THE STARR FAMILY OF MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT;
A STUDY IN SOCIAL MOBILITY AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

by
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This is a study of the Starr family of Middletown, Connecticut, with respect to the evolution of their socio-economic relationships within the context of a changing communal environment. Between 1650 and 1850, the 'mechanics' of Middletown's social, economic, religious, and political life were transformed. These changes were manifested in such historical developments as the spread of religious dissension, the evolution of the market system, and the emergence of party politics. In the nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Middletown found themselves confronted with a social environment which was, in many ways, radically different from that enjoyed by their Puritan predecessors. The first major concern of this investigation is that of social mobility. Edward Pessen writes, that

the sociologists' search for the causes of social mobility breaks down into two separate and distinct searches. In the first, they attempt to discover the causes of the vertical mobility rate... In the second, they put aside their attempt to explain the rate of social mobility, focusing instead on the reasons certain individuals and not others experienced whatever mobility occurred.1

What were the forces involved in vertical and horizontal mobility, and how did they contribute to individual success and failure? Consider the case of two brothers, each of whom will be discussed later in detail. One rose from apprentice blacksmith to become a wealthy Middletown manufacturer, while the other died swinging from

1 Edward Pessen, Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America, p. xix.
the gallows in Haddam. To what extent did social forces precipitate the former's rise and the latter's decline?

Secondly, we will try to come to some conclusions concerning the changes that took place in the Starr family's 'individual experiences of community' during the era in question. In *Community and Social Change in America*, Thomas Bender defines "community,"

A community involves a limited number of people in a somewhat restricted social space or network held together by shared understandings and a sense of obligation. Relationships are close, often intimate, and usually face-to-face. Individuals are bound together by affective or emotional ties rather than by a perception of individual self-interest.

Community is an experience, not a place - it is not restricted by geographical boundaries, but rather prescribed by the limits of "affective or emotional" bonds. How did one's experience of community in the 1670s compare with that of someone in the 1840s? To what extent did they differ, and in what ways did the experience of community redefine itself as the years passed? The answers are at once intriguing and crucial to our understanding of American social history.

The Starrs' vertical social mobility is perhaps best reflected in the 'occupational evolution' of the family's Middletown male lineage. The Middletown Starrs were all the descendants of Dr. Comfort Starr who, with his wife and children, sailed from England to Boston on the "Hercules of Sandwich" in 1635. Dr. Comfort Starr's grandson, Comfort, was born in Scituate, Massachusetts in 1644, and settled in Middletown in 1675. Comfort was probably a tailor.

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2. Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, p. 7.
3. The reader is urged to refer to the accompanying genealogy for further clarification of the Starr lineage. The individuals whose names appear in large print represent the Middletown male lineage - those Starr men who lived, raised a family, and died in Middletown.
for two of his three sons were so employed. The diagram on page four presents a rough occupational breakdown of the Middletown male lineage by generation, and raises some interesting questions respecting occupational mobility. How can we account for this type of mobility, and the way in which it manifested itself?

As the diagram indicates, the Starrs who sought and succeeded in making a living in Middletown were not all tailors. There was a marked tendency for successive generations to either abandon artisan employ altogether, or to diversify their occupational interests. This is not to say that, after a certain date, all Starr sons shied away from the pursuit of a single craft, but those who did so after 1750 almost invariably left Middletown to seek their fortunes elsewhere. As Middletown became a commercial and, later, a manufacturing center, the Starrs became seafarers, merchants, and manufacturers. Three primary factors lay behind this occupational shift. First, there were external forces at work behind occupational mobility. If a tailor's four sons wanted to remain in the town, they could not all become tailors unless demands for such services radically increased. As Middletown came into its own as a seaport, openings appeared in the shipping and mercantile industries, and the Starrs moved to fill them. The same is true of their move to manufacturing when, toward the end of the eighteenth century, it began to supplant commerce as the dominant economic activity in Middletown. The question remains, however, as to why their occupations shifted so dramatically away from Middletown's artisan industries. In all likelihood, it was far more difficult to enter into a different craft in Middletown than it was to enter a branch of the rapidly growing trade industry. Demand for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Years (End-Start)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joseph Tailor</td>
<td>Comforter</td>
<td>1644-1793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Joseph Tailor</td>
<td></td>
<td>1796-1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Joseph Smith</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1750-1821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nathan Smith</td>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>1786-1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nathan Turner</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>1750-1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timothy Jr.</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>1786-1857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sailors probably far outstripped that for shoemakers and wagonwrights. Interestingly, even though the Middletown Starrs did not remain tailors, many maintained an economic association with the trade. Daniel Starr was a weaver. Captain Timothy Starr, a seafarer and merchant, sold cloth and clothing in his shop. Likewise, his brother Elihu's store sold "shawls" and a wide variety of fabrics, including "calico, cassimer," and "moreen." Finally, in the face of Middletown's growing commercial enterprises, the tailor's trade probably lost some of its attraction - there were better ways to provide for one's family in the thriving seaport. Joseph Starr 3rd, a fourth generation tailor, died in 1797 with an estate valued at £98.3.2. Of this, £62.1.3 went to pay off his debts, leaving but a small sum to be divided among his survivors. His merchant cousin Elihu, however, died in 1798 with an estate valued at £1015.13.0. Among Elihu's possessions were eleven acres of pastureland, a silver tankard, and a "negro man" valued at £30. Commercial activities in eighteenth century Middletown seem to have offered the individual greater opportunities for security and success than did the tailor's shop.

Why the Starrs were occupationally mobile is one question - how they accomplished it is another. To become a sea captain or a manufacturer took more than desire. For the former, one needed training, and for the latter, capital. Throughout the family's history the primary agents behind occupational mobility and, indeed, success and failure, were one's family and kin relationships. While many of the Starrs were shrewd, if not ingenious, none rose to

5. MPC records, Volume 6, p. 462.
6. ibid, Volume 6, p. 434.
7. ibid, Volume 6, p. 462.
economic affluence entirely on his own. There was a close inter-
relationship between social mobility and social bonds.

From the time when Comfort and Marah Starr first settled in
Middletown, social relationships played a crucial role in shaping
the futures of Starr children and preserving the economic viability
of the family unit. After two generations of Starrs had been born
and raised in Middletown, a set of interfamilial kinship ties was
established whose rudiments would last well into the nineteenth
century. Perhaps the best name for this familial network would be
(for lack of a better term) the "Starr-Hamlin-Hubbard-Sage-Southmayd-
Ward hexagon." This was not a neatly ordered set of marital patterns,
but rather a fairly random and often diffuse network of socio-econo-
mic ties which served the Starrs in a variety of ways. The following
list of marriages will serve as a starting point for our discussion
of this "hexagon:"

HEXAGONAL MARRIAGES OF COMFORT AND MARAH STARR'S CHILDREN

Mary Starr m. Joseph Ranney (1693)
Hannah Starr m. John Sage (1693)

HEXAGONAL MARRIAGES OF JOSEPH AND ABIGAIL STARR'S CHILDREN

Elizabeth Starr m. Charles Hamlin (Date Unknown)
Abigail Starr m. Samuel Hall (Date Unknown)
Joseph Starr m. Sarah Southmayd (1720)
Daniel Starr m. Esther Southmayd (1724)
Jehosaphat Starr m. Mrs. Sarah Ward (His 2nd Wife; 1785)

These eight marriages represent the beginnings of the Starr's first
kinship network. Later, we will examine the development of other
kinship networks, as well as marriage ties of special interest.

