AMERICAN SOCIAL HISTORY: A STUDY OF THE RICH IN THE CITY OF MIDDLETOWN IN 1860

WHAT DID THEY HAVE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER?

A. Who were they? Birthplace, age, number of children, marital status, number of servants

B. Where did they live?

C. What were their sources of wealth? Did they have similar occupations? Were they born into wealth? How quickly did they accumulate their wealth?

D. How did they spend their money? House? Land? Other investments?

E. To whom and in what fashion did they will their money?

F. In what activities did they partake? Religious, political, social, other

G. How much did they associate with the other men in their financial strata?

Before I proceed to answer the above questions, I would like to make the reader aware of the multiple sources of error inherent in this study.

Many of the indicators I have chosen to employ may be misleading and result in incorrect conclusions. I have undoubtedly omitted looking at such sources which might have yielded information greater in quantity as well as better in quality and accuracy. Examples of the latter might include social club and church membership lists, society columns in the newspapers, earlier published biographies, customer lists at various clothiers, etc. I am willing to admit that the absence of some of these documents in my paper may be due to my ignorance of their where-
about and my failure in the role of Sherlock Holmes. I believe, however, that most of these papers, if they have ever existed, have long been destroyed - a problem all too often encountered by historical researchers.

Access to the abovementioned sources would not have guaranteed a reliable study, availability of source materials being only one of many problems.

I had neither the time nor the proper resources to study a far better, albeit more extensive question - Did the rich of Middletown constitute more than an economic class? Were they a distinct social class? This would have entailed a study of the lives of less wealthy Middletown citizens in order to determine how they differed (if they did) from their more affluent counterparts. I suspect that some of the similarities I have discovered among the Middletown rich might have been found in the same degree among the less wealthy.

Furthermore, my study has dealt with individuals rather than groups. On the plus side, delving into the pasts of actual people can be much more exciting than the study of mere numbers. At times I felt almost as if I knew the individuals personally. On the darker side, however, there was frustration on end. What happened to Simeon Tacoll before and after the 1859 Tax Assessment man came around? Did he die? Did he move? After appearing in the 1838 tax records where did Charles Seton mosey off to, only to reappear in the 1860 census? Did James G. Baldwin (1835) = Jesse G. Baldwin (1850)? In addition, it was unfortunate (both for me and them) that only 15 of my 35 subjects were not distinguished
enough to qualify for a write-up in Middlesex Commemorative Biographies. Probable the greatest source of error in this paper will be the varying amounts of information I was able to collect on each of the 35 individuals and the extrapolation I had to do in result.

Finally, and undoubtedly of most importance, as far as unreliability is concerned, is the nature of any study which attempts to analyze conditions of the past using standards of the present. Perhaps living on Main Street was not really an indicator of prestige, but rather of more importance was how often one travelled on the railroad. Perhaps similar evening entertainment was a stronger common link among the Middletown rich than the degree of political involvement. I regret that I was not able to be more selective in choosing indicators, and this was due to their scarcity.

Enough apologies.

THE MIDDLETOWN RICH OF 1860

A. Who were they?

They were 33 men and 2 women from the City of Middletown who estimated the combined value of their real estate and personal property to be over $25,000. I drew the line at $25,000 because too few people were worth more than $30,000 and too many to handle with comfort were worth more than $20,000.

Of the 35, twenty were born in Connecticut, seven were from the surrounding New England states (Vt., N.H., R.I., Mass.), three
were from New York, one was born in Pennsylvania, one from England, and one was born in Ireland.

Their age range was very broad with no specific age ranking high above the others. The youngest was 28; the oldest was 93.

- Of the 35, 30 were living with their wives, two were widowers, two were widows, and one was a bachelor.

- In 1860, seven (or 20% of the whole group) had no children living with them. Fourteen (40%) had three or less children living with them; fourteen (40%) had four or more, and of these, nine (26%) had more than five children living at home.

