

1726 Petition Signers

NAME	AGE	SEATING ASSIGNMENT
Daniel Abbott	55	Corner pew
Daniel Betts Jr.	28	Second long seat
Nathan Betts	27	Third long seat
Samuel Betts Jr.	32	First long seat
Stephen Betts	29	Other pew
Richard Bouton	47	First long seat
Thomas Bouton	49	Second long seat
Stephen Buckingham	24	Third long seat
Joseph Curle	unknown	Fourth long seat
John Dunning	42	First long seat
Jonathan Elmer	42	First long seat
Jachin Gregory	45	First long seat
Benjamin Hickox	41	Deacon's pew
Joseph Jump	22	Fourth long seat
David Keeler	33	Other pew
John Keeler	52	Great pew
Ralph Keeler III	53	Great pew
Nathaniel Ketchum	48	Great pew
Nathan Olmsted	24	Third long seat
William Parker	47	Corner pew
John St. John	42	First long seat
Matthew St. John	45	Great pew
Nathaniel Slauson	31	Second long seat
John Stewart (originally Steuart)	59	Great pew
Jonathan Sturdevant	30	Second long seat
John Taylor	52	Great pew
Daniel Trowbridge	26	Third long seat
James Trowbridge	63	Deacon's pew
Jonathan Wood Sr.	69	Corner pew
Jonathan Wood Jr.	35	Second long seat
Obadiah Wood	28	Third long seat
ADDITIONAL MEMBERS BY JANUARY 1727		
James Betts Jr.	27	Second long seat
Joseph Birchard	53	Great pew
John Bryant	27	Fourth long seat
William Drinkwater	unknown	Fourth long seat
Ebenezer Jackson	30	Third long seat
Ebenezer Keeler	38	First long seat
David Lambert	27	Second long seat
John Marvin Jr.	22	Third long seat
Amos Monroe	22	Fourth long seat
James Stewart Jr.	32	Second long seat
Samuel Wood	32	Fourth long seat

member, soon moved with his wife to Drum Hill. Deacon Trowbridge died in 1732.



Belden's Hill and Ridgfield Road

John St. John set the tune to the psalms on Sunday and was Society Treasurer. He farmed 145 acres on the west side of (Old) Belden Hill from 1715 until his death in 1773. Kent Road was laid out in 1729 to provide more convenient access to the main road for St. John and his neighbors.

Nathaniel Ketchum, another Norwalk native, was St. John's neighbor to the east, with a farm of 87 acres. He was on the Society Committee, the Highway Committee, in charge of Wilton school money, the first lieutenant of the Wilton Train Band in 1727, and a Norwalk selectman in 1728.

The first Society Clerk, Richard Bouton, a Norwalk native and descendant of a Norwalk founder but not a proprietor, had a farm of 100 acres on "Sear Hill," inherited from his father. His older brother Thomas, who seems to have been illiterate, had a smaller piece of land, also on Sear Hill. Both left Wilton in the early 1730s. Richard, and probably Thomas as well, followed Rev. Sturgeon to Bedford, New York in 1731. Jonathan Sturdevant, a Norwalk native with 30 acres at the upper end of Belden Hill, held no offices in either Norwalk or the Wilton Society and also left in 1731 with Rev. Sturgeon, showing that church schisms existed even then.

James Stewart Jr., nephew of John Stewart of Chestnut Hill, built a house across from Sturdevant, at the base of Drum Hill, on a farm of 165 acres inherited from his father and grandfather, Robert Stewart, a Norwalk settler in 1660. James's brother Robert inherited more of the family land

Approximate home locations of early residents can be determined from church and land records. Few of the early houses have survived. Many have been rebuilt on the same site.

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Samuel Keeler | 18. Nathaniel Ketchum | 34. Stephen Buckingham |
| 2. Jeremiab Mead | 19. John St. John | 35. Matthew St. John |
| 3. Benjamin Hickox | 20. Daniel Betts II | 36. Nathan Betts |
| 4. William Parker | 21. James Betts Jr. | 37. Stephen Betts |
| 5. Jonathan Elmer | 22. John Dunning | 38. Samuel Betts II |
| 6. Natban Olmsted | 23. John Taylor | 39. Nathaniel Slawson |
| 7. Ebenezer Keeler | 24. Joseph Birchard | 40. Jacob Patchen |
| 8. William Drinkwater | 25. John Stewart | 41. Joseph Jump |
| 9. James Stewart Jr. | 26. Daniel Abbott | 42. Obadiab Wood |
| 10. Jonathan Sturdevant | 27. Amos Monroe | 43. Samuel Wood |
| 11. Jachin Gregory | 28. George Abbott | 44. Jonathan Wood Jr. |
| 12. Meeting House | 29. James Trowbridge | 45. William Belden |
| 13. Ralph Keeler III | 30. Ebenezer Jackson | 46. Jonathan Wood |
| 14. John Keeler | 31. David Lambert | 47. Elias Betts |
| 15. David Keeler | 32. Parsonage | 48. James Olmsted |
| 16. Richard Bouton | 33. John Marvin Jr. | 49. Matthew Gregory |
| 17. Thomas Bouton | | |





