

CHAPTER I

*It is a revered thing to see an ancient castle not in decay;
how much more to behold an ancient family which has stood
against the waves and weathers of time! —Bacon.*

The surname of Middleton is derived from the lands of Middleton or Middletown in the County of Kincardine, Scotland, from "midale" in Danish and Swedish compounds and Icelandic "mior," ton from Icelandic, Swedish and Danish, tonde, tun, a cask—all from the Latin of the 9th century. "Ton" originally meant a farmstead but now signifies town.

When the new Domesday was taken in 1273, Edward Middleton of Hindringham owned 1485 acres of land in Norfolk, England. Laurentius de Middleton, designated, Dominus de eodem, is mentioned in an instrument of seizin to Andrew Lord Gray, 1481.

Middleton is one of the most common Norwich, England, surnames from the time of Edward II when Peter de Middleton was admitted as a freeman; also in adjoining parishes of St. Lawrence in 1632-1664.

A family of good note surnamed De Middleton lived in Sudbury, England, in the time of Edward I, about 1283.

Many references are made to this ancient family in various parts of England and Scotland.

The first known account of our branch of Middletons is found in, Sussex County, Delaware, Land Record Bk. "R" No. 17, p. 179, among warrants. James Middleton was granted 200 acres of land in Broad Creek Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware, Mar. 7, 1794. Land surveyed by Shankland.

The name of James Middleton is on the muster roll of Capt. Nathan Adams company, Delaware Regiment Continental Troops, Col. John Haslet, Apr. 12, 1776, date of enlistment Feb. 3, 1776. In barracks at Dover, Delaware. (Delaware Archives, Military Vol. I, p. 53.) This is proof that the descendants are eligible to the Sons or the Daughters of the American Revolution Society. To date no one has entered the Society on the record of James Middleton of Sussex County, Delaware.

James Middleton, born 1750, died intestate in Sussex County, Delaware, in 1798, when his son John was twenty-one years of age. Dickerson Middleton, evidently a brother, was appointed administrator with Zebedee James as security.

In Delaware Archives—Administration of estate of James Middleton 1798 by Dickerson Middleton we find "Paid William Middleton for appraising, no

disbursements by name—Jan. 10, 1798." This William, probably a brother to James, died 1805 and left several children.

In Colonial Bonds, 1799-1801, for Sussex County, Delaware:

"Dickerson Middleton and Zebedee James, yeoman—bound to Sommerset Middleton, minor son of James Middleton of Sussex County, deceased." (p. 34.) This son is listed as "over 14 years" and dated Nov. 19, 1799.

Ibid. p. 35. Same guardian as above for James Middleton, infant son of James of Sussex.

Ibid. p. 36. Same guardian and father to Betsey Middleton (minor daughter under 14) of James Middleton.

Same for a William Middleton; no age.

Same for a Polly Middleton under 14.

These are all children of James Middleton whose wife, Mary James, born 1754, died 1797, when "infant James" was born. John Middleton was of age and needed no guardian. James Middleton married Mary James in 1775,

At Georgetown, Del., Orphans Court Record Libre "G," page 175: "To the Honourable Judges of the Orphans Court now sitting in and for the County of Sussex, the petition of Dickerson Middleton, late of the county aforesaid, humbly sheweth that James Middleton, late of the county of Sussex aforesaid did not dispose of the Guardianship of his five children, namely, Sommerset, Betsey, Polly, and William under the ages of 14 years that said minors hath other property worth by computation 40 Dollars each; your Petitioner thereupon prays your Honor to appoint a proper person Guardian to said minors. And your petitioner will ever pray &c Nov., 1799.

Dickerson Middleton

The Court appointed the petitioner Guardian approved of Zebedee James. Surety Bonds to be taken in 200 Dollars each."

Notice: Dickerson Middleton, brother of James Middleton, as Guardian to his children with Zebedee James as security. Possibly Zebedee was grandfather (maternal) of the children or their uncle (mother's brother).

James James died 1824 intestate—estate administered by Zebedee James (brother?), no heirs mentioned by name nor disbursements but: 1828 administration papers of Zebedee James, Mar. 11, 1828, to Levi Downing and Mary, his wife—Sommerset Dickerson and Leah, his wife. There must have been some connection there.

