

Captain Robert Middleton — American Revolution

Born Chesterfield County, Virginia, 1755

Died Elbert County, Georgia, 1816

Robert Middleton's grandfather came from North Ireland in 1712 and settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He was John Middleton, a brother of Henry Middleton, who founded Middleton Gardens near Charleston, South Carolina. Robert's grandmother was Martha Caldwell Middleton, the daughter of David Caldwell, minister and teacher, born in 1725. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1776 and died in 1824. He moved his family to Virginia before the Revolution and his home was burned by the British in 1781.

Robert's father, John Jr., was one of several children. He was married to Margaret Preston, noted for her beauty and her poetry. Their children were John III James, Samuel and Robert, who was born in Chesterfield County, Virginia, in 1755.

After he grew up, he moved to South Carolina with two of his brothers. He was a captain in the Continental Army, serving 1776-78. His rank of Colonel came from his serving on the governor's staff after the Revolution. In the latter part of the Revolution, he moved to Wilkes County, Georgia, where he served under Col. Elijah Clark, in 1782.

GAY

In 1789, he married Elizabeth (Patsy) Nunnelee of Wilkes County. He was then living in the part of the County which became Elbert the following year.

We do not know the exact site of his Elbert County home, but Elbert County History says it was within a radius of fifteen miles of Heardmont, and it is possible it was near the present village of Middleton. We do know that at the time of his death, the plantation on which he lived, contained 600 acres.

Elizabeth (Patsy) Nunnelee Middleton was the daughter of William and Ann Nunnelee, and was descended from Elizabeth Hatcher of Richmond, Virginia, who was a great grandmother of Thomas Jefferson.

The children of Robert and "Patsy" Nunnelee Middleton were, Mary, born in 1790

and married to Caleb Tate of Lynchburg, Virginia, December 25, 1806; John, who married first Sarah Childers, and second Elizabeth Tate, (1817); and Martha, who married Mr. Woods, September 16, 1807.

Robert Middleton became sheriff of the new county of Elbert and served in this office from 1790 through 1799 and again in 1802 and 1803.

After the death of "Patsy", he married on November 11, 1810, Elizabeth Chandler Blackwell Williamson, the daughter of Joseph Blackwell, a Revolutionary soldier, and Sarah Banks. Elizabeth had two children by her first marriage. They were Betsy Williamson and Sarah Chandler Williamson, who married John A. Verdell, January 21, 1819.

Robert and Elizabeth had two children, Nancy and James Lawrence, who were five and two, respectively, when their father died.

Dunstan Blackwell, their mother's brother became their guardian, though Robert left Elizabeth, executrix of his estate. He left about 1000 acres of land and other property, and there followed some disagreement in the settlement of his estate due to the fact that there were three sets of children.

The youngest child, James Lawrence became blind when a young boy. He went out on the old post road, south of Elberton, to gather chestnuts from the big trees that grew at the edge of town along the road. A playmate up a tree threw down a burr, which accidentally hit James Lawrence in the eye with the result he soon lost the sight of that eye, and later of the other eye.

His nephew and namesake, James Lawrence Middleton Heard spent much time with him and remembered him as an interesting, optimistic man with a lovable disposition. Another contemporary describes him as unusually goodlooking and a gifted musician. His violin was his consolation in his blindness and his constant companion. James Lawrence Heard inherited it.

He married Sarah A. Cook, December 6, 1844. He died suddenly October 20, 1845, the night his daughter Rebecca was born.

His widow married William Cook, who was not related to her family in Elbert County, and they moved to Early County about 1850. Little Martha Rebecca's name

was changed from Middleton to Cook, her stepfather's name.

Her mother Sarah Middleton Cook died in Blakely, Georgia, January 27, 1889, and is buried there.

Martha Rebecca Middleton Grist died in 1888, and left five children, four daughters and a son, four years of age. This son inherited James Lawrence Middleton's Bible and gold watch.

James Lawrence Middleton is buried in the cemetery of old Bethlehem Church in Elbert County, by his mother, Elisabeth Blackwell Middleton. The inscriptions on their old fashioned tomb are:

"Sacred to the memory of James L. Middleton, son of Robert and Betsy Middleton.

Born July 10th, 1814

Died Oct. 20th. 1845"

and

"To the memory of Elizabeth C. Middleton. She was born on the 11th. of August 1780. Died on the 2nd. of October 1841 aged 61 years, one month and 21 days."

