

LOCAL

Researchers at Godfrey Library trace Middletown mayor's roots

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MIDDLETOWN — Mayor Dan Drew's family roots can be traced back to Plymouth, Mass., with a high degree of probability, though it could not be confirmed, nor could it be confirmed that one of his distant relatives came on the Mayflower.

That was one of the findings of researchers at the Godfrey Memorial Library, who researched Drew's family lineage for him.

The Godfrey Library on Newfield Street is a library dedicated to genealogy, genealogy research and family history.

Drew sat at a table in the library's main room Wednesday morning, flanked by researchers who explained their findings, learned about his relatives, both distant and recent.

Researchers referred to two binders filled with copies of vital records, family trees and other data that they gathered on the mayor's lineage.

What researchers could confirm, is that Drew's sixth great grandfather was born in 1724 and arrived in Redding about 20 years later.

They don't know John Drew's lineage or place of birth, though they strongly believe John was the son of Thomas Drew of Plymouth, Mass.

"We can probably go back to [Thomas Drew] as the head of the family.. census information prior to 1850 just listed heads of households," Diane Reid, a researcher at the library told Drew.

Reid also discovered in the course of her research



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Diane Reid, a researcher with the Godfrey Memorial Library, discusses her findings regarding the Drew family with Middletown Mayor Dan Drew Wednesday.

that John Drew was a Tory.

"I'm shocked. My father's going to be shocked, absolutely shocked, that we have a relative who was a Tory!" Drew said. "But he'll be glad there was a Union Army veteran in the family.

Drew was referring to another distant relative, Pvt. Levi Drew, of Bridgeport, who served in the Ninth Regiment for the Union Army.

Concerning John Drew's apparent allegiance to the crown before the Revolutionary War, Reid told Drew that many individuals placed their loyalties with those of their churches, despite their personal leanings.

Reid also told Drew that two of John Drew's sons were Patriots.

Also in the collected research is another distant relative, Able Sherwood, who was a member of the Continental Army under Gen. Montgomery, who led forces into Quebec to fight the British there.

Drew also has distant connections to the Barnum family and the Beardsley

family in the Fairfield area.

Drew was born Daniel Zippilli, though he later changed his name to his stepfather's name, who raised him along with his mother.

The Zippilli family, according to researchers, came to Ellis Island in the early 1900s and settled in New Rochelle, NY.

The Zippilli family emigrated from Atri, Teramo, Italy, in the Abruzzo region on the eastern side of the mainland.

Members of his mother's family, the Sanders, emigrated from Russia, Austria and Hungary, also arriving on Ellis Island in the early 1900s.

"I want to thank you all. This is such an asset for Middletown, and like I said, I could never do this without this incredible resource... This is so exciting for me," Drew said after listening to what researchers found.

For more information on the Godfrey Memorial Library, as well as a link to the library's Facebook page, visit its website at www.godfrey.org.