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Solomon Welles Papers:  
From Minnesota Back to Connecticut

By Barbara J. Mathews, CG

Last week, the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council had its monthly meeting at the Connecticut Historical Society. Judith Ellen Johnson, the Genealogical Librarian, had pulled out old books and manuscript boxes to show us. The next-to-last box was of great interest. Judith started by telling us that the Minnesota Historical Society had recently donated to CHS papers having to do with a Connecticut family. Ooh-ooh, said I. Our researcher, Nancy Pexa, had found the Solomon Welles papers in Minnesota on a family trip. Could this mean that they were home again?

Indeed, the papers sent from Minnesota were the family papers of Solomon<sup>6</sup> Welles, the man who built the home in which our next reunion will be taking place!

1. The first item in the box is a notebook (folded paper sewn together) kept by Solomon Welles in his senior year as a student at Yale College, that is, in the 1738-1739 school year. (He stayed after graduation on a Berkley scholarship.)
2. The second item in the box is his book of activities as a justice of the peace in Wethersfield.
3. The third folder contains deeds. In most of these deeds, the grantee is Gideon<sup>5</sup> Welles, Solomon's father.
4. The next folder contains correspondence between Solomon and other family members.
5. Folder 5 contains shipping papers.
6. Additional folders contain correspondence between members of the family and various early genealogists, including Lemuel Atkins Welles, Chester Wells, and Francis Griswold.
7. The last few folders contain photocopies of the school notebook, justice of the peace book, and early family correspondence, allowing researchers to use these newer materials rather than put wear-and-tear on the ancient originals.

The return of the papers to Connecticut is so timely as our upcoming reunion will take place at the home that Solomon built. With that in mind, I've included here the current material on Solomon from the draft of the Welles book. I've added three items of interest from the papers newly arrived in Hartford.

**637. Col. Solomon<sup>5</sup> Welles, Esq.** (Capt. Gideon<sup>4</sup>, Capt. Robert<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Gov. Thomas<sup>1</sup>), born 6 October 1721 in Wethersfield, Connecticut (Barbour citing VR 1:95); and died 28 September 1802, at age 81, in Wethersfield, Connecticut (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing 2:323); buried in the Village Cemetery, Wethersfield (Hale 18). He married on 16 January 1744/45 in Wethersfield, Connecticut, the Rev. Asahel Woodbridge officiating (Barbour citing VR 2:144), **Sarah<sup>5</sup> Welles (#839)**, daughter of Col. Thomas<sup>4</sup> Welles and Martha Pitkin, his third cousin; born 27 March 1727 in Glastonbury, Connecticut (Barbour citing

VR 1:60); and died 14 February 1814 at age 88 in Wethersfield, Connecticut (Hale Death Notices, *American Mercury*, issue of 28 Feb 1815, p. 175 of death abstracts).

Solomon and his wife were admitted to the First Church in Wethersfield on 17 February 1765 (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing EST:16).

Solomon graduated from Yale College in 1739 (Yale Bios. 1:631). He "res. at college after grad. on the Berckely scholarship (The Dean's Bounty); in his class list was 4<sup>th</sup> in a class of 10; ... app. J.P. at May sess. On 1769, '70, '71, '72, '73, '74, '77, '79, '80, '81, '82, '83, '84, '85; at Oct. sess. of Gen. Assemb. 1776 app. Lieut.-Col. of one batt. (*Hinman* says 6<sup>th</sup>) of the foot battalions; he built the ho. now standing N. of the prison at Weth., in 1774, on the old Gov. Welles' home-lot; is said to have been a man of stern character, and strong will and somewhat fractious temper, so that the young men of the town were almost afraid to become suitors of his daus., most of whom were without husbands until after the first years of their marriageable life, and then, some of them m. widowers. He was accustomed to attend every commencement at Yale Coll." (Stiles' Wethersfield 2:768).

Leonard Wells filed an administrator's bond on the estate of Solomon Wells, Esq., of Wethersfield on 1 November 1802, with Timothy Wells as surety. The inventory was taken on 24 November 1803 by Daniel Buck and John Francis; it totaled \$4466.95½. The distribution made by John Francis and Timothy Russell on 26 May 1804 sets shares of \$385.89½ to eldest son Solomon Wells, youngest son Leonard Wells, eldest daughter Eunice, the wife of Charles Bulkeley of Wethersfield; and daughters Sarah, the widow of the Rev. John Eells; the widow Hannah Hale; the heirs of Roger Wells, deceased; the widow Penelope Wright; Prudence, the wife of Charles Bulkeley of Vermont; Mehitable, the wife of Dr. Samuel Barnard; Mrs. Sarah Wells, the widow of the deceased (Hartford Probate District, estate files, no docket number, filed alphabetically, 1802, resident of Wethersfield).