Sussex County, Delaware, 1805. (Final settlement of estate of James Middleton by Zebedee James.) "Paid balance due to Polly Middleton, minor daughter of James—paid to Betsey Middleton, to William Middleton." No mention is made of "infant James" who must have died in the meantime.

In those days when a man sold property, it was frequently the time he was leaving for distant parts. The estate being settled in 1805, the Middletons left Delaware for Ohio, probably after the brother Sommerset had married in March.

The Downings also lived in Sussex County, Delaware, for John Downing was fined in 1779 for not attending muster according to an act of the Delaware Council of Safety of the government, Apr. 29, 1776.

*I hear the tread of pioneers,
Of nations yet to be,
The first low wash of waves, where soon
Shall roll a human sea. —Whittier.*

CHAPTER II

We stand indebted

In love and service to you ever more.

—Shakespeare.

John Middleton was born Feb. 12, 1777, in Sussex County, Delaware, and is the oldest child of James Middleton who died in 1798. The Middletons are acclaimed English in every account. By general description they are said to be medium tall, dark complexioned with shiny black hair, slender faces, long noses and long upper lips.

In 1802 John Middleton married his first cousin, Elizabeth Downing, born 1779, whose parents, according to family tradition, came from that part of Germany called Hussia. The orphaned Middleton children must have been reared in the Downing household for the intermarriages indicate such. It is known that when John Middleton teased his wife he called her "a Dutchman," so either the Downing mother or father, or both, must have been from Hussia.

It has been said of the Middletons that they are fond of land and learning, shy, independent in action, proud, intelligent, religious, patriotic, and great respectors of family lineage. In religion the early Middletons were Methodists and in politics they were Republicans.

John and Elizabeth Downing-Middleton came from Delaware to Ohio with a group of relatives when their first child, James, was one year old. They started with two horses and a cart, but the cart broke down, so the mother with the baby rode one horse. The goods was loaded on to the other horse and the father walked. The Middletons and Downings established Inns at Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio. A small, tin, oval shaped server for sandwiches and a drink from the barroom of the Middleton Inn is still in the possession of Eudora Mitchel-Light of Elkhart, Ind. Four ladder-backed chairs and a rocker from the barroom of the Inn are in the possession of other descendants of Elizabeth Ann Mitchel. The Middletons of Charles and Prince George Counties, Maryland, also had Inns for several generations.

The twelve other Middleton children were born in Franklin County, Ohio, five miles north and west of Columbus on the banks of the Scioto River and spent their childhood there. The third child, Jonathan Downing Middleton, and the oldest daughter, Mary, were married when in 1829 the Middleton and Downing families decided to migrate westward to expand the family fortune. No one knows why Elkhart, Ind., was chosen as their destination.



THE FIVE MIDDLETON DAUGHTERS WHOSE PICTURE WAS TAKEN IN ELKHART, IND., IN 1886 WHEN TWO SISTERS HAD COME FROM THE WEST ON A VISIT.

Standing, left to right: Aunt-Eliza Settle, Aunt Nancy Jane Lake, Aunt Libby Mitchel.
Sitting, left to right: Aunt Mary Stotts, Aunt Saly Minear.

Owing to the misfortune of the father, John Middleton, who broke his leg, the family could not migrate in the fall of 1829, but had to wait until February of 1830. However the three older children, James, Eliza, Jonathan and his wife, Margaret, went to Elkhart, Ind., in the spring of 1829 to locate land and put in the crops. They built a one-room log cabin by a stream, later called Middleton Run, raised the crops, harvested them, and returned in the fall to the family five miles northwest of Columbus, Ohio. Those today leaning on the work of their forefathers have inherited blessings!

In the spring of 1830 the oxen wagon train was made ready to move westward. In February of that year they started for the primitive wilderness from Franklin County, Ohio, a happy crowd, not thinking of the hardships and sadness ahead of them. They must have been of a fearless and trustful spirit to forsake the comforts gained in Franklin County, Ohio, which itself was then considered a new county, and to brave and endure the hardships of establishing a home in a newer part of the country which a few years previous the sagacious French traders and explorers had traversed. The Potawatami Indians still lived in their villages along the sparkling streams. There were no roads except Indian trails.