The hexagonal kinship network constituted a social group that
was both firmly interwoven and economically self-reinforcing. While
these familial bonds were gradually stretched and weakened with the passage of time, they endured nonetheless. The cohesiveness of this social group becomes apparent when we consider the fact that, not only did members of the Starr family marry Hamlins, Hubbards, Sages, Southmayds, and Wards, but the latter five families exchanged members between themselves as well. For example, while the Starrs married Hamlins and Southmayds, Hamlins and Southmayds also intermarried, creating a triangular kinship network. The brothers Joseph and Daniel Starr married Sarah and Esther Southmayd, who were cousins. Sarah and Esther were the grandchildren of William Southmayd and Hester Hamlin. Hester, in turn, was the aunt of Charles Hamlin, who married Joseph and Daniel's sister, Elizabeth Starr. This type of kinship network, although somewhat confusing, formed important webs of social ties. Often, the significance of particular marital bonds is hidden, and the reader may be wondering why we have included the names of Joseph Ranney and Samuel Hall in our hexagonal marriage list. Joseph Ranney's mother was Mary Hubbard (though not the same Mary who married Jehosaphat), and Samuel Hall's mother was Phebe Ward. Although the Rannesys and the Halls did not intermarry with the Starrs to any considerable extent, they did intermarry with other families in the hexagon. In this way, kinship ties extended even beyond the Starrs' basis kinship network.

If the hexagon comprised such a broad network of social ties for the Starr family within the Middletown community, what economic ends did it serve? Basically, these marriages enabled a number of Starr children to remain in Middletown by consolidating the financial

resources of two or more families. The fact that such a network formed between these six families suggests that they shared similar interests, many of which were undoubtedly economic. Often, Middletown families had branches which were well established in other Connecticut towns. If the partners in a hexagonal marriage out-migrated, these connections could help ensure their success. Members of the Starr family were among the early settlers of Guilford and, later, the Starrs established themselves in Goshen and New Haven. Kinship ties were especially important for those who left their native communities, and failure to take advantage of them could prove devastating.

The following three examples of 'kinship ties in action' are instructive, for they illustrate both the machinations and the potential power behind social relationships. In 1697, Comfort Starr indentured his thirteen year old son Thomas to the weaver William Ward. Thomas was to remain in Ward's employ until his twenty-first birthday on September 6, 1705. 10 This agreement took place long before a Starr ever married a Ward, and represents the cementing of a non-marital relationship which prefigured future marital ties. It may not have been unusual for artisans to trade sons, and it is quite possible that Comfort Starr took on one of Ward's children as an apprentice tailor. Such activities would serve to diversify a family's economic interests, and protect them in times of financial crisis. Our next example of the economic efficacy of social ties is slightly more dramatic. After John Sage married Hannah Starr in 1693, the couple moved to Cromwell, where Sage is said to have been "the second wealthiest man in town." 11 Their grandson, Comfort Sage,

was born in 1731. He married Sarah Hamlin, while his brother Ebenezer married Abiah Southmayd (the hexagon at work!). Sage was heavily involved in both shipping and mercantile activities in Middletown, and served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War. He owned the privateering sloop "Hamlin," which was captained by none other than Timothy Starr.\(^{12}\) Starr was hardly working for a stranger and, curiously, his second wife was Abigail, the widow of Captain Christopher Hamlin.\(^{13}\) Timothy Starr's cousin, Nathan, was a blacksmith, and served as an armorer in Sage's regiment during the Revolution. In 1798 he secured a contract to make arms for the government, and soon became a wealthy manufacturer. Sage, who became a general after the Revolution, probably played an important role in this success. For both Timothy and Nathan Starr, the Starr-Sage family tie was a key component of success. Finally, let us consider the way in which kinship ties worked for Jehosaphat Starr Jr. In 1785, Jehosaphat's father married Mrs. Mary Hubbard (his first wife died in 1784). That same year, Jehosaphat's sister Lucy married Nehemiah Hubbard, a man "successful in business pursuits."\(^{14}\) Nehemiah may have been Mary Hubbard's nephew. In 1793, Jehosaphat Starr entered into a partnership with his brother-in-law Hubbard and founded the Middletown paper manufactory. The factory turned out to be a considerable success, and at Jehosaphat's death in 1814 it was assessed at the then considerable sum of $2270.\(^{15}\) As the preceding examples suggest, kinship ties were both economically important and could operate in a variety of ways. They were instrumental in the training and employ of sons, the consolidation of family capital, and the launching of new business ventures.

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\(^{13}\) B.P. Starr, op. cit., p. 184.

\(^{14}\) ibid, pp. 226-227.

\(^{15}\) MPC records, Volume 12, p. 141.
As time passed, the Starrs branched out into separate, occupationally differentiated families within the Middletown community. With this branching came a gradual diffusion of their original kinship network, and individual families began to establish new sets of relationships which were particularly suited to their needs. Among this array of social networks can be found two distinct types, each employing different means toward a similar end.

The most rigid and 'organized' of these social networks was that adhered to by the South Farms family. Around 1725, Daniel Starr moved south of the town proper and began an artisan/farmer tradition that was to last a century. In his article on American colonial stem families, John J. Waters writes,

> The major form of generational assistance, the linch-pin as it were of New England's social structure, was the stem family. These colonial farmers wanted a world in which fathers, sons, and grandsons 'stemmed' together, male kin lived adjacent to each other, and brothers jointly tilled the beloved land.16

The South Farms Starrs were a model stem family. For four generations, their marital and occupational decisions were especially geared toward the preservation of the farm's economic viability, and the passing of a farm estate to as many sons as possible.

The family was hard pressed to shield their land from the ravages of partible inheritance, and thus they consistently maintained kinship ties with two other South Farms families, the Millers and the Roberts. Interestingly, they also engaged in preferential treatment of the youngest, as opposed to the eldest, sons. Daniel Starr married Esther Southmayd in 1724, and the couple had three children: John, William, and Anna. When John and Anna married, they took part in a sibling exchange with Patience and Joshua Miller, consolidating the

Starrs' and the Millers' land resources. Daniel's youngest son, William, married Sarah Roberts and inherited the Starr farm from his father in 1752. Thus, all three of Daniel Starr's children were economically enabled to remain in the South Farms community. Tragically, William Starr was killed in a shipwreck at the age of thirty-three. Like many of his cousins he had gone to sea, serving as a lieutenant in the British Navy. After his death, his eldest son Daniel became head of the household and took over the farm. Daniel married Mabel Bowe, who may have been his first cousin, for her mother's maiden name was Roberts. Other than this first cousin marriage of the 'mother's sister's daughter type,' three other marriages in Daniel's generation bear note. First, his brother William jr. married their second cousin, Elizabeth Starr. Second, Daniel's brother John married Bathsheba Cotton, whose mother was Bathsheba Sage. Finally, his sister Esther married Jonathan Hubbard. With the untimely death of the South Farms patriarch, the Starrs' kinship ties seem to have come to the rescue. These three marriages facilitated the occupational mobility of William Starr's children, and played a key role in preserving the viability of the farm estate. William Starr jr.'s marriage to Elizabeth Starr is particularly interesting, for Elizabeth's father Samuel also died at a young age, giving these two families good reason to seek mutual support. Ultimately, the farm passed from the Starr family's hands. Daniel and Mabel Starr willed the farm to their two youngest sons, the twins Sylvester and Comfort. Sylvester married, but had no children. Comfort married Mary Miller (whose mother was Lucy Roberts), but had only daughters. In keeping with tradition, the farm was passed on to Comfort's youngest daughter.

17 An interesting diary of Starr's voyage to Cuba on a British Man O' War in 1762 can be found in The Journal of American History, vol. 3, 1909, pp. 113-117.
Sophia, who married John Williams, the son of Maria Roberts. The South Farms families kinship network was clearly designed to consolidate the source of their livelihood, land. In later generations the family was faced with the grim prospect of dwindling resources, and this network facilitated the occupational mobility of sons and daughters. With the disappearance of the patriarchal line, the Starrs lost the farm. Had it not been for this turn of fate, however, they might still be tilling the land in South Farms today.