North Half: Joshua Lobdell RLR: 1/39
1742: Caleb Lobdell RLR: 3/73
South Half: Joseph Tompkins RLR: 1/42
1713: John Copp RLR: 1/42
1714: Moses Northrup RLR: 1/72
1716: Joshua Lobdell RLR: 1/106
1742: Darius Lobdell RLR: 3/87
1759: Matthew Seamor RLR: 4/153
1763: William Carpenter RLR: 4/253
1765: Nathan Hubbell RLR: 5/18
1771: Samuel Carpenter RLR: 5/133
1773: Jeremiah Wilson RLR: 5/158

Lot 10. Original Proprietor: 1712, John Belden
Location: South of R. Olmstead, north of James Brown, east
of Town Street, west of highway

Ownership Record:

1713: Benjamin Benedict RLR: 1/43
1750: Timothy Benedict RLR: 3/273
1775: Bartlet Foliot RLR: 5/248

Lot 11. Original Proprietor: 1712, Richard Olmstead
Location: South of Thomas Smith, north of John Belden, east
of Town Street, west of highway

Ownership Record

North Lot (1/2 acre)

1760: Daniel Olmstead RLR: 4/183
1765: Epenetus How RLR: 4/266
1771: John Watrous RLR: 5/132

South Lot

1765: Samuel Olmstead Jr. RLR: 5/121
1765: Josiah Stebbins RLR: 5/124

Lot 12. Original Proprietor: 1712, Thomas Smith
Location: South of Highway, north of Richard Olmstead, east
of Town Street, west of highway

Ownership Record:

1744: David Smith RLR: 3/124
1752: Isaac & Thomas Smith RLR: 4/29

Lot 13. Original Proprietor: 1712, Jonathan Stevens
Location: North of Thomas Sturdivant, south of highway,



west of Town Street, east of highway

Ownership Record:

1712: Mary Bouton
1712: David Scott RLR: 1/47
1741: Vivus Dauchy RLR: 3/215

Lot 14. Original Proprietor: 1712, John Sturdivant

Location: North of Thomas Hyatt, west of Town Street, east of highway

Ownership Record:

West Section (Two acres)
1715: Joseph Platt RLR: 1/46
1715: Thomas Hyatt RLR: 1/47
1759: Thomas Hyatt Jr., Danbury Probate Records
1/175-76
1772: Hannah Hyatt / Samuel Smith RLR: 5/174
East Section (5 1/2 acres)
1731: John Sturdivant Jr, Samuel, Elizabeth and
Bula (Fairfield Probate Record)

Lot 15. Original Proprietor: 1712, Thomas Hyatt

Location: North of Benjamin Wilson, south of John Sturdivant, west of Town Street, east of highway

Ownership Record:

1759: Thomas Hyatt Jr. Danbury Probate Records
1/175-76
1772: Hannah Hyatt / Samuel Smith RLR: 5/174

Lot 16. Original Proprietor: 1712, Benjamin Wilson

Location: South of Thomas Hyatt, west of Town Street, east of highway, north of Benj. Hitchcock

Ownership Record:

1742: Nathan Wilson
1762: Benjamin Rockwell RLR 4/270
1767: Nathan Wilson RLR: 5/32
1771: Ezekiel Wilson RLR: 5/126

Lot 17. Original Proprietor: 1712, Benjamin Hitchcock

Location: North of Matthew St John, south of Benjamin Wilson, west of Town Street, east of highway

Ownership Record:

1711: Thomas Rockwell RLR: 1/37



Other early names were Bald Hill, 1705; Buckingham Ridge, 1711; Comstock Ridge, 1726; Honey Hill, 1711; Hop Meadow, 1710; Kent, 1699; Long Hollow, 1738; Millstone Hill, 1739; Nod, 1757; Parting Brook, 1726; Rockhouse Woods, 1721; Rusco's Ridge, 1716; Spectacle Bog, 1711; and Split Rock, 1714.⁸

A Tour Through Wilton in 1733: Belden's Hill and Ridgefield Road

Many of the original house lots in Wilton still have houses on them, parts of which may be original or date from the eighteenth century; however, over the intervening years, most have been modified or restored and rebuilt. Church records identify the residents and land records tell us where they lived.

