

“Omissions in Hall’s Norwalk”

Partial transcription and introduction by Paul Keroack, Norwalk History Room

Among the documents in the Norwalk History Room are photocopies of 23 manuscript sheets (about 1300 entries) of Norwalk vital records transcribed by Charles Henry St. John (1822-1880). The first sheet is headed with the statement, “These are the omissions in Hall’s Norwalk,” referring to *The Ancient Historical Records of Norwalk, Connecticut ...* by Edwin Hall (1847) [R974.68 HAL]. Hall states that he limited the genealogical register portion of his book to couples “married before the year 1800,” though he also says, “the genealogical registers are very imperfect.”

St. John’s own transcription was made at least 35 years before James Arnold’s 1915 extractions from town land and vital records to 1850, which were the basis of the Barbour Collection. For Norwalk, these vitals were found in land record books 1, 4, 9, 13, 16-19. In Barbour, each vital entry is listed in alphabetical order by surname within the town, citing the original volume and page number.

St. John’s manuscript lists marriages, births and occasional deaths grouped together in family units, apparently as originally entered. This arrangement parallels Hall’s genealogical register, increasing its usefulness, although St. John does not cite the volume and page from which each is copied. A comparison of some of these entries with the corresponding Barbour entries confirms that they were usually originally recorded in family groupings.

A note in modern ink at the top of the first sheet states that it is a “copy of a notebook made by Charles Henry St. John of Vista Ct. [i.e. NY], taken from Norwalk land records by him. [The original is] in possession (1985) by [sic] his great-grandson Penfield C. Mead.” Charles Henry St. John is mentioned on p. 481-482 of *The St. John Genealogy: Descendants of Matthias St. John ...*, 1907. Penfield C. Mead (1920-2003) of New Canaan was a probate judge and a member of the Connecticut Ancestry Society.

The entries in the manuscript seem to be arranged in no particular order, either alphabetically or by date. When keyed into a table, the heads of household (or individuals if entered singly) can be sorted alphabetically, by date of original entry, by manuscript page, or [by added] Barbour volume and page. Uses of these sorted lists could be to investigate why some were not included by Edwin Hall, to check against Barbour entries (although both likely have mis-readings) and as a useful grouping of names not listed this way in Barbour.

The photocopied sheets of this manuscript are held in the Norwalk History Room, at the head of a series of boxes of alphabetized genealogical correspondence and research. The archive has no knowledge of the present location of the original manuscript.

The extracted alphabetized and original order lists appended here are given to aid the researcher in locating a family of interest. The children born to each family are not included in these extractions.