

John Southmayd

1676 - 1755

"...no man who has ever lived within the original bounds of the town has done as much for Waterbury as did John Southmayd."

- Sarah J. Pritchard - 1892

John Southmayd was born in Middletown, Connecticut on August 23, 1676. His life was so intertwined with the formative period of Waterbury that it is difficult to separate one from the other. A man of culture and noble character, he was one of the most important people in Waterbury's pre-brass industry history. Southmayd served Waterbury as a minister at a time when, according to Joseph Anderson, the pastor "was the reigning sovereign over his people, holding at the same time every office within his own government - being at once father, guide, counselor and deputy in all matters relating to the public..."

In 1686 when Waterbury was incorporated as a town, it left the village of Mattatuck behind. Still mostly wilderness, its borders encompassed present-day Waterbury, Prospect, Wolcott, Thomaston, Plymouth, Naugatuck, Watertown, Middlebury, and part of Oxford. At that time, Congregationalism was the official religion of Connecticut. Consequently, Waterbury's initial church, the First Congregational Church, was officially organized in 1691. The second minister of that church was John Southmayd who would become one of the most influential men during the early development of Waterbury. He served as pastor, preacher, and leader of his congregation for over thirty years, from his ordination in 1705 until 1739.

Southmayd, a graduate of Harvard College, was much respected, intelligent, and judicious. Few people have been associated with any town for so long a period and in so many forms of service as Southmayd. In addition to being a minister, he was the town recorder, the treasurer and he was both town clerk and town proprietor for thirty-five years.



He was appointed justice of the peace for Waterbury and the county and represented his town in the Connecticut General Assembly. Southmayd's influence was evident in every aspect of Waterbury's development.

In 1755, on November 14, Southmayd died at the age of 79. After serving Waterbury for half a century he was laid to rest in what became known as the Grand Street cemetery, the current site of Library Park and the Silas Bronson Library. With the elimination of the cemetery during 1891, his body became one of the few that was disinterred, examined and removed to Riverside Cemetery. Southmayd Home on Columbia Boulevard and Southmayd Road are named in his honor.