

Middletown, Connecticut

Background

Towns Once Part of Middletown

Middletown was once much larger and included parts of several other towns. Cromwell, north of Middletown, was founded as part of the Mattabeset settlement in 1651. It was called “Upper Houses” until its separation from Middletown in 1851. Parts of modern Portland and East Hampton also once belonged to Middletown and were called “East Middletown.” The areas were first settled in 1714. In 1767, East Middletown became part of the township of Chatham. In 1841, it split again. “East Middletown” became modern Portland. Middlefield was the last of Middletown’s parishes to split off, in 1866. As a result, records for other towns may be found in Middletown archives.¹

Major Events in Middletown History

- 1646: Plans created by General Court for settlement at Mattabset.²
- 1650: First English settlement.³
- 1653: First called Middletown.⁴
- 1784: Incorporated as a city.⁵
- 1785: First newspaper – Middletown Gazette.⁶
- 1831: Founding of Wesleyan University.⁷
- 1840: First high school.⁸
- 1868: Founding of the State Hospital (today Connecticut Valley Hospital).⁹
- 1872: Middletown Mansfields active (professional baseball team).¹⁰
- 1875: Russell Library founded.¹¹
- 1927: Major flood.¹²
- 1936: Major flood.¹³
- 1938: September 21, 1938 is the “Great New England Hurricane.”¹⁴

Publications

The list of publications was taken from the Library of Congress “U.S. Newspaper Directory.”¹⁵
The list is organized by date, from earliest to latest.

- The Middlesex Gazette: 1785-1787*
- The Middlesex Gazette or Federal Advertiser: 1787-1792*
- The Middlesex Gazette: 1792-1823*
- Connecticut Spectator: 1814*
- American Sentinel: 1823-1833*
- Middlesex Gazette and General Advertiser: 1823-1824*
- Middlesex Gazette: 1824-?*
- Sentinel and Witness: 1833-1867*
- The Witness: 1833*
- New England Advocate: 1834-1836*

The Constitution: 1838-1889
The Castigator: 1840
The Son of Temperance: 1847-1850
The Adder: 1849
The Oasis: 1850
The Son of Temperance and Family Visitor: 1850
The Middletown Daily News: 1850-1851
The Middletown Oasis: 1851-1852
News and Advertiser: 1851-1854
The Morning News: 1851
Weekly News and Advertiser: 1851
The Rainbow: 1853-1860
Middletown News: 1854
Middlesex County Argus: 1855
Middletown Explorer: 1856
The Middletown Republican: 1857
The Middlesex County Democrat: 1860
Middletown Democrat: 1861
The Daily Patriot: 1861
Our County and Sentinel and Witness: 1867-1868
Our County: 1867-1868
The Sentinel and Witness: 1868-1872
Middletown Advertiser: 1871-1874
The Daily Constitution: 1872-1876
The Middletown Sentinel and Witness: 1873-1877
The Advertiser: 1874
Middletown Daily Sentinel: 1876
Sentinel and Witness: 1877-
Middlesex Monitor: 1878
The Young American: 1878-
State Temperance Journal: 1879-
Middletown News: 1881-
Middlesex Daily Herald: 1883-
The Penny Press: 1884-1918
The Middletown Herald: 1885-1896
Evening Journal: 1887
The Drug Bulletin: 1888
The Middletown Constitution: 1889-1890
Sunday Morning Call: 1891
The Middletown Tribune: 1893-1901
The New Republic: 1895
The Tribune: 1901-1903
The Middletown Tribune: 1903-1906
The Middletown Times: 1914
The Evening Press: 1918-1919
The Middletown Press: 1919-Present

The Middletown Graphic: 1937
The Middletown Bulletin: 1949-Present
The Herald Press: 1996-Present

Colleges, Industrial Schools, and Universities

Partridge Academy: Failed 1829, land became part of Wesleyan University.¹⁶
Wesleyan University: Founded 1831.¹⁷
Berkley Divinity School: 1854-1928¹⁸
Connecticut Industrial School for Girls (Long Lane): Founded 1870.¹⁹
Wilcox College of Nursing: Founded 1908, closed 1997.²⁰
Middlesex Community College: Founded in 1966, branch of Manchester Comm. College.²¹

High Schools (current schools)

Middletown High School: public.
Mercy: All girls, Catholic.
Vinal Regional Vocational Technical School: public, vocational.
Xavier: All boys, Catholic.

