations to MSHS, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, are tax deductible.

www.members.tripod.com/MiddletownSpringsHS

Business Members

Thanks to local businesses that have joined MSHS under our "Business" membership category:

Archideck—Sarah Grimm
Estelle Ellis—Business Image, Inc.
William Emberley—Antique Bottles & Collectibles
Green Mountain Timber Frames — Dan McKeen
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis—Antiques Appraiser
Southview Arts—Digital Recording Studio
Stewarts Dairy
Williams Hardware, Poultney—Bob Williams

The MSHS Newsletter is published as many as four times a year for members and friends of the Society. Comments and manuscripts on subjects of interest are encouraged and should be sent c/o David Wright, editor.

Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

Return Service Requested

NEWS BRIEFS

NEW TRUSTEE AND NEW PRESIDENT FOR SOCIETY

At the Annual Meeting of the Historical Society on September 23 Emmett Francois was elected to a two year term as Trustee. He joins Jere Berger, Frances Krouse, Bud Krouse, Jon Mathewson, Joel Pliner, Diane Rosenmiller, Nora Rubinstein, and Marilyn Trapeni on the board.

Leaving the board at the end of their terms were Bob Johnson, Randy Kniffin, Jim Kopp and David Wright.

The highlight of the meeting, besides the delicious pot luck supper, was a presentation on frontier medicine by Western historians and Middletown Springs residents Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith. The program was underwritten by a grant from the Vermont Council on the Humanities.

At the October meeting of the Trustees, Emmett Francois was elected President; Fran Krouse, Vice-President; Jon Mathewson, Secretary; and Joel Pliner, Treasurer.

NEW COMPUTER FEATURES SCENIC PHOTO DISPLAY

Emmett Francois has put together a new computer system for the Stencil Room at the Historical Society building. Intended for inventory, acquisition and membership records, the system also includes a screen saver program which displays a group of photos of recent Society events and activities. Running continuously while the museum is open, the display will give museum visitors an idea of the year's events at the the Historical Society.

2002 EVENTS

Sunday, March 24	2-4 p.m.	Maple Festival
Sunday, May 26	1-4 p.m.	Memorial Day Parade
Sunday, June 30	2-4 p.m.	Strawberry Festival
Sunday, Sept. 30	6 p.m.	Annual Meeting
Sunday, Oct. 6	1-4 p.m.	Apple Festival

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