

# MIDDLEBROOKS FAMILY ASSOCIATION, Inc.

## Quarterly Newsletter

March 2012  
Editor,  
Jarrelyn Lang

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Founding Editor,  
Dianne Middlebrooks

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**MAZE** by Team Leaders, published by Joyce Arnold

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Dave Clark, and Henry Middlebrooks

MFA Website.....Dave Clark

and Leonard Middlebrooks

Family Repository...Michael Kerry Middlebrooks

Family Register Update.....Leonard Middlebrooks

Military Register Update...M. Kerry Middlebrooks

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**MFA Web Site:** <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~midregerrata>

Middlebrooks Family Association (MFA) was founded in 2001 for the purpose of assembling and preserving genealogical and historical material for future generations. MFA has two publications, as below:

THE MAZE, issued each February, May, August, and November, is sent to everyone on the MFA mailing list. It is free to both paid and unpaid members. If you want to be removed from this list, please contact Joyce Arnold: [joycenjim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:joycenjim@sbcglobal.net).

MFA Quarterly Newsletter is published four times a year (December, March, June, and September) by the Middlebrooks Family Association, Inc., 274 Wilder Drive, Forsyth, GA 31029. Subscription to the Quarterly is included in membership dues. Articles for inclusion in the Quarterly, or suggestions for topics, may be sent to Jarrelyn Lang, Editor, at [MFAEditor@gmail.com](mailto:MFAEditor@gmail.com).

MFA membership is \$20.00 per year, September 01 thru August 31.

If you would like to become a member, please make your check payable to MFA and mail to MFA, c/o Joyce Arnold, 2904 Trinity Dr., Pearland, TX 77584.

From the President ---

The location for our 2012 Middlebrooks Family Association meeting/reunion will be in Jack County, Texas, in and around Jacksboro, Texas. My Great-Grandfather John Floyd Middlebrooks and Great Grandmother Mary Jane Jarrell Middlebrooks settled here about 1880 from Panola County, Texas, having moved from Jones County, Georgia, in 1872. Jacksboro does not have newer hotels, so we are staying in Mineral Wells, Texas, about 30 miles from Jacksboro.

Do you have any Middlebrook/s family that lived in this area and is not related to the above family? We would like to cover any other Middlebrook/s families, also. Please contact me with your family information.

**2012 Annual Middlebrooks Family Association, Inc. Meeting  
October 3-6, Mineral Wells, Texas**

Make your reservations at:

Holiday Inn Express Hotel (Mineral Wells, Texas)

6801 Hwy 180 E

Mineral Wells, TX 76067

Reservations: 1-940-325-7829

Mention you will be attending the Middlebrooks Reunion

Name of the Block: Middlebrooks (group name), block code: MFA

The group room rates – available only until August 24, 2012:

Two Queen beds, \$89.99 + tax

King-size bed, \$92.99 + tax

Rate includes Express Start hot breakfast bar!

After August 24th, room rate is higher.

Reserving through our group rate will entitle us to a no-charge Meeting Room during our event, if we fill at least 10 rooms.

Consider RV accommodations at [Fort Richardson State Park](#) .

Check our Web site EVENTS for more information:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~midregerrata/>



A little history regarding Jack County and a couple of web sites to search for more information regarding this area

### **Jack County [History](#)**

Jack County was created from [Cooke County](#) in 1856. The first court met July 22, 1857, in the front yard of one T. S. Nettles, somewhere in the old Salt Creek community. Jacksboro, known at first as Mesquiteville, is the site of Fort Richardson which is now a part of a State Park and displays the restored fort historically. Fort Richardson was established in 1867 as one of the second-line forts against the Indians. It was also on the Butterfield Stage Route, known as the Upper California Road, and the Southern Overland Mail route. From 1875-1876 the Mooar Brothers' buffalo trail led through Fort Richardson, and the Old Emigrant Trail passed through Jacksboro, traveling from Gainesville to Fort Griffin. Jack County is bordered by Clay, Archer, and Montague counties to the north, Young County to the west, Palo Pinto and Parker counties to the south, and Wise County to the east. Jacksboro is the county seat and the largest town in the county.

JACKSBORO, TX

<http://www.jackcounty.org/history/>

<http://www.tshaonline.org/search/node/Jacksboro%2C%20tx>

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgj01>

Genealogy today can be as simple as turning on the computer or web tv and hooking onto the Internet. From there we can find leads to our roots. Some are accurate and some are not. However, before the Internet came along, searching was hard, meticulous, and yes - expensive work. Check these sites for Genealogy charts, forms, and deciphering old handwriting:

**Genealogy Charts and Forms** <http://www.ldpierce.com/recordsforms.html>

**Deciphering Old Handwriting** <http://amberskyline.com/treasuremaps/oldhand.html>

Joyce Arnold, MFA President

## The History of Mt. Airy Plantation

By Jim Mead

The progression of ownership of the Mt. Airy Estate is rather firmly ascertained from available legal documents and deeds of record. What fills the history with emotional content, however, are the memoirs and anecdotal remembrances of those who have been associated with this home we affectionately call Mt. Airy.