Between 1727 and 1733, a number of homes had already changed owners, some more than once, and several more had been built. Starting at the southwest part of town, when Richard Bouton went to Bedford in 1731 he sold his farm on Seir Hill to Titus Wood, fourth son of Jonathan Sr. On lower Belden's Hill, Samuel Gregory, 28, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Ketchum Gregory and a nephew of Jachin and Matthew, had married Sarah Keeler and built a house on land obtained from her father, Ralph III. Caleb Trowbridge, 27, younger son of the late Deacon James, married Jemima Keeler, another daughter of Ralph III, and built on land adjacent to his brother-in-law Samuel Gregory. Both young men soon left Wilton and moved to New Fairfield, Caleb in 1743 and Gregory in 1746.

Jonathan Sturdevant left Wilton for Bedford with Rev. Sturgeon. In turn, John Westcott of Bedford bought Sturdevant's farm on Belden Hill Road near the corner of Belden Hill and Drum Hill. Westcott's three sons and their sons served in several wars over the next fifty years.

At the north end of Belden's Hill, Ezra St. John built a new home near the Hickox mill on the Falls Branch of the Norwalk River at or near 19 Lovers Lane.* On Drum Hill, a new home was built by Robert Stewart next to his brother James Jr. on 90 acres given to him by their Norwalk father, James Sr. This house, at 165 Drum Hill, was later the birthplace of Robert's famous grandson, Moses Stuart, an eminent Biblical scholar in the first half of the nineteenth century. Daniel Trowbridge, a signer of the Wilton petition and older brother of Caleb, bought the former house of Nathan Olmsted. The rest of Drum Hill was still owned by Ebenezer Keeler.

A new road was laid out west from Drum Hill to a house built on Comstock Ridge by Moses Comstock's brother, Captain Samuel Comstock of Norwalk, where Samuel's twenty-year-old son Nathan lived and managed the farm. Nathan married Bethiah Strong in 1739 and joined the Wilton

* Mill Road was renamed Lovers Lane by Tim Merwin in the twentieth century.

Church in Norwalk, founded in 1737, received a boost. Dr. Samuel Belden, living in Wilton 1741-1746 and a son of John Belden, the Norwalk merchant, was the first moderator of the St. Paul's Society in 1742. Other early Wilton Anglicans were Moses Beers, Joseph Bettys, Samuel Fitch Jr. (nephew of Governor Fitch), Benjamin Keeler (of Hop Meadow), Josiah Marvin, Amos Monroe, Uriah Scribner, Samuel Stewart, and David Whelpley. In addition, Azor Belden, businessman Alexander Resseguie Jr., and weaver Alexander Sloan had strong Anglican connections.

Ironically, the Great Awakening fundamentalism led to a general demand in Connecticut for more religious tolerance of other denominations. One evidence of relaxation was the quiet omission of the restrictive religion laws from the 1750 revised Connecticut law code. However, it would be several more years before repeal of the humiliating "certificate law," which required a member of another denomination to produce documentation in order to secure exemption from the Congregational minister's tax.

The Wilton Congregational minutes include records of those who wished to attend other services: December 7, 1758, "John Truesdale shall be discharged from paying a rate to the minister in case he git a sartifikit from the Babtis Society," and January 9, 1764, "Samuel Whelpley discharged from paying a tax to the standing ministry as long as he attends the babtis meeting."

Migrations Out of Wilton

The growth of Wilton was achieved despite the fact that a number of the founders did not stay long. By 1733, in addition to Sturdevant and the Bouton brothers, those who had already left included Nathan Olmsted, Joseph Curle, Joseph Jump, and William Drinkwater. Several others moved on within the next few years.

As new lands were opened up farther north in the state, many young Wilton families looked for opportunities in that direction. Nathan Olmsted, Ralph Keeler III, Caleb Trowbridge, and Samuel Gregory, all related through the Keelers, moved to New Fairfield between 1739 and 1746. Much of Litchfield County was owned by the colonial Connecticut General Assembly and had not yet been opened for settlement. The General Assembly planned to offer the land in these towns for sale by subscription, but was deluged by so many requests that they decided to auction shares in all seven towns at sales to be held in the various county seats throughout the state. The shares were all sold in 1737 and 1738 to prospective settlers and real estate speculators who later resold them to settlers. Nathaniel Slauson and James Stewart bought land in Kent and moved in 1738 and 1740, respectively.

For some reason, Sharon, north of Kent, attracted a sizeable group of Wilton emigrants. Ezra St. John, a miller, was the first to move to Sharon

From
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