Hospitals

Middlesex Hospital: Charter granted 1895. First hospital opened 1904.²²
Connecticut Valley Hospital: Founded as Connecticut Hospital for the Insane, 1867.²³

Religious Communities

1. East Middletown:
 - a. First Congregational Church: 1714.²⁴
2. Upper Houses
 - a. First Congregational Church: 1715.²⁵
3. Middlefield
 - a. St. Colman Church: Originally a mission of St. John Church. Became a mission of St. Francis after 1904.²⁶
 - b. Middlefield Federated Church: Middlefield Congregational Church was established in 1745; Middlefield Methodist Church had its first meeting in 1790. The two merged in 1900.²⁷
4. Middletown
 - a. Roman Catholic:
 - St. John's: First church opened April 1844. Second (and current) church dedicated September 1852. Mostly Irish.²⁸
 - St. Francis: Founded 1904. Originally controlled Notre Dame (Durham) and St. Colman's (Middlefield).²⁹
 - St. Sebastian: Founded 1931. Mostly Italian.³⁰
 - St. Pius: Founded 1959, run by the Capuchin Friary. "Modern Parish."³¹

- St. Mary's of Czestochowa: Formally Polish Roman Catholic Church of St Mary of Czestochowa. Dedicated 1905.³²
- b. Lutheran
 - Christ Lutheran Church: Established as Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Tabor Church in 1891. First church 1895. Renamed as Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1922.³³ Merged to become Faith Lutheran in 2012.³⁴
 - Grace Evangelical/ St. Paul Lutheran Church: Founded 1893.³⁵ Merged to become Faith Lutheran in 2012.³⁶
 - Grace Evangelical Lutheran/St. John's Evangelic Lutheran Church: First built as German Evangelical Lutheran Church. Organized 1901; the first building was built in 1905. Changed name in the 1950s when moved to current location.³⁷
- c. Episcopal
 - Holy Trinity: Originally called Christ Church. First services were in 1724, and the first building in 1750.³⁸
- d. Congregational
 - First Church of Christ, Congregational: Founded November 1668.³⁹
 - South Church: Founded 1747 in a home. Became a church in 1818.⁴⁰
 - Third Church: Organized in Westfield in December 1773 from first and second churches.⁴¹
- e. Jewish
 - Congregation Adath Israel: First services in 1905, first building 1908.⁴²
- f. Hindu
 - Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple: Established 1990s. Unsure of actual date.
- g. AME
 - Cross Street AME Zion: Established 1823.⁴³

Literature

Elizabeth A. Warner, *A Pictorial History of Middletown* (Norfolk, VA: Donning Co, 1990).

Janice P. Cunningham and Elizabeth A. Warner, *Experiment in Community: An African-American Neighborhood, Middletown, Connecticut, 1847-1930* (Hartford, CT: Connecticut Historical Commission, 2002).

Julia Perkins, Bernadette S. Prue, and Claudette Kosinski, Ed. *Long Ago, Not Far Away: An Illustrated History of Six Middlesex County Towns* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co, 1996).

Repositories

Facility	Website	Address	Materials
Congregation Adath Israel	http://www.adathisraelct.org/	8 Broad St., Middletown, CT	Only extant worship site for Middletown's Jewish community. Many materials on long term loan to Wesleyan University Special Collections.
Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple	http://www.cvhts.org/	11 Training Hill Rd., Middletown, CT 06457	Religious Records
Court of Probate, Middletown, Middlesex County	n/a	94 Court Street , Middletown CT 06457	Wills (transcribed). No original copies extant. Middletown Only.
Cross Street AME Zion	http://www.crossstreetamezion.org/	440 West St., Middletown CT	Church records AME since 19 th century.
First Church of Christ Congregational, Middletown	http://www.firstchurchmiddletown.org/	190 Court St., Middletown, CT	Church Records, Congregational, dating back to 17 th century.
First Congregational Church, Cromwell	http://www.fcccromwell.org/	355 Main St., Cromwell, CT	Church records, Congregational, dating back to the 18 th century
First Congregational Church, Portland	http://www.firstchurchportlandct.org/	554 Main St., Portland CT	Church records, Congregational, dating back to the 17 th century
Godfrey Library	www.godfrey.org	134 Newfield St. · Middletown, CT · 06457	Databases, books, original Middletown records; access to FHL microfilms.
Health Department, Middletown	www.cityofmiddletown.com	245 deKoven Drive Middletown, CT 06457	Vital Records, 17 th Century Deeds
Holy Trinity, Middletown	http://holytrinity.ctdiocese.org/default.asp	381 Main St., Middletown, CT	Church records
Mercy High School, Alumnae Association	http://www.mercyhigh.com/page/alumnae	n/a	Alumnae contact, possible images.
Middlefield Federated Church	http://www.mfct.com/home.shtml	402 Main St. Middlefield, CT	Church records.
Middlesex County Historical Society	www.middlesexhistory.org	151 Main St., Middletown CT 06457	Books, manuscripts, Middletown vital records (Starr Collection), city directories, local newspapers (paper versions), early Wesleyan yearbooks and manuscripts.

