

The Family Bible of John² Wood of Middletown, Rhode Island: Its History and Contents

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Editor's Note: Records of births, marriages, and deaths written down in family Bibles are important sources of genealogical information often not available elsewhere. From time to time, the genealogical contents of such family Bibles have been printed in the Register; the usual course in such instances is to devote a relatively short section to the owners and provenance of the Bible in question before moving on to its contents. In this case, however, the emphasis is on that provenance, the history of this Bible's passage from hand to hand, place to place, and circumstance to circumstance.

The Wood Family Bible^[1]

This book, entitled *The Holy Bible in Sculpture*, was printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Paul's Church Yard in 1683.^[2] The book itself tells a colorful story, even before making its way to the Colonies. The publisher, Moses Pitt of Oxford, developed his business to become one of the largest booksellers in England in the late seventeenth century. He sold Bibles in three different qualities, and customers could pick and choose what they wished to include in their binding. Success in the 1670s led him to embark on a series of interrelated projects, including a large property speculation in Westminster, and taking over the printing office of Oxford University. These projects eventually demanded far more capital than Pitt had available and in 1685 he was forced to sell much of his remaining book stock in two auctions, marking the end of his publishing activities. Some of these auctioned Bibles made their way for resale to the colonies. Pitt's arrest for debt followed in 1689, and he remained in prison until shortly before his death eight years later.^[3]

¹ In this study, the land records of Middletown, Rhode Island were used to support and confirm the Bible records. Using these land ownership records it was possible to document how the family homestead, and hand-in-hand the 1683 family Bible, made their way through seven generations over the course of more than 200 years (followed by another four generations and 100 years off the homestead). The custodians of the family Bible over its history, who for most of that history have also been the owners of the Middletown property, are indicated with consecutively numbered square brackets ([1], [2], etc.), beginning with its first known owner [1] John² Wood.

² *The Holy Bible in Sculpture or The History's mentioned in the Old and New Testament lively represented in copper cutts*. London: Printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Paul's Church Yard 1683 At whose said shop Bibles Testaments and Common-Prayers in all Volumes are to be Sold that are printed at the Theater in Oxford.

³ Michael Harris, *Economics of the British Book Trade 1605-1939*, Publishing History, Occasional Series I, ed. R. Myers and M. Harris (Cambridge, 1985), 176-208 [hereafter Harris, *Economics of the British Book Trade*]. P. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkoopers bij de Beurs: de geschiedenis van de*

The Wood family Bible was probably sold at one of these auctions. It was not one of Pitt's highest quality books and had been pieced together from remaining stocks—a New Testament from 1683, a Colophon from 1670, and a Concordance from 1668, bound together in one volume. From an inscription on the inside cover, we know that John Wood of Middletown, Rhode Island was the owner in 1701. For more than two hundred years, this Bible would be held by those descendants who lived on the Wood family farm in Middletown.

The Wood Family in Middletown

The Wood family farm in Middletown, Rhode Island was purchased by John¹ Wood of Portsmouth, Rhode Island (d. by 1655). John Wood first appears in the records of Newport in 1643 when he was accused of trespass.^[4] Around 1646, John Wood bought fifty acres “at the Heritage alias Middletown” from Robert Jeffryes; at the same time the town granted him eight adjacent acres for a total of 58 acres. The colonial record immediately following shows “Nuport” granting John Wood additional land in the town, bounded by “Weedens land, the highway [*sic*] and the Common.”^[5] John Wood was made a freeman of the town of Portsmouth on 10 July 1648.^[6] The land in Middletown is located at what is today designated east of Mitchell's Lane and south of Fayal Road. John Wood left no will; his estate was disposed of by the town council of Portsmouth on 7 May 1655, leaving to his son John² Wood “that land that is in his present possession” and to his son Thomas² Wood his land in Newport.^[7] For more than two and a half centuries the land in Middletown would continue to be inhabited by John² Wood and his descendants.

[1] John² Wood (abt. 1620–1704)

On the inside cover of the family Bible, written in painfully small script, are the words *John Wood His Book 1701*.^[8] This cover page would be used by several generations to write their names. John² Wood of Middletown, Rhode

Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning en Swart 1637-1724 (Amsterdam, 1987), 113-133. Ian Gadd, ed., *History of Oxford University Press*, vol. 1, Beginnings to 1780 (Oxford, 2013), 622.