Robert and Elizabeth's daughter Nancy Parks, already mentioned, was born in 1811 and married Thomas Jefferson Heard, youngest child of Gov. Stephen Heard, Apr. 1st, 1828. She died at Rose Hill in Elbert County, in 1863.

The Middletons were Methodists but Nancy joined the Baptist Church after her marriage to Col. Heard and they worshiped at old Falling Creek Church till they became charter members of the first Baptist Church in Elberton in 1860.

Their children were Sarah Heard, who married Col. L. H. D. Martin, James Lawrence M. Heard, who married Mary Melissa Harper, Robert Middleton Heard, who Louise Jones, Erskine Heard, who married first Martha Harper, and second Caroline Calhoun, Wm. Henry Heard, who married Jennie Harper, Jane Heard, who married Dr. David Mathews and Eugene Heard, who married Sally Harper. These children all lived in Elbert County and thus many descendants of Col. Robert Middleton live in this county today.

It is interesting to note how the Middleton name has come down through the generations. A grandson of Robert Middleton Heard, mentioned above is Robert Middleton Heard, the present County Attorney in Elbert County.

Records show that Col. Robert Middleton took an active part in the life of the county right up to his death in 1816.

He is described in White's Statistics of Georgia published in 1848, as a small, active, quick-spoken man. His chief recreations were fox hunting and playing his violin.

He is buried on Old North Plantation in Wilkes County, Georgia.

Partial Bibliography:

1. Elbert County History, published online by the Heard Chapter, DAR Elberton, Georgia

2. Heard Family Records

Hero of The Hornet's Nest by Louise Hays .. page 154 - 329 (Certificate Revolutionary Service signed by Col. Clark)

3. Revolutionary Records of Georgia, Vol. II
4. Elbert County Records... Elbert Co. Court House, Elberton, Ga.
5. Material from family records of Mrs. E. P. Whitehead, descendant of James Lawrence Middleton Family
6. Material from Family Records of Mrs. H. P. Tuttle, descendant of Mary Middleton and Caleb Tate

Your

NAME

By JOHN C. DOWNING

• Middleton

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Middleton GAY

In both England and Scotland this is a place name. There are several dozen places scattered up and down England of this name.

With one exception, all bear the meaning "middle village" or "middle town." MIDDLETON on the Hill, Hertfordshire, was spelled MICELTUNA in 1086, MICLATUNA in 1123, and MITTLETONA in 1242 and the meaning is "large village or town" from the Old English MICLA.

In 1198 Michall de (of) MIDDLETON held a parcel of land in MIDDLETON, Wiltshire, as payment for keeping the king's wolf hounds. Richard de MIDDLETON of Buckinghamshire, Thomas de MIDDILTON of Lincolnshire and Gilbert de MIDDLETON of Yorkshire all lived in 1273. Johannes de MIDDILTON and Thomas and Robert de Midiltoun were on the 1379 Yorkshire Poll Tax Rolls. Christopher MIDDLETON is listed in the Oxford University Register in 1580.

THE SCOTTISH group acquired their name from the lands of MIDDLETOWN or MIDDLETON in Kincardineshire. The lands were so named as to distinguish them from Conveth Mill lands on the east and Westerton Conveth lands. The family who held this land for about 300 years bore the designation of "MIDDLETON of that Ilk" meaning the surname was the same as the estate name.

Umfridus de MIDILTON who witnessed a land grant in 1221 appears to be the first of the name. Humprey de MIDDLETONE of Kincardyn rendered homage to the English crown in 1296 and Robert de MIDDLETON, a Scot, was taken prisoner at Dunbar Castle the same year. Andrew de MIDDLETON was a witness in Mernys in 1357. William MYDILTOUNE was Burgess of Aberdeen in 1480 and William MEDILTOUNE lived in Glentanner in 1503. General MIDDELTON, commanding a Highland army, was ambushed and defeated by the English

General Monck in 1654. General MIDDLETON later became the first earl of Middleton and his son Charles succeeded to the title and later became titular earl of Monmouth. Most of these Scots were members of the Clan Forbes.

Eleven MIDDLETONS arrived in Virginia between 1635-56 and three MIDDLETONS arrived in the period 1639-42.

Burke's General Armory describes the various arms. The glossary might help in drawing your own.

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