- Twenty-five (71%) of the 35 had at least one servant; fifteen (43%) had two or more servants; ten (29%) had three or more servants.

B. Where did they live?

Below are two lists of addresses. The first list contains the addresses of my subjects; the second is the addresses
of a random group of people, chosen because their name began with the letter "W". You will notice that the first list does not contain the full 35. This is because the earliest City Directory that I was able to locate was from 1868. By this time some of the 35 had died or moved away from Middletown.

I.

Alsop, Charles - 100 Washington St.
Baldwin, Jesse - 41 Broad St.
Blake, John - 201 Main St.
Camp, William - 69 Broad St.
Chase, Daniel - 293 Main St.
Colton, Henry - 142 High St.
Douglas, Benjamin - 90 S. Main St.
Griffin, M.H. - 'Spring St. corner Prospect St.
Hakstaff, William - Main St. corner St. John's Sq.
Hochkiss, Julius - 96 S. Main St.
Hubbard, Charles - 62 Broad St.
Hubbard, Gaston - 43 Broad St.
Hubbard, Henry - Union St. corner Crescent St.
Hurlburt, Samuel - 80 College St.
Johnson, Edwin - 185 Main St.
Kilbourne, Jonathan - 89 S. Main St.
Lewis, Elijah - 36 S. Main St.
Lucas, Elijah - 25 S. Main St.
Parshley, Anthony - 55 Main St.
Parsons, Samuel - 20 Main St.
Pike, Robert - 8 College St.
Russell, E.A. - 160 High St.
Russell, Samuel - 178 High St.
Southmayd, Alfred - 63 Court St.
Stearns, Samuel - 45 Broad St.
Watkinson, John - 54 Main St.
White, Henry - 13 Hamlin St.

II.

Ward, Henry - 73 Court St.
Ward, H.W. - 112 High St.
Ward, John - 1 Bailey St. (mackmack)
Ward, Merrell - 90 S. Main St. (mannmann)
Ward, William Mrs. - 56 Union St.
Ward, William - 62 Court St. (clawk)
Warner, Julius - 57 William St. (mackmack)
Warner, Samuel - 117 Main St. (laujau)
Warner, Wells - 30 Ferry St. (mack)
Warner, William - 8 Warwick St. (mackmack)
Waterman, William - Washington St. corner Hill St. (mack)
Watkinson, John - 34 Main St. (Clark prawwright)
Webber, George - 15 Chase Ave.
Webster, Frederick - High St. corner Court St.
Weeks, Daniel - 6 Ferry St.  (Coal Dealer)
Welch, James - 30 Sumner St.  (Bakery)
Welch, Martin - 10 Union St.  (Stonecutter)
Welch, Thomas - 16 N. Main St.  (Labourer)
Wells, Edward - 40 Union St.  (Merchant)
Wells, Elizabeth - 13 Broad St.
Wells, George - 97 Main St.  (Every Stable)
Wells, G.H. - 13 Broad St.  (Student)
Wells, William - 20 Liberty St.  (Tradesman)
Welsh, Martin - 2 Green St.  (Engineer)
Welsh, Morris - 2 Green St.  (Labourer)

Using the street guide printed in the Directory which lists exactly where one street crosses another, I was able to plot on a map of Middletown where the two groups lived:
C. What were their sources of wealth?

Of the 35 men (the women were listed simply as widows),

- lawyers - 1
- physicians - 1
- teachers - 2
- farmers - 1
- civil engineers - 1
- merchants - 6
- manufacturers - 9
- gentlemen - 7 (This group generally consisted of financiers, bank directors, mayors, those who had retired)
- contractors - 1
- bankers - 3
- sea captains - 1

How many of these men were born into wealth?

This was very difficult to determine because of limited access to information about these men's private lives. Even in the fifteen cases where biographical material was available, rarely was there any mention made about money. The only helpful information was father's occupation as well as whether the individual attended district schools or academies. I looked at tax assessments of 1835 and 1838, but was reluctant to classify the individual as coming from wealth or poverty. Modest holdings next to man's name might have meant that money and property were still being listed under his father's name; in many cases I did not know who the father was.