⁴ Howard M. Chapin, *Documentary History of Rhode Island*, vol. 2 “Being the History of the Towns of Portsmouth and Newport to 1647 and the Court Records of Aquidneck” (Providence, 1919), 141, 142.

⁵ Rhode Island Colony Records: Vol. 1, Part 1, 1646-1669, p. 10 (Rhode Island State Digital Archives, sosri.access.preservica.com/archive).

⁶ *The Early Records of the Town of Portsmouth* (Providence, 1901) [hereafter *Early Records of Portsmouth*], 37-38.

⁷ *Early Records of Portsmouth*, 322-324. John¹ Wood was dead by April 1655, when his widow and children requested an inventory of his goods (*Register* 69 [1915]:188-189).

⁸ Although at first glance the hand-written date might appear to read 1707 or even 1727, a comparison with other turn of the century Quaker written records confirms the date to be 1701.

Island, son of John¹ Wood of Portsmouth, died 1704 in Middletown, age 84;^[9] he was included on the list of Newport freemen in 1655.^[10]

The Middletown property passed to John's son William³ Wood probably because his two eldest sons were already living across the sound in Little Compton, John³ Wood having received 11 acres from his father-in-law in 1691 and Thomas³ Wood having received 100 acres in Little Compton from his father in 1695.^[11]

[2] William³ Wood (abt. 1675–1753)

William³ Wood, son of John² Wood, was born about 1675.^[12] William was a Quaker and a freeman of Newport; he married first Amy Clarke, daughter of Latham Clarke, on 13 May 1709.^[13] Amy died in Portsmouth, 7 October 1726.^[14] Of this union were born three children, Mary,^[15] John, and Amy.^[16] William married second widow Elizabeth (Tripp) Mitchell 18 April 1734.^[17]

The names *Mary*, *John*, and *Amy* appear on the inside cover of the Bible, apparently all written in the same hand; they most likely refer to William's three children. William's death on 5 June 1753 was recorded in the Bible: *William Wood Decead the fifth of the Fourth Month in the Year One Thousand Seven hundred fifty Three.*

The exact date of William's acquisition of the Middletown property is unknown, but it was clearly in his possession by 1744 when he conveyed it to his son John⁴ Wood.^[18]

⁹ George Richardson, *Cemetery Transcription* (manuscript, abt. 1890, held at the Newport [R.I.] Historical Society as book 974) [hereafter Richardson, *Cemetery Transcription*], 23: "The Wood Burying Ground is on the Deacon Smith Farm at Middletown, R. I. John Wood died Aug. 26, 1704. Age 84 years." *The Early Records of the Town of Providence* (Providence, 1901), 322-324. See also Michael M. Wood, "The Token Books of St. Saviours" *American Ancestors Magazine*, 19.2 (Summer 2018): 44-47.

¹⁰ John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England, Printed by order of the General Assembly* (Providence, 1856), 301.

¹¹ Bristol County [R.I.] Deeds, Book 3, pages 419 (John Wood) and 457 (Thomas Wood) (transcriptions on the Dartmouth Historical Arts Society website, dartmouthhas.org).

¹² James N. Arnold, ed., *Vital Record of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, vol. 7 Friends and Ministers (Providence, 1895) [hereafter Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*], 129: William [Wood], aged 78 years, April 5, 1753. Apparently "April" was a mistaken calculation of the 4th month, which should have been June per the Quaker calendar (cf. the Bible record below).

¹³ Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 39: William [Wood], of John, deceased, Newport, to Amy Clark, of Latham, Portsmouth, May 13, 1709.

¹⁴ Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 129: WOOD Amey, wife of William, Portsmouth, aged 44 years, Oct. 7, 1726, daughter of Latham Clarke.

¹⁵ Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 83: [Wood] Mary, of William and Amy, Newport, March 7, 1712.

¹⁶ Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 39: Amy [Wood], of William and Amy, Middletown, [m.] William Barker, of James and Elizabeth, Dartmouth, Jan. 29, 1756.