The earliest owners of the property appear to be the Hill family, who began their occupancy of Mt. Airy as a homestead. Some of the family is buried here at Mt. Airy in the Southwestern graveyard behind the house, with Humphrey Hill being the apparent first owner sometime in the late 1700s.

From an early insurance document dated April 1816, procured by Mr. Humphrey Hill, we know that the estate had five principal buildings excluding a smokehouse, ice house, sheds, slave quarters, etc. They were positioned in a South to North configuration, facing towards the river and downstream. In comparison, today's home is situated East by North East. The insurance certificate listed a main house as a one-storey dwelling 44 x 18, with two adjacent buildings. A standalone kitchen 24 x 16 was to the west, and a school house 28 x 16, with a two-storey addition (24 x 18), was to its east. To the rear of the home were a principal barn 66 x 24 and a stable 28 x 16.

It appears from the records that a number of families were associated via marriage or as important friends with the Hills, the Keans, Minors, Halls, and Blackfords in particular. The last of the Hill family, following the demise of Mr. Humphrey Hill, appear to have moved to Lynchburg. The property then seems to have transitioned to a Mr. George Washington Dickinson, who owned it from approximately the 1840s.

There is a Virginia Historical Marker on Rt. 1 traveling north, just before Lake Caroline, that reads: "Dickinson's Mill... Lee camped here in May 21 1864 on his way to the North Anna to oppose Grant moving southward. Ewell's and Longstreet's corps rested here that night." One can easily suppose that the crumbling remains of an ancient mill located at the Hewlett Rd. bridge over the North Anna River is the mill to which this marker refers. Doubt as to this certainty can likely be dismissed because the ancestral home of the Middlebrook family is actually the location of the Dickinson home, Mt Airy Plantation, situated a quick step from the aforementioned mill found on the northwestern corner of the then-765-acre estate.

George Washington Dickinson, who owned the mill and this home, was, however, acquainted with the Halls and associated families who lived at the adjacent plantation, Top-n-Castle, that is located to the SE and just down river. Evidence of this is found in the book *Memoirs of Life in and Out of the Army of Virginia*, a telling of the life of Charles Minor Blackford who had lived at Top-n-Castle as a boy and played at Mt. Airy, then the home of his cousin, the last surviving Hill, Betty Hill Lewis. In his book he tells of the wonderful and refined country residence it had been before the war and during the Hills' ownership. He also relates that he was an officer under the command of General Jackson and tells of

how he came to the steps of Mt. Airy as the commander of a reconnaissance cavalry troop of 70-80 horsemen.

Arriving here, he was not recognized by the aged Mr. Dickinson until the soldiers brushed the dirt from their dusters, revealing their Confederate colors, and G.D. asked his name. Discovering that he was Charles Minor Blackford, whose initials as a boy had been carved into the aspens that populated the yard at Mt. Airy, Mr. Dickinson produced abundant food and drink for the entire patrol. Blackford recalls in his book that a number of initials were carved in the trees at Mt. Airy, including those of his Uncle James Minor, who did so with the inscription "1837 Earthquake," as he was in the tree at the time it occurred and related how it knocked the chimney off the school house here at the estate. Interestingly, the carving "1865" was also found, in contemporary times, somewhere behind the pond that is adjacent to the southern boundary of the property.

As an aside, it should be noted that Dickinson's son-in-law T.H. Jones did not greet the cavalry. Additionally, Mr. Dickinson is described as being aged and that at the time of Blackford's arrival, the home was described as being in disrepair and in an unfortunate state. One would suppose that, if the younger man was present, he would have greeted the company of men and that the estate would not have fallen into disrepair. This is of interest, as the majority of the information that was made available to me was via the Mormon descendants of T.H. Jones, who celebrate the beauty and abundance of the home in the years following the war. Their telling of the history records Mr. Jones being a Northern sympathizer who was jailed for his convictions. This would align the heritage of his descendants and the pacifist inclinations of the Mormons and complement other actions of his, such as his gift of a parcel of land for the construction of a church for the Mormon practitioners at Houston's corner and adjoining the store.