This party of settlers endured many hardships on their way from Columbus, Ohio, to Elkhart County, Indiana. Many nights they slept in beds made on top of the deep snow and when traveling forded rivers in which the floating ice made crossing very dangerous. We do not know how many were in this company of settlers, but among them was a brother of Elizabeth Downing-Middleton, David Downing, and his wife, Polly Middleton, a sister to John Middleton; also, John's brother, Sommerset Middleton, and his wife, Mary Downing, a sister to Elizabeth and David Downing. Thus we find two Middleton sons marrying two Downing daughters and a Middleton daughter marrying a Downing son, making a trio of marriages between the two families. Also included in the group were a sister of Elizabeth, known as Aunt Sally Cooper, and two brothers, Nathaniel Riley Downing and Edward Downing families, and the Davis family whose daughter married Jonathan Middleton. The brother, William Middleton, moved to Kentucky in 1830 and was never heard from again. *A brother John Downing settled Pickaway County, Ohio. See page 103.*

Polly Middleton-Downing was inclined to invalidism and was ill on the journey to Elkhart County. Despite good care she died just before the settlers reached Fort Wayne, Ind., which was then a mere hamlet along side a military outpost. Not wishing to bury her among strangers so far from their intended homes the families brought her body to Waterford, Ind., and buried her in the Dr. Sparklin burying ground between Goshen and Waterford on the Logansport road. After crossing the Elkhart River a stop of two days was made to bury the dead.

The relatives came on to Elkhart County, which at that time was part of the Pulaski territory. The name Elkhart, originally Elkheart, a translation of an Indian word, was so called by the Indians from the shape of an island near

the center of the present town of Elkhart formed by the Junction of the St. Joe and Elkhart Rivers which make many turns and windings there.

Although heavy primitive forests covered the country, there were three open spaces in the county. One was called Two-Mile Prairie or Plain and was east of the present town of Elkhart, Ind. It was on the wooded edge of Two-Mile Plain by a stream that John Middleton's children chose their location. We always refer to the one-room log cabin, built in the spring of 1829, as the homestead, although another room was added later. It was a forest home in the crudeness of the wilderness with no charms, but the choice location by those older children was rational and wise for it was situated at the east edge of the present town of Elkhart on the south bank of the St. Joe River at a point they named Middleton Run. It is a small stream emptying into the St. Joe River and is still known by this name. A driveway ran around the log cabin back to the barn and a milkhouse located across the driveway was fed by a cool spring. In 1924 the St. Joe River was dammed for electrical purposes and this raised the water in Middleton Run so that the homestead buildings, hallowed by so many associations, had to be moved to higher ground just up the hill from the old site. The log cabin was torn down and used for firewood. Prior to this it had been used for a stable and shop.

*"Haply some chance-saved trifle
May tell of this old home;
Some relic, which, long pondered o'er,
Hints faintly at a life before."*

The hospitable Middletons always welcomed guests. In that day no church houses were constructed in the wilderness, but the home itself was considered a sanctity enough to house meetings and the John Middleton log cabin served the circuit rider preacher of any denomination and to these meetings the neighbors came. The Middleton cabin was often so full of Indians that there was no room for anyone to sit. At these times the younger and smaller children became so frightened that they scrambled under the beds. The Indians begged and traded for things the family had. They were always fed and dealt with kindly. One time, after a church building had been erected, Eliza and Elizabeth Ann Middleton returned from Sunday School one late summer morning when the rest of the family was absent. The girls went down to the milkhouse to get their cold lunch of bread and milk. As they ate they heard grunts and looking up they saw some Potawatami Indians with blankets on their shoulders standing at the door. Eliza offered the Indians bread and milk; they shook their heads "No" and pointed to a large pile of yellow cucumbers on the floor. One Indian gave Eliza his blanket into which she put most of the cucumbers and the Indians left without further disturbance.

The pioneer settlers went to White Pigeon, Mich., fifteen or sixteen miles, to get their blacksmithing done. On such a trip David and Joseph Middleton met a group of drunken Indians who surrounded them and began to dance and sing.

The boys feared for their lives, but the old Indian chief stepped up and told them in English that the Indians were only having fun and would not harm them. The Indians soon quieted down and the boys were relieved of their anxiety.

The Middleton homestead was a few rods from the St. Joe River and each August John Middleton put his notch in the ears of his hogs and swam them across the river to fatten on forage of acorns and nuts.