¹⁷ Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 39: William [Wood], of John, Newport, to Elizabeth Mitchell, widow of Richard, Newport, April 18, 1734. 129: Elizabeth [Wood], wife of William, Newport, formerly wife of Richard Mitchell, aged 55 years, died at her son-in-law, Jabez Carpenter's, Feb. 13, 1740, daughter of James Tripp, Dartmouth.

¹⁸ Middletown, R.I. land records, 1:38-39 (FSL DGS 8701271, image 33): "William Wood of Middletown... yeoman... for and in Consideration of the Paternall Love...towards my well beloved son John Wood of Middletown," 25 June 1744, filed 16 July 1744.

[3] John⁴ Wood (abt. 1716–1798)

John⁴ Wood, son of William³ and Amy (Clarke) Wood, was born about 1716.^[19] In December 1744, he was called “of Middletown” when he married Mary Shaw, daughter of Anthony Shaw of Little Compton; the ceremony was performed at the home of her father by the local Justice, Rev. Richard Billings of the “Prispeteran [sic] Church.”^[20] The couple had three children, two of whom survived childhood.^[21]

John Wood left the land, now totaling 95 acres, to his two daughters Sarah⁵ (Wood) Manchester and Elizabeth⁵ (Wood) Freeborn, who agreed in 1798 to split the land into two parcels; Sarah received 46 acres including the *dwelling house*.^[22]

[4] Sarah⁵ (Wood) Manchester (1753–after 1828)

Sarah Wood, daughter of John Wood and Mary Shaw, was born the twenty-second day of the first month in 1753, which per the Quaker calendar would be 22 March 1753. Sarah's birth is also recorded by Arnold, albeit from a 1795 deposition by Peleg Wood who reported the birth as “January.”^[23] No other record has been found to address this discrepancy.

Sarah married John Manchester, the son of Isaac Manchester, at Middletown on 8 March 1787;^[24] he died between 1790 and 1800.^[25] The couple are known to have borne two children, Mary in 1788 and Hannah in 1790.^[26] Sarah died after 15 February 1828, when as “Sarah Manchester widow of John Manchester of Middletown deceased” she, along with Mary Anthony (and her husband Philip Anthony) and Hannah Coggeshall (widow of David Coggeshall) sold

¹⁹ The titular Bible records his death: *John Wood deceased the seventeenth of the fourth month 1798, aged 82 years.*

²⁰ Deposition of Peleg Wood, 7 Oct. 1795, in Middletown, R.I., vital records 1700-1870, 98-99 (FSL DGS 4250609, images 73-74). NOTE: James N. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rhode Island, 1636-1850*, vol. 4 part 3, Middletown (Providence, 1893) [hereafter Arnold, *Middletown VRs*], 20, records the minister officiating this wedding as Rev. *Robert* Billings. This marriage was recorded in the family Bible: *John and mary Wood was Marred [sic] 1744.*

²¹ The titular family Bible records the birth of Elizabeth Wood *the first Day of the twelf Month...1747/8*, the birth and death of Hannah Wood *the twelf day of the second month...1750 and the 27 day of the twelf month...1752* respectively, and the birth of Sarah Wood *the twenty second day of the first month...1753.*

²² Middletown, R.I. land records, 4:164-170 (FSL DGS 8701272, images 546-549): 6 June 1798, filed 3 July 1798.

²³ Middletown, R.I., vital records 1700-1870, 99 (FSL DGS 4250609, image 74): “Elizabeth Wood Daughter of the afore Mentioned John Wood & Mary Wood was Born February 1th [sic] AD 1748 [/] Sarah Wood Daughter of the said John & Mary Wood was Born January 22th day AD 1753.” Arnold, *Middletown VRs*, 42, records the births of Elizabeth and Sarah with those same dates. Elizabeth's birth in the Bible record on the 11th month translates in the Quaker calendar to February, which is the month given for her birth by Peleg Wood; why the same was not done for Sarah remains a mystery.

²⁴ Arnold, *Middletown VRs*, 13: John [Manchester], of Isaac, and Sarah Wood, of John; m. by Elder William Bliss, Mar. 8, 1787.

²⁵ Alden C. and Rita C. Manchester, “The Manchester Family of Rhode Island” *Register* 101 (1948):308-313, 102 (1948):10-28 (especially 102:12).