Eldest son Solomon Wells died intestate and without issue. His brother Leonard Wells filed an administrator's bond on his estate on 15 January 1832 with Hezekiah Butler as surety. Elias Francis and Hezekiah Butler took an inventory on 13 April 1832 that totaled \$536.76. After the administrator sold land to meet debts, the two appraisors distributed the estate. The distribution names brother Leonard Wells, the heirs of Roger Wells, the heirs of Eunice Bulkeley, the heirs of Penelope Wright, the heirs of Mehitable Barnard, the heirs of Hannah Hale, Prudence Bulkeley, and the heirs of Sarah Eells (Hartford Probate District, estate files, no docket number, filed alphabetically, 1832, resident of Wethersfield).

- Children, surnamed **Welles**, born in Wethersfield, Connecticut (Barbour citing VR 2:114):
- + 2143 i. **Eunice**<sup>6</sup>, b. 15 Apr 1746, twin with Sarah; d. 10 Sep 1827; m. 7 Oct 1773 **Capt. Charles Bulkeley, Jr.**, of Wethersfield.
  - 2144 ii. **Sarah**, b. 15 Apr 1746, twin Eunice; d. 29 Sep 1827, at age 81, bur. in Green Cemetery, Glastonbury, Connecticut (Hale 7); m. 24 Dec 1776 in Glastonbury (Barbour citing VR 1:116) **Rev. John Eells**, son of the Rev. Nathaniel Eells and Mercy Cushing; bapt. 13 Mar 1736/7 in Stonington (Yale Bios. 2:370), and d. 17 May 1791, at age 54 (Hale Death Notices, *New London Gazette*, issue of 9 Jun 1791, p. 80 of death abstracts), bur. in Green Cemetery, Glastonbury (Hale 7). He graduated from Yale College in 1755 and was ordained 27 Jun 1759 over the church in Glastonbury, where he served for the rest of his life. He m. (1) 30 Jun 1763 Sibyl Huntington, who d. 20 Nov 1773, at age 31 (Yale Bios. 2:370, which notes that some of his manuscript sermons are in the collection of The Connecticut Historical Society).
  - 2145 iii. **Solomon, Jr.**, b. 16 Jan 1748; d. unmarried 13 Jan 1832; bur. 15 Jan 1832 in Newington, Connecticut (Hale 8). "Became insane" (Stiles' Wethersfield 2:768).
  - + 2146 iv. **Hannah**, b. 27 Nov 1749; d. 28 May 1820; m. 8 Jun 1775 **Dr. Elizur**<sup>6</sup> **Hale Jr.** (#3146).
  - + 2147 v. **Penelope**, b. 16 Nov 1751; d. 5 Mar 1826; m. 22 Apr 1784 **Capt. Elijah Wright**.