Of the original 35, I was able to determine the background of only 20. Of these, I found that 13 could be classified as not having been born into wealth while the remaining seven could be listed as having easier beginnings. (And hardly very wealthy parents.)

Rate of Accumulation

Originally I had planned on examining the development of
each man's wealth by looking at tax assessments through the years.
The first obstacle I encountered was that I only had five
years of these records at my disposal ('35, '38, '50, '55, '59).
Many of the people I was studying could only be found on one
or two of the records. Holdings that had been entered in one
year were often nonexistent in later years. I was unable
to trace any consistent development over time because of this.
In addition, I was unable to account for the depreciations
I found in the records because of my unfamiliarity with
economic conditions at that time or any of the tax rules.
All speculation was virtually impossible.

D. How did they spend their money?

Below is a duplication of the Middletown Tax Assessments
from Oct. 1, 1859:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Cash</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1-6,000</td>
<td>$1-100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-10,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-5,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-10,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-15,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-20,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-25,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-30,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-35,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-40,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-45,000</td>
<td>$1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Money in hand ($1,000)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
<th>Fifth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- First: 10-15
- Second: 20-25
- Third: 30-35
- Fourth: 40-45
- Fifth: 50-55
Visible Similarities:

1. Originally, I had planned to use this chart to determine what percentage of total wealth was invested in real estate. After glancing at the estimation of real estate value in the 1860 census, I realized that in almost all cases real estate value in the census surpassed that given in the tax assessments. There may be two reasons for this. Either the men took pride in overestimating their wealth to "sound good" but when it came to pay taxes they became truthful. More likely, however, is the possibility that each of these men owned land and houses that was not within Middletown lines and was therefore not taxed.

2. Out of the 34 individuals listed, 17 or 50% had a musical instrument; 17 (50%) owned time pieces or jewelery worth over $50.

3. Twenty-two (65%) of the people owned some sort of vehicle or pleasure wagon.

4. Bank insurance and manufacturing stock was by far the most popular form of investment with 16 (47%) of the individuals listing some ownership.

5. Eighteen (53%) owned household furnishings worth over $200.

E. To whom and in what fashion did they will their money?

Of the 17 wills I was able to locate in the Probate Court, seven of the individuals willed everything to their wives; the other ten left their wife the estate and some money, and
willed the rest to their children, grandchildren, nephews, and nieces.

F. In what activities did they participate?

1. Church Activities:

With the exception of one deacon and one president of the board of trustees, there was no mention in either of the published biographies of active church involvement.

Church membership did not seem to be concentrated in any one church. The fifteen men written up in the biographies were members of the following churches: Episcopal, Baptist, Universalist, Methodist, Swedenborgian, and Congregationalist. There was mention made of some of these men donating land for the church guild.

2. Social

The sources I used to trace club membership were the published biographies as well as the published accounts of commemorative exercises of various clubs. There was one member of the Sons of the Revolution, one member of both St. John's Lodge and the Day Spring Lodge, and five members of the Conversational Club.

3. Political

Political activity among the 33 men was quite extensive with at least 19 (58%) holding some form of political office at one time in their life. Membership seemed to be equally divided between the Democratic and Republican party.