²⁶ Arnold, *Middletown VRs*, 32: [Manchester] Mary, of John and Sarah, March 19, 1788. Hannah, April 2, 1790. The family Bible records both of these births, though the portion of the page containing their first names is missing.

10 acres in Middletown to Giles Manchester she entered into a land contract, calling herself “widow of John Manchester of Middletown.”^[27]

The Middletown property eventually passed to Sarah’s two daughters, Mary (Manchester) Anthony and Hannah (Manchester) Coggeshall, who on 13 March 1834 entered into an Agreement to Partition, with Hannah receiving the southerly 46-acre parcel.^[28]

[5] Hannah (Manchester) Coggeshall (1790–1864)

Hannah Manchester was born 2 April 1790, daughter of Sarah Wood and John Manchester. She married David Coggeshall in Middletown on 30 November 1815, the ceremony performed by Justice Joshua Coggeshall.^[29] Hannah died in Middletown 9 March 1864.^[30]

On 20 December 1850 the Wood farm got a new name, when widow Hannah (Manchester) Coggeshall transferred part of the farm and the dwelling house to her son-in-law, James M. Smith, husband of her daughter Sarah Ann (Coggeshall) Smith.^[31]

[6] Sarah Ann (Coggeshall) Smith (1815–1876)

As calculated from her age at death, Sarah was born 4 December 1815, less than a week after her parents, Hannah Manchester and David Coggeshall, were wed. Sarah married James M. Smith at Newport on 9 March 1834.^[32]

Around 1850 the original Wood family home was torn down and a new home built by J. M. Smith.^[33] After this time the property was referred to as the Deacon Smith Farm; he was still the owner in 1870.^[34] Sarah lived on the family farm until her death on 24 June 1876, age 60 years, 6 months, and 20 days.^[35] Though no apparent record of Sarah survives *within* the Bible, it was clearly in her possession; the name *Sarah Ann Coggeshall* is cut into the leather of the cover.

²⁷ Middletown, R.I. land records, 7:1-2 (FSL DGS 8701273, image 643).

²⁸ Middletown, R.I. land records, 7:286-289 (FSL DGS 8701273, images 795-796).

²⁹ Arnold, *Middletown VRs*, 9, 13.

³⁰ *Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* (Ancestry.com), 1864, image 32 of 157: Hannah Coggeshall, age 73y 11m 7d, widow, b. Middletown, parents John Manchester and Sarah Manchester, cause of death Lung Fever. She was bur. in Middletown Cemetery (FindaGrave.com, memorial no. 23575613).

³¹ Middletown, R.I. land records, 8:515-516 (FSL DGS 8701274, image 317): recorded 27 Dec. 1850.

³² Arnold, *Rhode Island Friends*, 536.

³³ Richardson, *Cemetery Transcription*: “The Wood Burying Ground is on the Deacon Smith Farm at Middletown, R. I.” and “The original house was torn down about 1850 by Deacon James Smith, who was a relative.”

³⁴ D. G. Beers *et al*, *Atlas of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Philadelphia, 1870), 103.

³⁵ *Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* (Ancestry.com), 1876, image 33 of 186: Sarah Ann Smith, age 60y 6m 20d, married, b. Middletown, parents David Coggeshall and Hannah Coggeshall, cause of death Debility(1st) Softening of the Brain (2nd). Sarah Ann wife of James M. Smith was bur. in Middletown Cemetery (FindaGrave.com, memorial no. 127413342).

After Sarah A. Smith's death, the land passed to her husband, and upon his death their five children.^[36] James M. Smith died in 1889.^[37] It was likely at this time that the family Bible was given to Sarah's eldest son, David C. Smith, who in 1870 had been living on the family farm with his wife and first child.^[38]

[7] David Coggeshall Smith (1837/8–1925)

David was born in 1837 or 1838, the son of Sarah Ann Coggeshall and James M. Smith.^[39] David married Mercy B. Caswell, daughter of Robert of Newport, on 1 November 1864; they were married by the Methodist minister Josiah Higgins in Caswell, Massachusetts.^[40]