- + 2148 vi. (Gen.) **Roger**, b. 29 Dec 1753; d. 27 May 1795; m. 27 Mar 1785 **Jemima<sup>6</sup> Kellogg (#3577)**.
- 2149 vii. (Capt.) **Gideon**, b. 12 Feb 1756; bapt. [page worn] 1756 (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing JL:22); d. 11 Feb 1795 "on passage from the West Indies" (Barbour citing Rocky Hill VR 1:92, age 38; Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing 2:213, age 40). He became a sea captain, sailing from Stepney parish, now Rocky Hill, to the West Indies. He was master of the brig *Polly*. His cenotaph in the Wethersfield Burying Ground reads in part, "The Bosom of devouring seas entomb my mould'ring dust/Thus life and all my active powers are in a moment lost" (Stiles' Wethersfield 1:591, 2:769). A customs declaration from New London, Connecticut, dated 10 Feb 1792, shows that he imported from St. Martin's on his own behalf, on the schooner *Polly* of which he was Master, six hogsheads and one cask of rum, containing in all 620 gallons (see Manuscript References below).
- + 2150 viii. **Prudence**, b. 19 Mar 1758; d. 5 Feb 1837; m. 24 Mar 1782 **Maj. Edward Bulkeley**; m. (2) 27 Aug 1798 **Charles Bulkeley** of Vermont. Edward Bulkeley was a ship's Captain and Master, sailing from New London and the Connecticut River for ports in the Caribbean. Extant shipping manifests, customs declarations, etc., show that he mastered the sloop *Dolphin*, the schooner *Oliver*, and the *Fair Trader* at one point or another. He sailed into Nevis, Grenada, and Dominica. Bills of lading show that he accepted horses in Connecticut for sale on the islands. One document, dated 29 July 1765, when the *Dolphin* was under Capt. James Mitchell, that Alexander Granby accepted a brown mare for sale for under £20. The terms were that the sale was to be made prior to the sloop's return from Dominica and that, should she fetch more, the commission would not increase (see Manuscript References below).
- + 2151 ix. **Mehitable**, b. 18 May 1760; d. bef. 1832 when her heirs are listed in the estate distribution of her brother Solomon; m. 6 Jul 1786 **Dr. Samuel Barnard**.
- 2152 x. **Chester**, b. 21 Nov 1762; bapt. 28 Nov 1762 (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing JL:42); the first child baptized in the brick meeting house (Barbour citing Wethersfield VR 2:114); prob. d. bef. 26 May 1804 when he is omitted from the estate distribution of his father. "Rem. to Canada" (Stiles' Wethersfield 2:769). He was 25 years old when, in a letter dated 24 Apr 1796 from Sheffield, Berkshire Co., Massachusetts, he wrote,

Sheffield April 24<sup>th</sup> 1796

My Dear & Honored Parents

The many indulgencies and repeated Kindnesses you have shown me call forth my warmest acknowledgments. I take this method to inform you that I enjoy praised be God a tolerable State of Health – alltho I am not well – the Air in Sheffield is a damp mist Air occasioned by the large Quantity of low Ground & Meadows. I determine if I am not better from the move out about three or four Miles East of the Meeting House to Capt Day's<sup>1</sup> he is an old Gentleman that is Well versed in Surveying. With him I may perhaps perfect myself in that Art. I live in a Neighborhood of people that mean well and if they meet me as they have done hitherto I can make myself tolerable easy with them. But I wish to be in business that is more lucrative. To accumulate wealth is the Define of most of us. To live

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<sup>1</sup> Possibly this is William Day, the only one of that name appearing in the 1790 federal census in Sheffield, Berkshire Co., Massachusetts (NARA series M-367, reel 4, p. 595 [handwritten number], column 3).

happy with it is the lot of few. I hope these Lines will find you my Dear Father enjoying Life and Health may the evening of your Life be calm and serene – may we all live as we shall wish we had done when we come to Die that when Death shall lay his Arrest upon us we may not be seized with any terror or perturbation of mind but believing in him who expired upon the Cross may be cheerfully resign our Spirits into the Hands of our Creator

Adieu my Honoured Father

C Welles

- + 2153 xi. **Leonard**, b. 5 Jul 1765; d. 11 Jan 1835; m. 7 Oct 1798 **Prudence<sup>7</sup> Robbins (#5290)**.  
2154 xii. **Mary**, b. 25 Jul 1767; bapt. 2 Aug 1767 (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing JL:48); d. unmarried 10 Aug 1793, at age 26 (Wethersfield First Congregational Church Records, slip index citing 2:310).

Correspondence: Gail Donkin; Henry H. Hunt, III.

Manuscript Resources: The Connecticut Historical Society, Welles family papers 1673-1955, manuscript 100564, Box 1 of 1, Folder 4, correspondence, letter from Chester Welles to his father Solomon Welles, dated 24 April 1796; Folder 5, District of Connecticut, Office of Inspection at the Port of New London, import manifest dated 10 February 1792 for Gideon Welles; Folder 5, bills of lading, manifests, receipts and other materials relating to Edward Bulkeley's trips as a Master of the sloop Fair Trader, home port New London, burthen 30 tons, no guns, five men, on trips to ports such as Nevis and Grenada in the 1760's and 1770's. He likewise appears as Captain and as Master of the schooner Oliver in 1774; Folder 5, shipping papers, contract with Alexander Granby, dated 29 July 1765..

Published Works: Bulkeley 267-268, 290; HH 792; Stiles's Wethersfield 2:590-596, 768-769, 777 (omits marriage of Sarah<sup>5</sup> Welles); Welles (1968) 3:68-69: family CCLXXVI, 5:13: family CCCLIX (omits children Prudence and Gideon); Yale Bios. 1:631, 2:370.