Middletown High School, Guidance Department	http://www.middletownschools.org/page.cfm?p=8668	200 LaRosa Lane Middletown, CT 06457	Transcripts, Student Attendance, Yearbooks pre-1950 (scattered)
Olin Library	http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/	Wesleyan University Campus, Middletown	Manuscripts, Books, Databases, Wesleyan University Archives.
Russell Library	www.russelllibrary.org	123 Broad St., Middletown, CT 06457	Books; Manuscripts; Local Documents; City Directories; Local newspapers; Access to Ancestry.com
South Church, Middletown		9 Pleasant St., Middletown	Church Records, Congregational, dating back to 1747.
St. Francis, Middletown	http://www.saintfrancisofassisi.com/	10 Elm St., Middletown, CT.	Baptismal Records, post-1903 (Catholic, mixed). Originally controlled Catholic parishes in Middlefield and Durham, likely holds their original baptismal records. Now primarily Hispanic.
St. John's, Middletown	http://www.saintjohnchurchmiddletown.com/Pages/default.aspx	19 St. John Sq, Middletown, CT 06457	Baptismal Records, post-1843 (Irish Catholic). Originally controlled Catholic parishes in Middlefield and Durham, likely holds their original baptismal records.
St. Mary's, Middletown	http://stmarymiddletown.com/	79 S. Main St., Middletown, CT	Baptismal Records, post-1903 (Polish Catholic).
St. Pius X's, Middletown	http://www.saintpius.org/	310 Westfield Street Middletown, CT 06457-2047	Baptismal Records, post-1957 (Catholic, mixed).
St. Sebastian's, Middletown	http://www.stsebastianmiddletown.org/	155 Washington St., Middletown, CT	Baptismal Records, Post-1920 (Italian Catholic).
Third Congregational Church	http://www.thirdchurchmiddletown.org/	94 Miner St. Middletown, CT	Church records, back to 18 th century
Town Clerk, Middletown	http://www.cityofmiddletown.com	245 deKoven Drive Middletown, CT 06457	Deeds, DD214.
Xavier High School, Alumni Association	http://www.xavierhighschool.org/alumni-giving	n/a	Alumni contact