David was the last caretaker of the Bible to have lived on the Wood/Smith farm; as noted above, he was recorded there in 1870 together with his wife, daughter, parents, and sister Annie. He later moved to the farm of his daughter Ella F. (Smith) Molden on Third Beach Road in Middletown. Land records tell us that this 8-acre parcel was left by Mercy B. Smith to her only two heirs, Charles W. Smith and Ella F. Molden.^[41] She had purchased this land on her own accord, for \$650, in 1874.^[42]

In 1891 most of the southern parcel was partitioned among the heirs, with 22-plus acres “being the northerly part of the homestead farm of Sarah A. Smith” transferred to David C. Smith, William Smith, and Harriet (Smith) Ward, and 17 acres “being the southerly part of the homestead farm of Sarah A. Smith” to Frederick A. Smith and his sister Annie Elizabeth (Smith) Ward.^[43] In April 1892, Annie E. Ward sold 6.5 acres and her undivided half interest in the 17-acre southerly parcel to her brother Frederick.^[44] The following month, the remaining siblings transferred their ownership of the 22-plus acre parcel to their sister, Annie E. Ward, for “\$10 and other valuable considerations.”^[45]

³⁶ Middletown, R.I. land records, 16:49-53 (FSL DGS 8578411, images 369-371): quitclaims of heirs, dated 7 and 10 Sept. 1891. See also 14:279-281 (FSL DGS 8572411, images 575-576): quitclaim of heirs (i.e., children) of Sarah A. Smith to James M. Smith, dated 13 April 1882, recorded 15 May 1882.

³⁷ *Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* (Ancestry.com), 1889, image 35 of 237: 4 Sept. 1889, James M. Smith, age 77y 4m 13d, d. Mitchell Lane, Middletown, widower, farmer, b. Middletown, parents Jonathan Smith and Elizabeth Smith, cause of death Diarrhoea.

³⁸ 1870 U.S. Census, Middletown, Newport Co., R.I., p. 10 (386B): *James M. Smith* (58, Farmer), *Sarah A. [Smith]* (54), *David C. [Smith]* (32, Farm laborer), *Mercy B. [Smith]* (29), *Ella F. [Smith]* (4), and *Annie E. [Smith]* (23) (all b. R.I.).

³⁹ “David C. Smith 1837 – 1925” and “his wife Mercy B. Smith 1843 – 1910” share a gravestone in Middletown Cemetery (FindaGrave.com, memorial no. 127410333). According to his death record (see below), he was b. 6 Nov. 1838.

⁴⁰ *Massachusetts, U.S., Marriage Records, 1840-1915* (Ancestry.com), 1864, image 793 of 928: David C. Smith (26, Farmer, b. Middletown R.I., parents James M. and Sarah A.) and Mercy Caswell (21, b. Newport R.I., parents Robert and Elizabeth), first marriage for both.

⁴¹ Middletown, R.I. land records, 26:478-480: 15 April 1925.

⁴² Middletown, R.I. land records, 12:381-382 (FSL DGS 8701276, images 240-241): dated 6 and recorded 12 June 1874.

⁴³ Middletown, R.I. land records, 16:49-53 (FSL DGS 8578411, images 369-371).

⁴⁴ Middletown, R.I. land records, 16:213-214 (FSL DGS 8578411, images 452-453).

⁴⁵ Middletown, R.I. land records, 16:232-233 (FSL DGS 8578411, image 462).

After the turn of the century David C. Smith moved to his daughter's farm on Third Beach Road.^[46] The family Bible was passed to his son, Charles Wesley Smith, who was living in Newport in 1900.^[47] Frederick and his family were still living on the Wood/Smith farm in 1907, but for the first time since 1701 the Bible was not held by someone residing on the family farm.^[48] David died in Middletown 14 March 1925.^[49]

[8] Charles Wesley Smith (1872–1942)

Charles W. Smith was born in Middletown 12 March 1872, the son of David Coggeshall Smith and Mercy B. Caswell.^[50] He married Agnes (Bennett) Reid there in 1892.^[51] Charles died in Newport 16 August 1942.^[52] Charles lived in Newport and worked as a gardener at a private estate; his home on Roseneath Avenue was just 1,300 feet from Narragansett Bay.