The kinship networks of other branches of the Starr family, like the South Farms Starrs, display a marked concern for capital consolidation. Since these branches were chiefly involved in commercial and manufacturing interests, however, their kinship networks did not have to be so "land intensive." They were primarily interested in the acquisition of other kinds of capital. Peter Hall writes,

Where...merchants could expand their operations in order to absorb the increase in the number of their children, the farmers could not without engaging in activities which would lead to a weakening of family cohesion and their ability as a group to concentrate capital and manpower. 19

Starr merchants and manufacturers were able to "expand their operations" and provide for their children through the establishment of social bonds that had little or nothing to do with geography. Three of Jehosaphat Starr's sons became successful Middletown manufacturers and businessmen without participating in traditional marriages within the hexagon or with other, long-established local families. George Starr married an Irish immigrant, Anne Carnall. His brother Jehosaphat Jr. married Mary Warne, a native of New York. Finally, Vine Starr married Sarah Blague of Chatham, Connecticut. In late eighteenth

18. B.P. Starr, op. cit., p. 162.
century Middletown, the entrepreneur's marital horizons stretched much farther than those of the farmer. Of particular interest is George Starr's marriage to Anne Carnall. Anne was the niece of Philip Mortimer, a wealthy Irishman who arrived in Middletown before the Revolution. George S. Roberts describes his economic affluence, "Another of the successful men of that day...His house was a marvel of grandeur. The grounds surrounding it, on the bank of the river, were extensive and ornate." Mortimer was a prominent member of the Middletown Masons and the first warden of the Episcopal Church. It should perhaps come as little surprise that George Starr's father, Jehosaphat, was the first president of the Masons as well as an active Episcopalian. George undoubtedly met Anne through his father's friendship with Mortimer. In fact, it is not inconceivable that the marriage was prearranged, for Anne arrived in Middletown in January of 1775 and George, aged thirty-five, married her the following June.

20 Mortimer was married to Martha Blinn of Weathersfield, but the couple had no children, leaving George and Anne their sole heirs. 21 When Mortimer died in 1794, Starr was appointed executor of his estate, and inherited the Mortimer ropewalk. The ropewalk was a valuable piece of property and Starr later sold it, investing the money in bank stock and other commercial ventures. In 1820, Starr followed Mortimer to the grave with an estate valued at over twenty thousand dollars. 22 Like the farmer, the merchant or manufacturer faced problems of capital consolidation, but he was not forced to rely upon land-intensive kinship ties for their solution. Starr's marriage to Anne Carnall was the first and last kinship tie between the Mortimers and the Starrs,

23. MPC Records, Volume 12, p.141.
and a rather distant one at that. Nevertheless, it succeeded in providing the couple and their progeny with a marked degree of economic security.

If success hinged so heavily upon the formation of productive social bonds and/or kinship networks, what were the origins of failure? The evidence suggests that, like success, failure was intimately intertwined with the nature of one's social relationships. Granted, just as one could conceivably rise from rags to riches with a combination of industry and ingenuity, one could also squander one's livelihood through poor management. Barring economic ineptitude or bad luck, however, the roots of failure lay in the want of supportive and productive social ties. Two conspicuous Starr failures illustrate this point. In 1797, Thomas Starr was hanged in Haddam for the murder of his nephew, Samuel Cornwell. In the late summer of 1796, the forty-three year old Starr had assaulted Cornwell with a penknife, after which the young man died a 'languishing death.' There appears to have been no clear-cut motive for this murder, and it was hardly premeditated. It was a compulsive, irrational act. The Reverend Enoch Huntington's printed sermon on the execution of Thomas Starr contains a brief history of the condemned. It reads,

His youthful genius was promising...when an unhappy step CHANGED ALL THE COLOUR OF HIS FATE. Connected with a worthy family, and contracted in matrimonial engagement with an amiable and only daughter of it, by ungentlemanly and capricious conduct he lost that affection of which he thought himself, in his vain confidence, too sure...[Subsequently,] he shunned society...sunk by degrees into the various stages of intemperance and debauchery...This abandonment of moral virtuous character paved the way...to his doing...violence to innocent and kindred blood...24

Huntington's history is highly suggestive. Starr was probably both

drunk and depressed when he assaulted Cornwell, and the origins of this condition lay in his failure to marry the "amiable and only daughter" of a "worthy family." Starr was hanged for murder, but this ruin stemmed from his inability to cement a social tie that would have guaranteed him a psychologically supportive social relationship and, quite probably, economic security as well. Thomas Starr's brother, William, served in the Revolutionary War and then became a tailor in Goshen, Connecticut, where their brother Ephraim was a successful merchant. Subsequently, William moved to Baltimore, Maryland, for reasons unknown. Perhaps he could simply not compete with the other tailors in Goshen, and decided to seek his fortune in the city. In any event, his move to Baltimore entailed considerable risk, for he was settling far from the environs of the Starrs' established social network. William married Eunice Price of Baltimore, further alienating himself from his Connecticut kin. In 1820, he was living in Baltimore under the same roof with Eunice, his widowed sister-in-law Hannah, her four children, and an eighty-three year old woman by the name of Margaret Fisher. Starr valued his worldly possessions at $59.75 and was desperately trying to secure his Revolutionary War pension, but his commission papers had been lost during the attempted siege of Baltimore in the War of 1812. He wrote the following to his wealthy Middletown nephew, Nathan Starr Jr., in April of 1820,

I wish you would see Mr. Henry Daget for me and see if he is willing to assist me in gaining my just claim for my land warrants and commutations he knows that I was intitled to them as I did not leave service untill after the new arrangement took place...*I now

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25. B.P. Starr, op. cit., p. 137.
26. MHS Box 111, Papers re: Suit of William Starr for War pension.
*. In all quotations from primary source material, spelling and punctuation have been largely unaltered.
find I must break up house keeping my family will soon all go amongst their friends but where I can find shelter or a place [to] lay my head except in a poor house unless some of you will suffer me to live with you which I am ashamed to after I was ever the child of misfortune.27

Nathan was unable to help his uncle secure the pension and William Starr, "ever the child of misfortune," died penniless in Baltimore in 1823. By severing his family ties and partaking in a distinctly unpropitious marriage, William made himself especially vulnerable to failure. What must have gone through Nathan Jr.'s mind when he read his estranged uncle's letter, begging for assistance? He may well have addressed Mr. Daggett on his uncle's behalf, but he certainly did not welcome William into his own home. As the country expanded both physically and economically in the post-Revolutionary era, Starr sons who faced the problems of occupational and geographical mobility must have felt an increasing temptation to try their luck in the cities and on the frontiers. For those who ventured forth without the tangible supports which family and kin could provide, however, individual risks far outweighed potential gain. Although the Starrs' original hexagonal kinship network gradually diffused as the years passed, new sets of relationships took its place, and the importance of familial ties and the bond of marriage remained undiminished.