The Middleton family and relatives were stimulated by neighborly helpfulness to aid at log rollings which was very essential to quick developments for farming. After the land was cleared and larger crops were raised, husking bees began to take the place of log rolling. The women enjoyed wool picking and quilting at their social gatherings. There were apple parings at which both the men and women took part, and taffy pulling and dancing for the young people.

All the Middleton daughters could spin and weave. To obtain colors, they used the walnut bark, red oak and hickory bark, also pressed golden rod mixed with indigo and alum, pokeberry, and sassafras bark. The wearing apparel of the men was buckskin, flax and tow linens, linsey and flannels. The small spinning wheel and Dutch oven are still in possession of Rhoda Mitchel-Eby near Elkhart.

The diet of our pioneers consisted principally of wild meats, hog, and hominy, bread forms of Johnny cake, hoe cake, dogger, ash cake, and pone. A large dough-tray was used for bread making.

Some say that the Middletons had the wanderlust. They were the vanguards of civilization for at no time did the rigors of a new country seem too difficult for them. They kept just ahead of populated and fully organized territory. All their married life was spent in the crudeness of pioneering and they must have enjoyed the great out-of-doors, and the wilderness ways of Indians and wild animals.

The nearest neighbors the Middletons had were the Bolson Hess family south of Goshen, the John Violet family a little farther south, Jess Ruß who lived on Pleasant Plain south of Elkhart, and later the Randalls owned adjoining land.

The Middletons kept pet deer with same treatment as pet lambs. The deer would run with the cattle in the daytime and would come in with them in the evening for feed and protection.

In the spring of 1831, the father, John Middleton, started to Fort Wayne for plow repairs. On the way he met some former Franklin County, Ohio, friends, the Bolson Hess family who were just then migrating to Goshen. Mr. Hess gave John Middleton the necessary repairs, so he returned with the Hess family visiting on the way.

There was one road, the old Vistula road, between Fort Dearborn (Chicago) and Fort Detroit, and the older Middleton boys teamed on this road between harvest seasons. They hauled wash tubs, churns, food stuffs, and other articles the localities needed. They hauled their grain to Bertram, Mich., north of South Bend, Ind., to get the grinding done at the nearest mills.

The father, John Middleton, owned 160 acres of wheat land seven miles south and little west of LaPorte, Ind., LaPorte County, in southwest corner of Pleasant Township. Each spring the father and sons planted the wheat and during the harvest season, the older daughters and sometimes the youngest one, went with the brothers and father to cook for them. They hauled their wheat to Michigan City for market.

John Middleton maintained high ideals and always did any act in accordance with the innate dignity of his nature and great force of his character. Before his death he bought land to be used for burial grounds and a meeting house; three-fourths acre for \$7.50 was bought of James E. and Susannah Randall and another three-fourths acre of George Aumiller and Barbary Aumiller. This land is now known as the Middleton Cemetery.

*I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls;
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.*
—Longfellow.

Sally Downing-Cooper, a sister to Elizabeth, died and when Elizabeth went to her husband and asked for Sally's good dress he replied that the new wife had used it for her wedding dress. A sole leather roll stagecoach trunk and large pennies of Sally's are still in the possession of Eudora Light of Elkhart, Ind. A son, Bill Cooper, was a favorite boatman on the St. Joe River. He went to Clinton, ~~Ind.~~^{Indiana}, and later returned to Elkhart where he died. Before his death he was too weak to tell Mr. Davis where his money was hidden.

Sometime in the late fall of 1840 Elizabeth Downing-Middleton was stricken with apoplexy. She lived for a while but could not talk and slept all the time. Members of her family who were constantly around her could not arouse her, but one son who lived afar and whose voice was strange came home, and was successful in arousing her from the stupor. She died Jan. 9, 1841.

After her death, John was very unhappy. Many times his children begged him to have his picture taken, but he always refused saying that he would not have it taken alone. He died July 17, 1847, and is buried in the northwest corner of the Middlebury Street schoolyard, Elkhart, Ind., beside his wife, Elizabeth Downing-Middleton. ~~Steel~~^{Lead} plates were placed on their coffins but no tombstones ever marked their graves. This ground was the original Elkhart Cemetery, and when the graves were moved to an outlying new cemetery to make way for the school, the Middleton graves were left unmolested in the corner, due to the fact that there were no markers at their graves. An attempt was made to move the bodies to the Middleton Cemetery a few years ago, but it was found best to let them lay silent and undisturbed as they had for so many years.