In 1911, Charles's siblings Frederick A. Smith and Annie E. Ward together sold the two parcels of land they owned, encompassing all 46 acres of the southern half of the original Wood homestead, to a neighboring land owner, William J. Peckham.^[53] William J. Peckham moved to the 1850 Smith home and was living there in 1921.^[54] In 1939 he sold the James M. Smith homestead, plus three other parcels he owned (the four lots totaling 66.5 acres) to George Leonard.^[55] Today the area includes small to medium-size farms defined by 20-acre parcels of open fields and pasture.^[56] The 1850 home of James M.

⁴⁶ *Resident and business directory of Tiverton, Little Compton, Portsmouth, Middletown, Rhode Island, 1910* (Hopkinton, Mass., 1910), 154.

⁴⁷ 1900 U.S. Census, Newport Ward 5, Newport Co., R.I., E.D. 225, sheet 22B: Charles W. Smith (Head, March 1872, 28, [married 7 yrs.], R.I. R.I. R.I., Gardener), Agnes [Smith] (Wife, April 1869, 31, [m. 7 yrs., 2 children, both surviving], R.I.[sic] Scotland Scotland), Marguerite B. [Smith] (Dau., Oct. 1889, 10, S, N.Y. Scotland Scotland), and Everett W. [Smith] (Son, Oct. 1894, 5, S, R.I. R.I. R.I.).

⁴⁸ *Atlas of the City of Newport, and Towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island* (Springfield, 1907), plate 18.

⁴⁹ *Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* (Ancestry.com), 1925, image 1066 of 8427: David Coggeshall Smith, b. 6 Nov. 1838 in Middletown, age 86y 4m 8d, widowed, name of wife Mercy Caswell, retired farmer, parents James M. Smith and Sarah A. Smith, causes of death Grippe [and] Senility; information submitted by daughter Mrs. P. Moulden ("Ella F. Molden" written under).

⁵⁰ *Rhode Island, U.S., Birth Registrations 1846-1921* (Ancestry.com), 1872>ALL>26-A, image 38 of 246: Charles Wesley Smith, father David C. Smith (Farmer, b. Middletown), mother Mercy B. Caswell (b. Newport).

⁵¹ *Rhode Island, U.S., Marriage Registrations 1853-1922* (Ancestry.com), 1892, image 83 of 274: 15 Dec. 1892, Charles Wesley Smith (res. Newport, 20, Gardener, b. Middletown, parents David C. Smith and Mercy Caswell, his 1st marriage) and Agnes Reid (res. New York, N.Y., 24, b. Scotland, parents James Bennett and Jane Rankin, her 2nd marriage), by W. H. Allen, Pastor of M.E. Church, Middletown.

⁵² *Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* (Ancestry.com), 1942, image 4819 of 30206: Charles Wesley Smith, widowed, wife Agnes Bennett, b. 12 March 1872 in Middletown, Retired Gardner at Grovenor Est. Newport, father David C. Smith [b. Middletown], mother Mercy Beloyd Caswell (b. Middletown); informant son Mr. Everett W. Smith of 70 Roseneath Ave.

⁵³ Middletown, R.I. land records, 21:270-272: 22 Sept. and 3 Oct. 1911.

⁵⁴ *Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown & Portsmouth, Rhode Island, From Actual Survey and City Records* (New York, 1921), map 27, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Middletown, R.I. land records, 35:405-406: 5 Oct. 1939.

⁵⁶ *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island* (Providence, 2001), 96.

Smith still stands, southwest of the Wood Burying Ground, and retains 19 acres of the original John¹ Wood property.^[57]

The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 and the Bible's Subsequent History

In September of 1938, a storm that would come to be known as the Great New England Hurricane made landfall in Long Island as a Category 3 storm. Except for Charlie Pierce, a junior forecaster in the U.S. Weather Bureau who predicted the storm but was overruled by the chief forecaster, the general public never saw it coming—certainly not Charles W. Smith, who was living near the Bay.^[58]