In From Fathers to Sons, Janice Cunningham writes, "The single most pervasive and disruptive social phenomena in New England in the post-Revolutionary period was the mass exodus of the young adult population."28 Outmigration was an unsettling reality for the Middletown Starrs. Since their arrival in 1675, Starr parents had

27. NHS Box 93, Letter written by W. Starr to N. Starr Jr.; 4-17-20.
28. Janice Cunningham, From Fathers to Sons, p. 120.
to face the fact that the local community would not be able to provide all of their sons and daughters with a living, and that at least some of their children would be forced to leave Middletown in search of a livelihood. The following diagram presents the outmigration figures for six Starr generations, beginning with the children of Comfort and Marah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERATION #</th>
<th>TOTAL # SONS</th>
<th>TOTAL # DAUGHS</th>
<th>TOTAL # WHO OUTMIGRATED 29 SONS</th>
<th>DAUGHS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13 (72%)</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (TOTAALS)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29 (50%)</td>
<td>22 (41%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures indicate that Starr sons and daughters outmigrated throughout the family's history, and that nearly half of all Starr children left the place of their birth. Curiously, while 50% of all Starr sons outmigrated, only 41% of all Starr daughters did. It is difficult to explain this discrepancy - perhaps there were fewer females than males born in the community, or perhaps this figure reflects a lower average age at death for women. In one instance, Timothy Starr jr.'s eldest daughter Polly died at the age of thirty-one, and her husband subsequently married her youngest sister. Also, before the invention of modern obstetrics, women often died in childbirth. The third Starr generation achieved the lowest outmigration figures - only one of Joseph Starr's eight children left Middletown. His sons and daughters came of age in the

29. Sons and daughters who died before reaching marriage age have not been included in these figures.
1730s and 1740s, and this low outmigration figure might be a reflection of either the town's economic expansion during this period, or the effectiveness of kinship ties. In general, however, outmigration was an absolute necessity, for it preserved the community's economic efficiency and helped ensure the well-being of all concerned.

Mary Russell, a Middletown resident at the turn of the nineteenth century, wrote in her diary in 1797,

We have made several short excursions into the country and have always remarked in the farm houses we have visited an appearance of independant happiness which was very pleasing - They seem to have everything within themselves, their farms are almost universally their own property, so that after having spent their best days on it they cannot be liable to be turned out at the caprice of a rich landlord but their little property descends quietly to their children - there is however such a spirit of emigration in this state that when a young man has attained a little property he generally disposes of it in order to settle in the backwoods.\(^{30}\)

Russell implies that farmers who subdivided their estates beyond the point of usefulness were fighting a losing battle against the forces of outmigration. In her description, the "young man" inherits a "little" piece of property. Unable to support his family, he sells his share of the farmlot and heads for the frontier. For farmers and entrepreneurs alike, there came a time when efforts (however virtuous) to keep all their children in the community could serve only counterproductive ends.

As America expanded and the western frontier pushed toward the Mississippi, the character of outmigration was also transformed. Among the first three generations of Starr children, only three of the fourteen individuals who left Middletown migrated beyond the

30. Mary Russell, Diary, p. 5.
borders of Connecticut. Later, as distant territories gradually became less foreboding, many more left for such states as Ohio and New York. In 1821, Philip Mortimer Starr left for Ohio to work two hundred acres of farmland that had been given to his father, George, for service in the Revolutionary War. Few Starr children left unprepared, and most married in Middletown before departing, taking with them the blessings and support of local kin. The Starr sons who outmigrated were usually artisans. Beginning life anew as tinsmiths, printers, or joiners, their efforts closely paralleled those of their common ancestor in seventeenth century Middletown. Although horizontal mobility diffracted the Middletown Starrs, it was also a process of rejuvenation, for out of the old families were born new families and, by extension, new communities.

Having considered the Starrs' social mobility in terms of quantitative change, in what ways did it reflect qualitative change? In other words, how did social mobility affect individual experiences of community? The evidence suggests that, as the Starr family grew and gradually became occupationally, economically, and geographically differentiated, individual experiences of community were redefined.

This 'redefinition' is mirrored perhaps most fundamentally in the history of the family's religious affiliations. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and into the nineteenth century the church was, for most, a primary focus of community, second in importance only to the family itself. As the Middletown Congregationalists successively succumbed to the pressures of population

expansion, the internal dissensions of the Great Awakening, and
the infiltration of the Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists,
however, the community was no longer bound together by a common
religious association. This is not to say that the New Light axed
his Episcopalian neighbor, but rather that the disintegration of
the town's religious focus was closely related to the gradual
segregation of individuals' communal interests. The Half-Way
Covenant of 1662 was one of the first manifestations of this
disintegration. Daniel Starr was born in 1705 and admitted into
the Congregational Church under the provisions of this Covenant.32
Perry Miller writes that,

numbers of...children grew up in
New England knowing nothing, except by hearsay and
rumor, of the struggles in Europe...This second
generation were, for the most part, good people;
but they simply did not have - they could not have -
the kind of emotional experience that made them
ready to stand up before the whole community and
say: "On Friday the 19th, I was smitten while plow-
ing Deacon Jones's meadow; I fell to earth, and I
knew that the grace of God was upon me."33

Originally, the Church had insisted that its members provide proof
positive of their having had a spiritual 'conversion experience,'
but as it became increasingly difficult for succeeding generations
to fulfill this requirement they were admitted to the Church 'half-
way,' by virtue of their parents' sainthood. This modification doc-
trine was aimed at the preservation of the religious community,
but it could not be denied that there were now two distinct types
of church members. Ultimately, this distinction lead to the decisive
split of the Congregationalist Church in the religious turmoil of
the Great Awakening.

Religious dissension was both a product of doctrinal disagree-

ment and, as the Starr family's history suggests, the religious beliefs of one's social peers. Until 1752, virtually all of the Middletown Starrs were members of the First Congregational Church. It was in this year, however, that two members of the family - Jehosaphat Starr and his South Farms nephew, William - left the fold to join the newly established Episcopalian parish. Both Jehosaphat and William were enlisted in the British Armed Forces and, unlike their Congregationalist brothers and sisters, were exposed to a heavy Anglican influence. Their decision to convert seems to have derived directly form their communal associations, and not from any privately conceived doctrinal misgivings. Interestingly, while Jehosaphat Starr's descendants remained members of the Episcopalian Church, William's children reverted to Congregationalism. Jehosaphat lived to be seventy-eight, and was able to establish a solid family tradition of Episcopalianism within his lifetime. William Starr, however, was killed at the age of thirty-three, and left his family with little or no Episcopalian tradition. Also, while Jehosaphat's sons and daughters were all involved with mercantile activities and continued to deal with an Episcopalian contingent long after their father's death, William's children were all raised and married in the Congregationalist environment of South Farms. The only other Middletown Starr who converted to Episcopalianism was Nathan Starr Jr. Born in 1784, Nathan became a Jeffersonian, and was undoubtedly driven to the Episcopalian Church by his political beliefs and associations. As dissenting religious orders emerged within the Middletown community, they both articulated and contributed to the development of diverse

spheres of communal experience.

In qualitative terms, this evolution subtly undermined the totality of each individual's experience of community, for the spiritual dimension of community was no longer something commonly shared by all. In early eighteenth century Middletown, the artisan, the farmer, and the merchant had lived on the same street, attended the same church, and shared a common sense of communal self-interest. This was not necessarily so in early nineteenth century Middletown, where wealthy men were moving their families up the hill to High Street, individuals were attending different churches, and people were becoming socially segregated into differentiated spheres of communal interest. Thomas Bender writes, however, that in the mid-nineteenth century

the town was [still] the most important container for the lives of men and women, and community was found within it...The geographic place seems to have provided a supportive human surround made up of a series of distinct relationships that can be visualized in the image of concentric circles. In earlier Puritan villages, these circles of relations had been...of nearly equal intensity and were highly permeable, but now, a sharp division among them was clear. The innermost ring encompassed kin, while the second represented friends who were treated as kin. Here was the core experience of community. Beyond these rings were two others: those people with whom one dealt regularly and thus knew and, finally, those people who were recognized as members of the town but were not necessarily known.

In seventeenth century Middletown, it is doubtful that the outermost 'social ring' which Bender describes even existed. Community did not vanish in the nineteenth century, but it did become increasingly atomized. The forces of social mobility and moderniza-

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36. For a rough idea of what Middletown's Main Street probably looked like in the early eighteenth century, see map p. 44.
37. Thomas Bender, op. cit., p. 99.
tion drove members of the Starr family into new and diverse spheres of community. Part II will consider the nature of social experience within this new, atomized realm of communal relationships.