*None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise.*

—*Fitz-Greene Halleck.*

It fell to the ^{eldest} youngest son, James, to settle up the John Middleton estate. The personal effects were divided at once but it was many years after their deaths, May 3, 1864, before the administrator was finally discharged. There was much land to be divided for John Middleton had come into this virgin country early and acquired choice tracts. He could not write his name as his mark is made on all deeds affixed by his signature. So close was the relationship of the Middletons and Downings that some of the land parcels were bought in partnership. Court records of Elkhart County show that the following land was owned:

N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$	160 acres	Apr. 5, 1831.
E. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$	80 acres	June 7, 1831.
W. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$	80 acres	July 14, 1831.
1 S. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. W. $\frac{1}{4}$	80 acres	Aug. 6, 1831.

(Owned with Edward Downing whose estate was settled
Feb. 13, 1846.)

E. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$	80 acres	July 3, 1834.
12 N. E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. W. $\frac{1}{4}$	40 acres	July 3, 1834.

(Owned with Nathaniel Riley Downing.)

12 S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ N. W. $\frac{1}{2}$	40 acres	Mar. 24, 1836.
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In LaPorte County:

S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 30 Twp. 36 R. 2. 160 acres. Bought Aug. 14, 1841,
for \$1200, Bk. L, p. 345. Sold for \$1600 on Oct. 20, 1843.
Deed Bk. N, p. 6.

In order to make the settlement among the heirs, the land was divided by friends and neighbors into twelve shares, so that there would be as many parcels as children. The viewers divided it into shares of equal quality, that is, if it was a fertile tract the acreage was smaller than a swampy or heavily wooded tract, for much time and labor would be required to drain or clear such ground and it would be years before those heirs would obtain gainful returns. After the viewers made the division, they gave each tract a number and assembled the heirs. The numbers corresponding to each share were put into a pitcher and drawn out as the heirs' names were called. They began the drawing by calling the name of the oldest child first, he stepped up and reaching high above his head, drew a number from the pitcher held by a viewer. Then the name of the second eldest child was called and she did likewise and so on down the descending age scale from the eldest to the youngest Middleton heir. It is related that much suspense accompanied this drawing due to the fact that one particular share of land was low and inclined to be swampy. As each drew his number from the pitcher, his anxiety was great for fear he would draw this less valuable land as his share. This state of anxiety did not relax till eleven had drawn and no one had the 87 acres of low land. All knew that Elizabeth Ann was the youngest

MIDDLETON-DOWNING FAMILY HISTORY

and consequently the last whose number remained in the pitcher. She was unmindful of the uneasiness that accompanied each drawing. An elderly man, probably one of the viewers, realized the situation, put his hand on Elizabeth Ann's shoulder and told her not to worry, that her share would make good pasture and hay land and would be more valuable when drained.

It was necessary to write the Downing heirs in California in order to execute the final papers for the land held in joint title.

*"All honor and praise to the old pioneers,
You may never know all their story.
What they found but a wilderness prairie, a garden became,
And their toil and success is their glory."*

The following children were born to John and Elizabeth Middleton:

1. James Middleton Mar. 12, 1804—Mar. 5, 1870
2. Mary Middleton Oct. 25, 1805— 1890
3. Jonathan Downing Middleton..... May 15, 1807—Jan. 25, 1853
4. William Middleton May 16, 1809—May 8, 1861
5. John Downing Middleton May 4, 1811—Sept. 19, 1887
6. Wesley Middleton May 22, 1813—Feb. 11, 1885
7. Sarah Howard Middleton..... Apr. 28, 1815—Mar. 4, 1889
8. Eliza Henry Middleton..... Dec. 15, 1816—Mar. 15, 1902
9. David Downing Middleton..... Nov. 8, 1818—May 9, 1876
10. Joseph Bigelow Middleton..... Aug. 20, 1820—Oct. 12, 1894
11. DeWeese Middleton July 20, 1822—July 21, 1822
12. Nancy Jane Middleton..... June 29, 1823—Jan. 18, 1908
13. Elizabeth Ann Middleton..... Feb. 9, 1826—Jan. 9, 1912

*We sleep, but the loom of life never stops; and the pattern
which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when
it comes up tomorrow.*

—Henry Ward Beecher.