The storm surge followed the Rhode Island coastline and into the bay; Providence was submerged under a storm tide of nearly 20 feet.^[59] Rhode Island recorded sustained winds of 100 mph with a gust to 125 mph. The lowest pressure at the time of landfall occurred on the south side of Long Island where a reading of 27.94 inches was recorded; 28.00 inches was recorded in Middletown. Entire beach communities on the coast of Rhode Island were wiped out by the hurricane; the storm at Newport sustained 13 feet of surge. The only structures lying directly on the coast that endured the storm were the immense stone mansions in Newport. Across New England the hurricane killed more than 600 people, damaged tens of thousands of homes, and completely destroyed some 19,000 buildings.^[60]

Although the Smith family did not lose their home, the 1683 Bible was one of the items damaged by the swiftly rising water. Decades later its spine was still curled upon itself due to water damage, and the rear cover was completely lost. Despite its badly damaged condition, the Bible continued to be a treasured heirloom, passing from Charles W. Smith to his son, [9] Everett Williston Smith (1893–1983), to his daughter, [10] Janet Williston (Smith) Marvelle (1923–2019), and then to her son [11] Robert Marvelle (1953–2021).

Robert Marvelle was the long-time caretaker of Marble House in Newport and keenly aware of each generation's responsibility to preserve the past. Through his generosity, in 2019 the Bible was gifted to this author, an agnatic descendant of the book's original owner, John² Wood of Middletown. During the pandemic, over the course of several months, the Bible was fully deconstructed and restored using period bookbinding techniques. It remains today a treasured family heirloom.^[61]

⁵⁷ Vision Government Solutions (gis.vgsi.com), Middletown, R.I., Parcel 124-38, PID 5224, 708 Mitchell's Lane, Middletown, R.I.

⁵⁸ S. A. Mandia, *The Long Island Express: The Great Hurricane of 1938* (2013), sunysuffolk.edu/mandias/38hurricane (accessed 24 Sept. 2024).

⁵⁹ Scott A. Mandia, *Weather History of the '38 Hurricane* (Smithtown, 2006).

⁶⁰ Patrica Grossi, *The 1938 Great New England Hurricane: Looking to the Past to Understand Today's Risk* (Newark, Ca., 2008), ii, 4; see also Christian Winthrop, "The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 Made Landfall in Newport 86 Years Ago today" *The Newport Buzz*, 21 Sept. 2024.

⁶¹ The story of this Bible's passage and restoration was the subject of an article in *The Providence Journal* on 24 March 2021 (Donita Taylor, "Descendant restores RI Wood family Bible, inherited 10 times in 300 years").

The Family Data

In addition to the names written on and inside the Bible's cover, including those of his children, [3] John⁴ Wood and his family added a full page of notations in the Bible. All of the dates are written in the Quaker style. Vital records are recorded for three generations, in at least two different hands, some of the records incomplete due to tears and missing pieces.

John &	William Wood Deceacd the fifth
mary Wood	of the Fourth Month in the Year One
was Marred	Thousand Seven hundred fifty Three
1744	

Elizabeth Wood was born the first Day [/] of the twelf Month in the Year 1747/8

Hannah Wood was born the twelf day of the Second [/] Month in the Year 1750

Hannah Wood Deceased the 27 Day of the twelf [/] Month in the Year 1752

Sarah Wood was born the twenty Second [/] Day of the first Month in the Year 1753

Mary Wood Deceased the fifteenth Day [/] of the Second month 1793 Aged 71 Years

John Wood Deceased the Seventeenth of the [/] Fourth Month 1798 Aged 82 Years

[missing] Manchester was born March the 19 Day 1788

[missing]h Manchester was born April the 2 1790

[missing] Manchester Deceased December the 16 1840 [/] [missing]ged 52 Years^[62]

Michael M. Wood (mmwood@gmail.com) inherited several 18th-century family letters in 1987 and has been actively researching and sharing family history ever since. His published works include several books and peer-reviewed articles in ten different journals. Michael currently lives with his wife and children in Munich, Germany.

⁶² The identity of this person is unknown; though apparently born about 1788, he or she was not Mary (Manchester) Anthony, who d. in Middletown 28 Aug. 1876 (*Rhode Island U.S., Death Registrations and Records, 1852-1946* [Ancestry.com], 1876, image 33 of 186: Mary Anthony, age 88y 5m 9d, widow, b. Middletown, parents John Manchester and Sarah Wood, died of Old Age [1st] and Asthma and Ossification of Arteries & Valves [2nd]).