PART II
ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY MIDDLETOWN; A CASE STUDY

Collectively, the lives of Nathan Starr, his son Nathan jr., and his grandson Elihu spanned a period from before the Revolution to the end of the nineteenth century. In financial terms, their history was an "American success story." Nathan Starr rose from indentured apprentice to become a wealthy arms manufacturer, and paved the way for the material affluence of his son and grandson. As in Part I, we will want to address the questions posed by this social mobility. First, how was it accomplished? Second, given the economic advantages of these three individuals, how did they orient their social lives and, in turn, what can we say about their experiences of community? Nathan, Nathan jr., and Elihu Starr are of interest to us both as personalities and as social beings whose actions and experiences reflected the historical and social realities of their times.

Rising from relatively inauspicious beginnings, Nathan Starr became a paradigm of the upwardly-mobile individual in late eighteenth century Middletown. Born in 1755, he was the fourth son of the tailor Joseph Starr jr. and the younger brother of Thomas Starr, the infamous murderer. When Nathan turned fourteen, his father
apprenticed him to a European blacksmith, who was also an accomplished sword maker.¹ Starr's apprenticeship ended on his twenty-first birthday in April of 1776, and on July 5th he enlisted as an armorer in Colonel Comfort Sage's revolutionary regiment. As we noted in Part I, Sage was the grandson of Nathan's great-aunt Hannah. The relationship between regiment leader and recruit was thus tenuous, but nevertheless important. Starr was nearly court-martialed during the War, but at the same time he exuded a brand of patriotism that would put many Fourth of July fanatics to shame. At some point during the conflict, Starr was granted a sick leave and ordered to travel to North Castle, New York for recuperation. In violation of his orders, however, he returned home to Middletown. He was subsequently tried for this infraction and acquitted.² Starr hardly seems to have been the deserter type - perhaps he was in such a poor state of health that he travelled to Middletown to say his last farewells. During the Revolution, he sent the following poem to his family from the battlefields of New York,

As to myself I am well and sound
And am resolved to stand my ground.
The Hessian troops all bent on evil
are just as cruel as the Devil.
Some of our men have to their cost
Fell in their hands their lives are lost.
When from New York we took our flight
Finding it was in vain to fight
I left my blanket sword and gun
Which grieves me [mightily(?)] to think upon
But soon the damage was repaired
The continental store I shared
I have a gun as trew as steel
And very resolute I feel...³

Starr managed to "stand his ground" and lived to share in more of

1. Major James Hicks, Nathan Starr, Arms Maker, p. 11.
2. ibid, p. 11.
3. MHS Box 115, Letter written by N. Starr to family, Rev. era, no date.
the "continental store" than he had perhaps anticipated. Returning to Middletown in 1781, he redirected his patriotic energies and set about the task of establishing himself in the blacksmith's trade.

As is true of other members of the Starr family, Nathan's success was intimately connected with his kinship ties. On July 5th, 1781 — five years to the day after he enlisted in Sage's regiment — Nathan Starr married Polly Pomeroy. The Pomeroy family were a new family in Middletown, yet this marriage was overwhelmingly significant in light of Starr's future upward mobility. Polly's father, Adino, was born in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1732. The Northampton Pomeroy family were the oldest arms manufacturing family in America, a tradition begun by their common ancestor Eltweed, who emigrated from England in 1630.4 Nathan Starr married into a family with an arms making tradition that stretched back well over a century. As his smithing business got underway, he manufactured items for which there was a heavy local demand, like farm tools and carriage parts, and either sold them himself or through local merchants.5 By 1798, when the government issued its first arms contracts, Starr was well-established in the blacksmith's trade. With the assistance of the Pomeroy family and, in all likelihood, General Sage, he received a contract to make cavalry swords and stepped onto the threshold of economic affluence.

After 1798, Starr rapidly expanded his operations. In 1799, he bought twenty-six acres of land on the West River at Staddle Hill, just north of Middletown.6 In 1807, he entered into a partnership.

5. See The Middlesex Gazette for 7-2-1787 and The Connecticut Courant for 6-5-1797.
with Ebenezer Peck, Abner Bradley, and Henry Mulford of New Haven. The exact nature of this business venture is unknown, but it does suggest that an important concern of someone who had 'made it' in the early nineteenth century was the investment of idle funds. Starr continued to receive arms contracts from the government, and in 1810 he bought another twenty-seven acres on Staddle Hill. Finally, in 1813, the Starr Arms Factory on the West River was completed. Within fifteen years, Nathan Starr had made the leap from traditional artisan to factory owner.

None of Nathan Starr's three children outmigrated and this is undoubtedly a reflection, in part, of his economic success. His son Nathan Jr. married Grace Townsend, the daughter of a wealthy New Haven family. His daughters married local merchants - Susannah married Henry Carrington, who was involved in the West Indies trade, and Mary wed Henry Ward, a distillery owner. The Middletown tax list for 1820 lists Nathan Jr.'s tax at $223.80, Henry Carrington's at $323.93, and Ward's at $75.00. These were all considerable assessments and suggest that, for Nathan Starr's children, the Townsend, Carrington, and Ward marriages created a powerful network of financial resources.

What were the consequences of this economic success in the social and historical context of nineteenth century Middletown? Nathan Starr was a 'man on the make,' but he was also a man of the eighteenth century, a Congregationalist, and a political conservative. The historical record, though fragmentary, contains no indications that he might have entertained Jeffersonian ideology in his later years. Nathan Starr was, essentially, a creature of

7. MHS Box 115, Starr/Peck/Bradley/Mulford contract, 6-1-07.  
the past. As he climbed the ladder of success, however, the world was rapidly changing around him. The diffraction of Middletown's religious community, the political upheaval of the Revolution, the emergence of party politics, as well as the evolution of the market system and economic specialization were all historical realities with which he had to contend. In many ways, his son and grandson were products of this process of modernization, and their actions and experiences reflect this fact. Bender writes that, "Although local communities [in the early nineteenth century] became less exclusive in the context of social experience, if anything local life provided a stronger sense of community identity."9 Nathan Starr jr. and his son Elihu were both leading economic and political figures in nineteenth century Middletown, and we turn now to consider their experiences of community with respect to Bender's assertion.

In our analysis of the experiences of Nathan jr. and his son Elihu, it should be kept in mind that they reflect the 'elite end' of the communal spectrum. Unlike Nathan Starr sr., they were born into wealth; and while this may not have greatly affected one's experience of community in the early eighteenth century, it certainly did in the nineteenth. Nathan Starr jr. was engaged in the merchant trade in New York until the War of 1812, when he returned to Middletown to join his father in the arms business. Upon the latter's death in 1821, Nathan jr. inherited the factory. Nathan jr.'s son Elihu became his partner in 1837, and Elihu continued to manage the establishment until 1864. The Starr family papers contain a group of invitations which the family appears to have received between 1810 and 1820. All of the invitations are addressed either to Nathan and

Grace Starr or to Nathan's sister, Mary. Included are invitations from Mrs. Watkinson, Mrs. DeKoven, Mrs. North, Miss F.M. Alsop, Mrs. Russell, Mrs. Mather, and Miss Carrington. Also, one missive from Mr. John Russell announces Mary Starr's election to the "Social Budget Society." This collection of letters suggests that the Starrs regularly socialized with a group of people who represented Middletown's economic elite. Taken one step further, these invitations also seem to indicate that 'class' was beginning to play a role in the communal experience of Middletown residents. The Starr family papers contain no evidence of their having socialized - in a formal sense - with people of average financial standing. By the early 1800s, Middletown's economic elite were withdrawing into a self-contained social sphere of their own.