Still other information does affirm Jones's patriotism to 'The Cause'. Herbert Collins, in his book of *Caroline Grave Yards*, reports that Jones was indeed a Captain in the Confederate Army, and Captain Jones, along with thirty of his fellow soldiers, are buried here near the old Hill graveyard. Reputedly, another fifty people, including slaves, are buried in the area around said graveyard. Collins also reports that the original home was burnt down by Grant's Union troops.

That said, G.W. Dickinson bequeathed his home to his son-in-law Thomas Henry Jones, who had married the Dickinson daughter Edna Clay Dickinson, with the promise that he would care for Dickinson's widow, his wife Edna, and her sister Susan, following his passing. Mt. Airy then became the Joneses' property.

As mentioned, much of the history of Jones's tenure as the owner of Mt. Airy is procured via the records of his Mormon descendants. Another "telling" of the past arrived here in the early 1990s with the visit of a great grandson of Thomas Henry, a dentist from California, then in his 80s, who described Thomas Henry Jones as a captain for the Confederacy. In his telling, he confirmed that the original Dickinson house was burned down by Union troops because of Jones's allegiance to the Southern cause.

His telling of the history of Mt. Airy has particular credence. First, he was not bound by the preference for pacifism that was demonstrated by the Mormon descendants, and secondly, he proved to me that

another graveyard was indeed located next to the large pecan oak tree that rises from the NW side of the house as he walked directly to its corner and with a brush of his cane unearthed from the sod-covered ground a cornerstone. He walked two steps to the east and, with a similar movement, unearthed the broken remains of a headstone. While looking about, he noticed a third stone in line with the other two but remarked that this was not a marker for a grave. Indeed the gentleman was correct. It was the marker that I had placed there to note the burial and passing of a pet. I had chosen the site after walking the entire yard and found it with a strange type of tugging feeling that made me stop and mark the site. His reply to my telling him so was that, strangely, my experience must be true as it was the only consecrated site on the property.

The grandson shared another interesting anecdote of his grandfather's past. He reported that he was the original builder of the County Line Baptist Church. He said that H.T. would ride a mule to the site of the church from Mt. Airy on a Monday and not return until the end of the week, as the commute was too far to do in a single day and still accomplish anything at the church site. Everything was constructed from scratch, and one Friday he left a worker in charge of the kiln that he was firing his bricks in. The man got into some moonshine and unfortunately let the fire go out. On his return that following Monday, Jones saw that the fire was out but inspected the bricks and decided that they would be sufficient and safe to use in construction. Still, he decided to make the walls a bit thicker with these bricks and continued on with its construction.

On the completion of the church, Jones reputedly approached the building committee for payment and, they surprised him by denying his request with the claim that he had built the church with faulty materials. Jones retorted that the bricks were sufficient and he had made the walls thicker than they had specified. It was suggested that Jones, along with the committee, retire to the church for prayer and the guidance of God as to what should be done. At the end of the "consultation." the deacons reportedly told Mr. Jones that God had directed them to pay him for his materials and cost but no profit. Jones, on exiting the church he had just built, is said to have sworn aloud that he would never again let the shadow of a church doorway cross his brow. He reputedly never did.

This story does, however, give cause to his involvement and that of his family in the Mormon sect, considering that their adoption of its theology was an expense as it created some prejudice and isolation in the community. Additionally, Jones never did join the "movement," while nearly all of his family did, and many became principals in its local effort...an odd occurrence for a man that offered the property for their church and is heralded in their records for his contributions to their efforts.

As noted, various sources recall the destruction of the home by fire. The first was by Union troops. The consequential rebuilding of the home, with the economic plight of the post-war years, might be expected to have been modest, but a second fire in 1894 resulted in T.H. Jones rebuilding the residence in its present location as a two-storey home with four white columns, with a veranda running across the second floor. Jones died in 1896 and the farm was split up, with his wife retaining the house and 365 acres. Each of the ten children received a 40-acre parcel, including Betty whose memoirs of her childhood here at Mt. Airy are a principal part of this telling. Betty, her husband, Alfred Lewis, and

Betty's mother, widow Edna Jones, remained at Mt. Airy until Alfred's death in 1900. The ladies then sold their holdings for cash in order to facilitate an immediate move to a Mormon community in Canada. Betty sold her 40 acres and home for \$750.00, and Edna sold Mt Airy and its 365 Acres for only \$1,000. They settled in Taylorsville, Canada, and eventually moved to Utah.

After Mt. Airy was sold, by all appearances to G.P. and F.L. Smith, it again burned down but, by Betty Lewis Jones's memoirs, was rebuilt to the prior design of Mr. Jones. The property was then purchased by S.W. Middlebrook for \$2,500 plus interest, along with the purchase of a number of parcels that had been inherited by the ten children of T. H. Jones, or, by transactions, subsequent owners. The house burnt down for the fourth time in November of, reputedly, 1932, during Mr. Middlebrook's ownership, and he, along with his sons from his first marriage, rebuilt it as the present cottage that stands here today.