The ticket of the city election of 1860 contained the
names of nine of the men (out of a possible 30 slots)

The following is a list of offices held by the nineteen men:

Russell, Samuel - State Senator, presidential elector, General Assembly Representative
Griffin, M.H. - Alderman, Councilman
Chase, Daniel - State Legislature Representative, General Assembly Representative
Pike, Robert - Chairman of the Republican Committee, Common Council
Hotchkiss, Julius - Congressional Representative, Lieutenant Governor
Baldwin, Jess - Candidate (?) on anti-slavert ticket
Douglas, Benjamin - Presidential Elector, Lieutenant Governor, member of the General Assembly, Mayor
Kilbourne, Jonathan - Member of the Common Council
Alsop, Charles - State Senator, mayor
Johnson, Edwin - State Senator, mayor
Russell, E.A. - mayor, Representative to the State Legislature, delegate to the National Convention
Hubbard, Charles - Member of General Assembly
Parsons, Samuel - Member of the General Assembly
Watkinson, John - Member of the General Assembly
Hubbard, Samuel - Mayor
Hackstaff, William - Councilman
Southmayd, Alfred - mayor, Councilman
Camp, William - Councilman
Hubbard, John - Councilman
Dana, Samuel (late husband of Anna Maria) - Mayor

4. Other

a. Bank involvement - I was not quite sure where this category belonged, but of 15 men mentioned in the Biographies, seven were in some way involved with a Middletown Bank (trustee, president, director, president of board of trustees) and in most cases, more than one bank.

b. Middlesex County Orphans Home -

Seven of the men were involved in its incorporation; nine of their wives were listed as associate incorporators.

c. Middlesex County Agricultural Society membership held thirteen out of the 35 names (37%).
G. How much did they associate with the other men in their financial strata?

From the material I had access to, I discovered that a few of the men, far few than I would have thought, had personal contact with each other in family as well as business enterprises:

1. Hubbard, Henry -
   a. Entered into the dry goods business with Jesse Baldwin
   b. Manager of Russell Manufacturing Co., established by Samuel Russell.
   c. His daughter was the wife of Samuel Russell's grandson.

2. Griffin, M.H. - He bought his house from Robert Johnson.

3. Chase, Daniel - His daughter married the son of Benjamin Douglas.

   b. He did sales work for Jesse Baldwin.

5. Russell, Samuel -
   a. Started his career in Alsop's father's store.
   b. His grandson married Henry Hubbard's daughter.
   c. William Camp and John Watkinson were the executors of his will.


7. Douglas, Benjamin -
   a. His son married the daughter of Daniel Chase.
   b. His brother married the granddaughter of Robert Johnson.

7. Samuel Stearns - Samuel Hurlburt was the executor of his will.

8. Maria, Dana - Her daughter married Charles Alsop.

9. Colton, Henry - Benjamin Douglas was the executor of his will.
H. Miscellaneous fact and figures:

1. In any Middletown newspaper in the year 1860, one might find at least nine out of the 35 names mentioned in one of the advertisements (26%).

2. The wealthiest man in my study, Samuel Russell, made some of his profit by running opium from India to China. (Samuel Wadsworth Russell: A Study in Orderly Investment by Alain Munnikitrik, Wesleyan thesis)

3. Nine out of the 30 (30%) family names in my study were also the names of streets in the City of Middletown in the late 1800s.
After almost two months of doing research which entailed having my clothes soiled from crumbling book covers, having my lungs ruined from breathing in age old dust, and having my patience taxed by the archives room lady who insisted on making sure (every five minutes) that I was not mishandling the History of Middlesex County, I regret to say that my work has yielded very inconclusive findings.

Of course, the wealthy of Middletown did have some things in common. (I might point out, at this time, that I am not even sure whether these people were the "wealthy" of Middletown. Perhaps it would have been more correct to title the paper "A Study of the Richer in Middletown". Although $25,000 was probably a respectable sum in those days, it should be of some significance that ten of the people who fell into the "above $25,000" category were only there by virtue of the high value of their real estate. Perhaps these people had inherited the land or bought it when it was much cheaper). At any rate, these people did seem to have some things in common. Most impressive, as far as percentage figures are concerned, is the amount of political involvement of the men. This political elitism is not surprising. Many of these men were manufacturers who had established their own factories and already maintained positions of power; many other of the men were Main St. merchants and were very well known among the town people. In addition, most of the men who were politically active came from old Middletown families.
These 35 people seemed to have large families; they lived close to each other (although, as my map shows, so did everyone else); many of them had established ties between themselves (although this is hardly surprising in a town with a population under 6000). On the whole, I found no overwhelming similarities among the thirty-five. Why?