The historical evidence suggests that there were compelling practical reasons for the community's financial leaders to band together in the nineteenth century. As individuals, they each had to deal with the increasingly impersonal specter of the market economy, and it was far easier to confront this beast as a group. One of the problems which Middletown businessmen faced in the early 1800s was the fact that the town had no hotel. There was no centralized place to house visiting merchants and professionals, to the end that they simply were not coming to the city. In 1812, a group of about fifty Middletown merchants, manufacturers, and professionals banded together to form the Washington Hotel Company. Their contract read,

Many thousands of dollars are annually lost to this place for want of such an establishment. Our honor, as well as our interest requires, that exertions should be made to effect so important an object. Those towns, which

10. NYS Box 115, Invitations to Nathan, Grace, and Mary Starr.
may be regarded as the rivals of this city, have
spared neither pains nor expence, in erecting ele-
gant and spacious houses of public entertainment,
while strangers, induced by a variety of considera-
tions to reside among us, are actually driven away
by a deficiency of suitable accomodations.11

The Washington Hotel Company was able to purchase a building on
Main Street and convert it into a "House of Entertainment."
Finally, Middletown could compete with the modern facilities
in her "rival" cities. Nathan Starr jr. purchased one share in
the Washington Hotel, which he probably acquired on the advice
of his brother-in-law Henry Carrington, who was one of the hotel's
directors.

Besides pooling their economic resources in time of need,
Middletown's economic elite also united on political issues of
common concern. Following the War of 1812, the economy suffered
a sharp downturn. The British were flooding American markets with
cheap British goods, and underselling American manufacturers. In
response to this state of affairs, a group of local entrepreneurs
formed an organization known as the "Citizens Friendly to American
Manufactures." John L. Lewis, the brother-in-law of George Starr,
chaired the group and Arthur Magill, a local merchant, was secretary.
At a meeting in November of 1819, the organization adopted the
following resolutions:

Resolved, that our Representatives in Congress, the
Governor, members of the Legislature, and all
civil officers of this State...appear hereafter
clothed in Domestic Manufactures.

Resolved,...that in all future elections...we will
support no man who is not friendly to the pro-
tection of the Industry of our Country...

Resolved, that a committee be appointed to ascertain
the state of the Manufactures in this town in
1816, and at the present time.12

11. MHS Box 116, Washington Hotel Contract.
12. MHS Box 115, Minutes of Citizens Friendly to Am. Manufactures
meeting, 11-27-19.
Clearly, this group was interested in exerting political pressure on both state and national levels in order to secure government protection for American-made products. Nathan Starr Jr. was assigned to help 'ascertain the state of the town's manufactures' - a job for which he was well-qualified. As the market system came to dominate men's economic lives, the sources of their financial well-being were gradually removed from the local community, and they were forced to seek economic assistance from higher, impersonal, translocal powers. The common interests of Middletown's economic elite played a key role in their emergence as a fairly cohesive social group. Forced to unite in order to protect their economic viability, it is little wonder that some of them formed close communal bonds as well.

While Nathan Starr Jr. and his son Elihu enjoyed a material well-being that was far superior to that of the average American, they were also faced with socio-economic tensions of a similar calibre. Nathan and Elihu's factory depended upon the acquisition of arms contracts in a highly competitive marketplace, and was thus highly susceptible to the actions of others and external forces completely beyond its control. Let us compare the Starrs' situation with that of the colonial subsistence farmer. The farmer was economically self-sufficient, but had to contend with the forces of nature. If the crop failed, he might starve, but so would all the other farmers who lived near him. Nathan and Elihu's situation was somewhat different. They were not economically self-sufficient, and had to sell a highly specialized product - weapons - to provide for themselves. In this venture, they were competing for buyers with other
arms manufacturers who might try to undersell them or somehow drive them out of the business. For Nathan and Elihu, there was overwhelming temptation to get ahead of the competition in order to protect their own interests. It was this drive and its corresponding fears which led to social tensions of a perhaps unprecedented intensity.

These economically-induced tensions manifested themselves even in the Starrs' kin relationships. Nathan Starr Jr. lived in New York from about 1805 to 1813, where he was a partner in a shipping firm with one William Starr, who may have been his cousin. Their trading operations began to suffer heavy losses during the War of 1812, and Nathan withdrew from the partnership, buying himself out entirely in 1815. Subsequently, however, he found himself being sued for losses which the firm of "N. and W. Starr" had incurred after his withdrawal. William had failed to disassociate his former partner's name from the firm after 1815, and Nathan thus remained liable for the company's debts. In 1818, Nathan sued William and his cousin Ephraim Starr (who was William's "surety") for damages. Some twenty-five years earlier, Timothy Dwight had written in Greenfield Hill,

But should contentions rise, and grudges,
Which call for arbitrating judges,
Still shun the law, that gulph of woe,
Whose waves without a bottom flow:
That gulph, by storms forever toss'd
Where all, that's once afloat, is lost;
Where friends, embark'd, are friends no more,
And neither finds a peaceful shore:
While thousand wrecks, as warnings, lie,
The victims of an angry sky.

Nathan Starr's action against his former partner represents a decisive

12. Their exact relationship to one another is unclear.
break with both Dwight's eighteenth century admonitions and Greenfield Hill's vision of the ideal community. The intra-familial lawsuit is symbolic of both the diffraction of the family and the increasing impersonalization of economic relationships.

This is not to say, however, that intra-familial lawsuits were at all common. Instead, financial problems tended to exacerbate familial tensions in far less dramatic ways. Nathan Starr jr.'s brother-in-law, Ebenezer Townsend, was employed as an agent for the arms factory, and represented Starr before the leading military figures and government contractors of the day. In 1817, Townsend left for New Orleans to set up an earthen-and-glassware shop in the booming riverport, and took a shipment of Starr's cutlasses with him, presumably for private sale. He returned the following letter from New Orleans,

Dear brother,...Your shipment [of cutlasses] by me was hove overboard on our passage—we got on the Bahama banks in a Norther blowing a gale and it became necessary to heave over much of our cargo for the preservation of the remainder—the vessel and our lives—I hope you were insured...16

Unfortunately, Starr was not insured, and a rather tense series of communications followed the incident. Finally, Townsend wrote Starr in May of 1817,

You appear to bear a little on me that your insurance was not effected...I certainly have enough to answer for my own put offs, don't saddle me with any of yours...I am in good health and spirits and wish your success—but don't ship anything to this place.17

Ebenezer put an end to the hostilities by simply refusing to handle any more of Starr's arms. Beyond this incident, he and Nathan seem to have enjoyed a close relationship. In the final analysis, intra-

15. MHS Box 98, see letters written by Eben Townsend to N. Starr jr.
16. MHS Box 98, Letter written by Eben Townsend to N. Starr jr., 1-4-17.
17. MHS Box 98, Letter written by Eben Townsend to N. Starr jr., 5-16-17.
Familial business dealings were not necessarily detrimental to affective bonds, but they certainly had the potential to wreak havoc on what were otherwise mutually beneficent social relationships.