Endnotes

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- ¹ “Cromwell History,” *Cromwell Historical Society* (http://cromwellhistory.org/Cromwell_History.html: accessed 6 October 2011). “William H. Buell, “Town of Portland,” *The History of Middlesex County, 1635-1885* (New York: J.H. Beers & Co., 1884); transcription, “Portland, Middlesex County, CT, Town History,” *Portland Historical Society* (<http://portlandhistsoc.com>: accessed 5 October 2011). Economic Development Commission, “2007 East Hampton Visitor Guide & Community Directory,” *Town of East Hampton, Connecticut* (<http://www.easthamptonct.org/pages/2007visitinguide.pdf>: accessed 6 October 2011), 3. Julia Perkins, Bernadette S. Prude and Claudette Kosinski, Ed. *Long Ago, Not Far Away: An Illustrated History of Six Middlesex County Towns* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 1996), 151.
- ² “The History of Middletown 1650-1800,” *City of Middletown* (<http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/history/historypart1.html>: accessed 5 October 2011).
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ “The History of Middletown 1800-1900,” *City of Middletown* (<http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/history/historypart1.html>: accessed 5 October 2011).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² “The History of Middletown 1900-Now,” *City of Middletown* (<http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/history/historypart1.html>: accessed 5 October 2011).
- ¹³ “The History of Middletown 1800-1900,” *City of Middletown* (<http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/history/historypart1.html>: accessed 5 October 2011).
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ “U.S. Newspaper Directory Search Results,” *The Library of Congress* (<http://chronicalingamerica.loc.gov>: accessed 10 October 2011).
- ¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Warner, *A Pictorial History of Middletown* (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1990), 44.
- ¹⁷ “Wesleyan University: A Brief History,” *Wesleyan University* (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/about/uhistory.html>: accessed 11 October 2011).
- ¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Warner, *A Pictorial History of Middletown* (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1990), 44.
- ¹⁹ Elizabeth A. Warner, *A Pictorial History of Middletown* (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1990), 49.
- ²⁰ “Wilcox College of Nursing,” *The University of Connecticut Archives & Special Collections* (<http://doddcenter.uconn.edu/exhibits/Wilcox/history.htm>: accessed 12 October 2011).
- ²¹ “About Us,” Middlesex Community College (http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/Content/About_Us.asp: accessed 11 October 2011).
- ²² Mary B. Heath, *The Halls of Ivy: The Middlesex Hospital and The Wilcox College of Nursing, One Hundred Years of Caring, 1895-1995* (Worcester, MA: Deerfield Press, 1995), 1-3.
- ²³ National Park Service, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form,” 14; online copy, *National Park Service* (<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/85001920.pdf>: accessed 11 October 2011).
- ²⁴ William H. Buell, “Town of Portland,” *The History of Middlesex County, 1635-1885* (New York: J.H. Beers & Co., 1884); transcription, “Portland, Middlesex County, CT, Town History,” *Portland Historical Society* (<http://portlandhistsoc.com>: accessed 5 October 2011).
- ²⁵ “Our Beginning,” *The First Congregational Church of Cromwell* (<http://www.fcccromwell.org/5.html>: accessed 10 October 2011).
- ²⁶ “History,” *Saint John Roman Catholic Church* (<http://saintjohnchurchmiddletown.com/aboutus.aspx>: accessed 12 October 2011).
- ²⁷ “History of Middlefield Federated Church,” *Middlefield Federated Church* (<http://www.gb-gm-umc.org/mfc/history1.htm>: accessed 20 October 2011).
- ²⁸ “History,” *Saint John Roman Catholic Church* (<http://saintjohnchurchmiddletown.com/aboutus.aspx>: accessed 12 October 2011).
- ²⁹ “History,” *Saint Francis of Assisi Parish* (<http://saintfrancisofassisi.com/history/>: accessed 12 October 2011).
- ³⁰ “History of Middletown, Connecticut,” *Middlesex County Historical Society* (<http://www.middlesexhistory.org/exhibits/italians.htm>: accessed 12 October 2011).

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- ³² Romuald K. Byczkiewicz, *St. Mary’s of Czestochowa: A Century of Polonia in Middletown Connecticut* (N.p.: n.p., n.d.) 8-10.
- ³³ “Swede,” *Middlesex County Historical Society* (<http://www.middlesexhistory.org/exhibits/swedes.htm>: accessed 13 October 2011).
- ³⁴ “About Us,” *Faith Lutheran Church* (<http://faithelcamiddletown.org/about-us/>: accessed 13 May 2016).
- ³⁵ “Home Page,” *St. Paul Lutheran Church* (<http://www.stpaulsluthchurch.org/>: accessed 12 October 2011). Lois Poissant, email to Bryna O’Sullivan, 20 October 2011; held privately by Bryna O’Sullivan.
- ³⁶ “About Us,” *Faith Lutheran Church* (<http://faithelcamiddletown.org/about-us/>: accessed 13 May 2016).
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- ³⁸ Alice Bridge Richter, *History of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Middletown, Connecticut* (N.p.: n.p., 1963), 1, 9.
- ³⁹ Azel Washburn Hazen, *A Brief History of the First Church of Christ, Middletown Connecticut for Two Centuries and a Half, 1668-1918* (N.p.: n.p.: n.d.); digital images, *Archive.org* (<http://www.archive.org>: accessed 20 October 2011).
- ⁴⁰ Jonathan Dean-Lee, “The History of South Church,” *South Congregational Church, UCC* (<http://www.southchurchmiddletown.org/history.html>: accessed 12 October 2011).
- ⁴¹ “A History of Third Congregational Church,” *Third Congregational Church* (<http://www.thirdchurchmiddletown.org/AboutUs/AHistoryofThirdCongregationalChurch/tabid/1459/Default.aspx>: accessed 13 October 2011).
- ⁴² “Jews,” *Middlesex County Historical Society* (<http://www.middlesexhistory.org/exhibits/jews.htm>: accessed 13 October 2011).
- ⁴³ “Church History,” *Cross Street AME Zion* (http://www.crossstreetamezion.org/church_history0.aspx: accessed 20 October 2011).