A perfectly good answer might be that none existed, that the wealthy people of Middletown were a heterogeneous group, distinguishable only by virtue of the value of their property.

Another answer which I would be more likely to believe, is that these 35 people did not really belong in the same group. As I mentioned before, there were those who qualified only because of their real estate holdings (such as Samuel Hurlbut who estimated his real estate as being worth $27,000 and his personal property to be worth $1,000). These people would very likely have different backgrounds than those such as Benjamin Douglas, who estimated his real estate at $15,000 and his personal property at $80,000. Furthermore, I wonder how sound it was to place two people such as Gaston Hubbard ($29,000) or John Blake ($50,000) in the same category as Samuel Russell ($350,000) or Henry Hubbard ($200,000). Perhaps it would have been wiser as well as more lucrative, as far as tangible results are concerned, to have studied the wealthiest people in Middletown over a period of fifty years.

This is not to say that I view my study with negative feelings. The detective work which was part of the research was both rewarding and fun. There is something quite exhilarating about
working with primary sources that date from over a century ago, finding out about different facets of a man's life who was born over 150 years ago, and then trying to form some sort of hypotheses. That these hypotheses were not quite as plentiful as I had hoped, does not in any way, at least, in my eyes, invalidate the experience of working on a project such as this one.
LIST OF 35 SUBJECTS:

1. ALSOP, CHARLES
2. BACON, NATHANIEL
3. BALDWIN, JESSE
4. BLAKE, JOHN
5. COITE, GABRIEL
6. COLTON, HENRY
7. DANA, MARIA
8. CAMP, WILLIAM
9. CHASE, DANIEL
10. DOUGLAS, BENJAMIN
11. DOUGLAS, CATHERINE
12. HOTCHKISS, JULIUS
13. HUBBARD, CHARLES
14. HUBBARD, GASTON
15. HUBBARD, HENRY
16. HUBBARD, JOHN
17. HURLBUT, SAMUEL
18. HACKSTAFF, WILLIAM
19. GRIFFIN, W. L.
20. JOHNSON, EDWIN
21. JOHNSON, ROBERT
22. KILBOURNE, JONATHAN
23. LEWIS, ELIJAH
24. LUCAS, ELIJAH
25. PARSHLEY, ANTHONY
26. PARSONS, SAMUEL
27. PIKE, ROBERT
28. RUSSELL, E. A.
29. RUSSELL, SAMUEL
30. SOUTHMAYD, ALFRED
31. STEARNS, SAMUEL
32. WATKINSON, JOHN
33. WHITE, HENRY
34. WYSE, JOHN
35. HUBBARD, SAMUEL

These 35 are:

1) 67% of the entire Middletown City population of 1860 (5,192)

2) 2,6% of the working population of Middletown City (1,343)

3) 5.7% of all those living in the City of Middletown claiming more than $45 in real estate or personal property.
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2. Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County, Conn., Beers and Co., N.Y., 1903

3. Published Census of the City of Middletown, 1860

4. Wills of Citizens of Middletown, Probate Court, Middletown

5. The Middletown Constitution, 1859 - 1863

6. The Sentinel and Witness, 1859 - 1863

7. Tax Assessment Records - 1835, 1838, 1850, 1855, 1859

8. Faithful Remnants: Church of the Holy Trinity 1727 - 1874, Compiled by Mrs. Louis Eugene Richter

9. Constitution By-Laws of the Middlesex County Agricultural Society, Middletown, 1845

10. Club Notes, Conversational Club of Middletown, 1880

11. Commemorative Exercises of the 150th Anniversary of St. John's Lodge, no.2, Middletown, 1904

12. City Directory of Middletown, 1863, 1900