Nathan Starr jr. was not always the 'innocent victim,' however, when it came to his financial struggles. When a branch of the Bank of the United States was established in Middletown in 1817, Starr and a number of his business cronies - including Henry Carrington, Arthur Magill, and Simeon North (another local arms manufacturer) - secured directorships. Magill was appointed cashier, and soon began to practice some rather unorthodox lending policies. Starr and a small group of Magill's friends were allowed to borrow about $50,000 on illegally extended credit until, the Bank discovered the infraction in 1820. Magill was spirited off to the New Haven jail, and the bank demanded immediate repayment of the loan. It was at this point that Starr blundered, for he went ahead and paid his share of the debt, $20,000, while his associates defaulted. As a cosignor for the entire sum, he continued to be liable, in part, for the amount still outstanding. The Bank of the United States took Starr and his partners to court, and a grim, political struggle ensued. Nathan Starr jr. was a leading Middletown Jeffersonian, and had served as a representative to the state legislature in 1817-18. The President of the Middletown branch of the B.U.S. was Enoch Parsons, an arch-Federalist, and he took advantage of this situation to turn the screws on Starr and his Jeffersonian associates. While Starr was on a business trip in Washington in 1823 one of his co-defendants, 18. NHS Box 105, List of elected directors for the office of discounts and deposits at the Middletown branch of the B.U.S., 7-11-17.
Joshua Stow, wrote him:

if you can find access to Wm. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, pray tell him that of all the evils sent upon a people who have just gained a victory over their political enemies, that of having a monied institution headed and governed by such a man as Parsons, I say of all evils this is the worst. 19

Starr was unable to depose Parsons, and the Bank proceeded to seize his property in order to cover his debt. In June of 1823, Starr wrote Parsons,

I do not ask the Bank to let go any hold they now have on my property, but only that they will not molest my future earnings. I cannot conceive any possible reason why my request should not be granted unless indeed the Bank intend by coercive measures to secure from me my last shilling and beggar my family. 20

The Bank continued to financially harass Starr until 1827, when Parsons sent him an unsettling ultimatum:

The board of directors of this office came to a resolution yesterday, expressive of the opinion that the real estate in Middletown, sett off to the Bank, be sold as soon as maybe, and that, that part of it, which belongs to you, be offered sold to you at the appraisement if you desire it. 21

In a rage, Nathan Starr penned in "Satan's" and "Old Splitfoot's Letter" on the back of this epistle. 22 For Starr, it was a moment of financial panic, for Parsons held the mortgage on the factory and was threatening to sell it on the open market. The Middletown land records for 1827 indicate that, on December 15th, Nathan's brother-in-law Elihu Townsend "sold" him the factory and fifty-eight acres on Staddle Hill for one dollar. 23 Townsend came to the rescue and bought Starr's factory back from the B.U.S... Nathan probably repaid Elihu at some future date, but had it not been for

19. MHS Box 105, Letter written by J. Stow to N. Starr Jr., 2-11-23.
20. MHS Box 105, Letter written by N. Starr Jr. to E. Parsons, 6-10-23.
21. MHS Box 105, Letter written by E. Parsons to N. Starr Jr., 8-24-27.
22. ibid
his brother-in-law's timely intervention the history of the 
Starr Arms Factory might have ended right there and then. Liti-
gation in the B.U.S. case continued until 1831, when Starr re-
covered twelve thousand dollars in damages from one of his for-
mer partners, Arthur Magill. This ten-year delay was precipitated
by the fact that, after his release from the New Haven jail, 
Magill had sought 'financial refuge' in the wilds of western
New York, and it was some time before the authorities managed
to track him down. 24 Nathan Starr jr. borrowed funds illegally
in order to expand his business operations and keep up with his
competition. It seems unlikely that he was a hapless dupe in the
whole affair - as a director of the office of discounts and de-
posits, he must have known the lending regulations. The pressures
and temptations of the market system led him into a deal which
consumed more than a decade's worth of lawyer's fees and profited
him nothing.

Ultimately, the Starr Arms Factory fell victim not to the
financial caprice of its owners, but to a dramatic decrease in
the demand for privately manufactured weapons. The turning point
for Nathan and Elihu's business came in 1845, when the government
stopped issuing private arms contracts and began directing all of
their business to the Federal armories at Springfield and Harper's
Ferry. In the face of this crisis, private arms manufacturers
banded together in protest. As early as 1842, Elihu Starr had
corresponded on the subject with the New Haven arms manufacturer
Eli Whitney jr.. In September Whitney wrote Starr,

I...am almost of your opinion that Govt intend to

break up private contract for arms or to whittle us down in price to the lowest ebb...Please write me if you have heard...anything that may throw light upon our way in this business.25

The two men collaborated extensively and tried to influence developments in Washington, but their prospects grew progressively dimmer. When word finally came that all future arms contracts were to be directed to the Federal armories, Starr and his fellow contractors wrote letters to Washington in protest. Elihu received the following reply from S.D. Hubbard in January of 1846:

There is a strong feeling among many [of us] against national works and a decided preference for having all government work executed by individual contractors...Should war with England grow out of the present difficulties the government would be under the necessity of employing you.26

War with England never materialized, and Elihu was forced to turn to the manufacture of plane irons to keep the factory afloat. The business remained in the Starrs' possession until 1864, when the factory and the Staddle Hill property were sold to Henry G. Hubbard for five thousand dollars.27 After the sale, Elihu was employed in Middletown as a "Notary Public, Conveyancer, Insurance, and Real Estate Agent."28 The forces of political and economic change which had helped produce the family's manufacturing success in 1813 returned in the 1860s to sweep it away. The Starrs were by no means ruined, but the major source of their prosperity was now destroyed, and Elihu's sons had to seek their livings in more traditional, white-collar occupations.

25. MHS Box 106, Letter written by E. Whitney to E. Starr, 9-21-42.
28. MHS Box 108, Elihu Starr's business card.
William and Henry Starr became bank employees, and Frank Starr was self-employed as a professional genealogist. After the collapse of the arms business, the Starrs experienced a turn of downward mobility, and could no longer count themselves among Middletown's financial 'super-elite.'

The material affluence which Nathan and Elihu Starr enjoyed combined with the translocal, impersonal nature of their economic activities played a major role in defining their experiences of community. The Starrs' economic interests fostered social interests which were not shared by many of their fellow Middletowners, and these interests combined to prescribe the form which their 'concentric spheres' of communal experience took. In the 1830s, Nathan Starr bought a mansion and moved up the hill to High Street. Soon after, his son Elihu purchased a fourteen-room home on Mount Vernon Street. Not only were these nineteenth century mansions manifestations of the Starrs' economic well-being, but they stood as signs that Nathan and Elihu were somehow 'different' from the rest of the community. Both Nathan and Elihu formally socialized with a group that represented Middletown's economic elite, and their affective ties were increasingly defined along lines of superior financial status. Middletown was still a home for their affective family and kinship ties, but it also became a home for their enemies. Nathan Starr probably dreaded the thought of meeting Enoch Parsons on the street. Conversely, he enjoyed a warm relationship with his wife's relatives in New Haven, and shared affective bonds with other individuals in a translocal sphere. True to Bender's argument, the town was still the "most

30. MHS Box 108, newspaper clippings re: sale of Starr property.
important" source of community in the early nineteenth century, but it was no longer "exclusive" in this respect. Middletown offered Nathan and Elihu Starr a significantly rarefied spectrum of satisfying social relationships, and their local affective bonds were supplemented with ties that transcended the city limits.

The reader will recall Bender's argument that nineteenth century local life provided individuals with a "stronger sense of community identity." This generalization must be questioned in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The historical evidence suggests that those communal identifications which were enhanced in the nineteenth century tended to fall in areas like politics, where one's communal identifications did not encompass the whole community, but rather a significant part of it. Secondly, it must be said that the evolution of differentiated spheres of communal experience combined with the forces of modernization and self-interest worked significantly against the development of strong communal identifications.

The Starrs' political activities provide us with a glimpse into the way in which communal identifications were enhanced, in a very polarized sense, in nineteenth century Middletown. Early in life, Nathan Starr Jr. became a Jeffersonian Republican. The Republican party was a political response, in many respects, to the breakdown of community in American life. By 1800, the cities and towns which comprised the State of Connecticut were already divided into differentiated communal spheres, yet the Federalist Standing Order ruled as if to deny this, disinheriting those who did not adhere to Congregationalist conservatism. The Jeffersonians wanted
to confront this breakdown of community realistically, and allow dissenting factions an equal voice in the democratic franchise.

The Connecticut Republicans called their platform the "toleration ticket," and they were motivated by a considerable amount of idealism. In 1829, Republican governor Gideon Tomlinson wrote Nathan Starr jr. and reminisced about their early days as political radicals,

Your allusion to the commencement of our friendship enlivens the recollection of a period when we were engaged in our arduous struggle to secure equal rights and the free operation of democratic principles. Having avoided republican principles before my collegiate education was finished, I have steadily and perseveringly exercised the rights of a freeman in maintaining them, as exhibited in the several administrations which have...followed the great triumph of principle that elevated Jefferson to the Presidential chair. I was, however, like the patriots with whom I acted...the object of severe denunciation. You and I, and our republican friends, I trust have not forgotten the power of the party with which we had to contend nor the many modes in which it was brought to bear...[upon us]...

It was my lot when studying my profession to see a respected and beloved father who held a commission in the army of the revolution, after he had been a prisoner in New York and subjected to wanton deprivation and severe sufferings, arraigned before the legislature of the state whose independence he had assisted to achieve, for the offense of joining in the republican convention, at New Haven in the year 1804...found guilty of that free and public expression of his deliberate and honest opinion...[He was] diminished from the office of a justice of the peace, in company with other independent republicans.

...With such a recollection of that trial and the punishment thus inflicted for announcing opinions...it was to me no inconsiderable satisfaction as a member of the Convention of Delegates elected by the people of this state, in the year 1818, to join in their almost unanimous declaration of the [Federalists' injustice]...31

Tomlinson alludes to the Jeffersonians' Connecticut victory and the rewriting of the State Constitution in 1818, when church

31. mhs Box 93, Letter written by G. Tomlinson to N. Starr jr., 1-3-29.
and state were definitively separated. This political transformation marked the state's clean break with her Congregationalist, Federalist-dominated past. Interestingly, Tomlinson waited until he had finished college before he publicly expressed his Jeffersonian sentiments. Had he done otherwise, the Federalists might have nipped his legal career in the bud. The Standing Order was at once a powerful and frightening force with which to contend. This is not to say, however, that Nathan Starr's political beliefs were entirely grounded in selfless idealism. He was also on the lookout for political favors. Starr became an early supporter of Andrew Jackson, and this undoubtedly had something to do with the fact that Jackson was a leading military figure. A militaristic national government could mean bigger and better contracts for the Starr Arms Factory. Occasionally, the Starrs' political connections paid off. In 1841, Elihu Starr was appointed postmaster in Middletown by the Postmaster General John M. Niles. Niles was an old friend and close political associate of Nathan Starr Jr.

In Community and Social Change in America, Bender writes that, as political parties developed, politics were transformed from "a warm local political culture" to a "cold bureaucratic one." The Starr family papers reflect the beginnings of this transformation. In 1820, Nathan Starr's Hartford friend Ebenezer Barnard complained,

> I am not altogether pleased...with the scrambling for offices, also with many appointments, the loaves and fishes seems to be the primary object, - whilst that Amor Patria, is not discernable, by your old friend.

Despite this bureaucratic greed, however, political life in Mid-

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33. Thomas Bender, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
34. MHS Box 94, Letter written by E. Barnard to N. Starr jr., 5-29-20.
dllestone in the early 1800s does seem to have provided a focus for people's communal identifications. In 1836, Elihu Starr was appointed a "vigilant" of the Middletown Democratic-Republican Party and instructed to "use his best endeavors to induce all the DEMOCRATIC voters, in his...School District, to attend the polls, at all future elections, within the ensuing year."\(^{35}\) Starr's political interests thus compelled him to take an interest in the local community, and he made social contact with individuals with whom he did not normally associate. This kind of contact was not a communal experience in the strict sense of the word, but it was a way in which individuals became familiar with new faces in an increasingly atomized society. While Nathan and Elihu's political convictions alienated them from men like Enoch Parsons, they also provided father and son with both an identification and a stake in local life. Significantly, the roots of this enhanced communal identification in the nineteenth century lay in the divisive forces of factionalism.

The financial success of Nathan Starr, Jr. and his son Elihu was the end product of two centuries of social mobility, and their social experiences reflected a stage in the evolution and modernization of communal life in Middletown. Throughout the Starr family's history, family and kinship ties played a key role in determining the individual's capacity for vertical mobility. For those who were horizontally mobile, the abundance or lack of productive social ties often determined the difference between success and failure. Throughout the family's history, the Starrs' family and kinship ties also remained central to individual experiences of

\(^{35}\) MHS Box 117, Letter written by E. Chamberlain to E. Starr, 3-19-36.
community. Between 1700 and 1800, the Middletown Starrs evolved into a semi-atomized, socio-economically and geographically differentiated group of families, each with its own patriarch. Each one of these families developed its own kinship network, often drawing upon relationships established by past generations, and these networks continued to provide family members with the core of communal experience. Beyond the family, however, the Starrs' experiences of community were gradually infused with uncertainties, and became less satisfying in their totality. With modernization and democracy came increased social autonomy, and individual freedoms were emphasized above and beyond mutual, communal responsibilities. In the seventeenth century, the Starrs' economic lives and their affective ties were contained within the Middletown community, and they were united with their fellow townspeople in a common spiritual bond. This spiritual unity transcended many differences, and people shared in a common sense of communal obligation. In nineteenth century Middletown, however, the Starrs' economic interests propelled them into translocal relationships, and their affective ties were no longer anchored in Middletown alone. As notions of individuality and secular self-interest began to supplant beliefs in spiritual commonality and communal obligations, social tensions both within and without the family were exacerbated. Middletown still contained the vestiges of seventeenth century communal life, but they were swiftly vanishing as the city's social structure was radically redefined. In many ways, the individual's family and kin were his only bulwark against the new and bewildering array of social interactions which this transformation entailed. As he reflected on a religious career which spanned over
a half-century, Middletown's Congregationalist Minister Enoch Huntington penned in his diary in 1805-06,

The peculiarity and obliquity of the times in which I have lived, have been attended with evils and temptations and produced changes and effects of very uncommon kinds. All societies and kingdoms on earth must fall...All the inhabitants of the earth must die out of it...

When I first came to Middletown...I found the circumstances of the place, and [the people's] union and political happiness under the conduct of their leading characters, who had, and very highly deserved their fullest confidence. However I soon perceived a spirit of ambition for rule...which could never be gratified, till it should obtain the place of the leading characters which were in its way...It is the very spirit of pride and ambition that seeks, for its own gratification, to overturn everything in its way...Nothing but the interposition of Heaven will arrest it...

This I know will be done in God's time, which is the best time. 36

In his old age, Huntington wished for a resurrection of that time when life was simpler and men were united in social and spiritual harmony, but the wheels of progress were working against him. As the forces of social mobility and modernization exerted both internal and external pressures on the Middletown community, the Starrs were transported from a world of spiritual brotherhood and commonality to one increasingly marked by social atomization and secular concerns.

36. Enoch Huntington, Diaries, entries for 12-26-05 and 5-30-06.
PLAN OF MAIN STREET, MIDDLETOWN, SHOWING THE BUILDINGS AND OCCUPANTS, FROM ABOUT 1710 TO 1715.

(By Joseph Barlow, M. D., Middletown, Sept. 1856.)

(From Barber's Historical Collections, p. 508)

Copied from Albert Van Dusen, Middletown and the American Revolution

* First mayor of the city, 1781. 1 Built by H. Rowan, a tinner. 1 Built by Gilse Hall.
2 Built in 1698; afterwards occupied by Wesley Hobdy, the first postmaster in the town: the post office was kept where he resided.
3 Mr. Fuller was a schoolmaster, minister, constable, storekeeper, and kept taverns about 6 months.
4 The office of town clerk of Middletown has been in this family 143 years.
5 Gen. Washington put up at this tavern.
6 The letter a, at the head of Main Street, shows the spot, or very near it, where the first meeting house was erected. 6, town house.
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FOOTNOTE ABBREVIATIONS

MHSBox = Manuscript Box, Middlesex Historical Society.
MPC Records = Records, Middletown Probate Court.