Mr. Middlebrooks fathered two families here at Mt. Airy. Following his demise, his young widow, in time, lost the home at auction via an effort that seems to have been of questionable origin and design. The beneficiary of this was a man named Mr. Snipe, who procured the property by this effort in 1956. Snipe's life proved unfortunate as the good fortune turned sour with time, and he died from possible complications resulting from his construction of the current Mt. Airy pond and the destruction of the outbuildings that surrounded the home site.

The property was then purchased in the 1960s from his estate and son by S. Usry, with the intention of developing it into a mobile home park. County ordinances fortunately prevented this from happening, and he gifted the use of the property to his son Dwight Usry as a home and a place for his ferrier business. Dwight and his family lived here until the birth of their son Jason. The large spruce tree on the northern side of the front yard was originally a Christmas tree planted here, commemorating Jason's first Christmas. Now, over 40 years later, it towers over nearly all the trees here except for the ancient pecan oak that borders the aforementioned graveyard to its side.

In 1991 my aunt Louise Usry allowed me to move to Mt. Airy. The home had been vacant for a number of years following the removal of the last tenant. I have resided here since, but in 2003, after an unfortunate business exercise that left me nearly destitute, my aunt requested me to move as I could no longer potentially purchase the property from her. Penniless and exhausted by the effort, with no prospects or commissions as an artist, I knelt in prayer to ask for Divine assistance. In the prayer I guardedly asked that a buyer be found that would gift me with the house and ten acres as I had no place to go or means other than prayer available to me. Within about thirty minutes, an old friend of mine from college called, requesting to stop by. I suggested that he help me pack to move and following his question as to why, I told him what had happened but did not admit to having prayed. Out of his mouth came the words of my prayer as he said, "Seems to me you need to find someone to buy the place and give you the house and ten acres?" I was spellbound and frightened by the synchronicity of his statement parroting the request of my prayer but agreed to follow his directions and assemble the material he then requested.



The point of a leap year is to keep our calendar aligned with nature, but many centuries ago, people thought that messing with our months would throw Mother Nature for a loop. Farmers worried that the change would lower crop yields and make their livestock sick. The Scots vowed that "leap year was never a good sheep year." Other lore held that "leap day babies are unruly and tough to raise."

Speaking of leap day babies, those born on February 29 are called "leaplings" or "leapers." Since their actual date of birth occurs only about a fourth of the time, leaplings often celebrate non-leap-year birthdays on February 28 or March 1. Legal permissions – getting a driver's license or drinking alcohol – are granted on whichever day a particular region deems official. Most states use the March 1 date.

There are an estimated 187,000 leaplings in the United States and 4 million worldwide. Famous leaplings include poet John Byron, bandleader Jimmy Dorsey, and writer Dee Brown. The likelihood of being born on February 29 is roughly one in 1,500. On this year's leap day, approximately 10,000 American babies were expected to join the group.

Four hundred years ago, women were not allowed to propose marriage to men – except on leap day. It is said that, in fifth-century Ireland, St. Bridget supposedly complained to St. Patrick that girls were tired of waiting around for their beaux to pop the question. Patrick agreed to a leap day role-reversal and, by some accounts, also declared that men who declined the proposal would be fined.

In Greece, it is considered bad luck to get married during a leap year – not to mention on leap day – but this superstition doesn't seem to extend to the U.S. The number of weddings performed in New York City on February 29, 2008, was more than double the daily average for that year. Tying the knot on leap day is ideal for practical couples. An anniversary every four years is easier to remember – and saves money!

In 1999, a rumor spread that the year 2000 would include not only a February 29, but also a February 30, one of many hoaxes going around at the turn of the millennium. However, a double leap day did actually occur in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden. To follow the lead of other European nations, Sweden attempted a gradual changeover from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. Somehow, the plan failed, and the decision was temporarily reversed. In order for the Swedes to revert back to the Julian system, they had to add February 29 and February 30 to their 1712 calendar.

In the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Pirates of Penzance*, the character Frederic is apprenticed to a band of pirates until his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. On that day, he deserts the ship, falls in love, and plans to marry – that is, until the pirates realize that Frederic was born on February 29, meaning his contract does not officially end until the twenty-first time that date actually occurs – when Frederic will be in his 80's. He is forced to leave his fiancé and return to life at sea.

So, why do we call it leap year when we're actually adding a day? It seems that hundreds of years ago in England, the British government did not officially recognize February 29 as having a legal status. Thus, such things as court proceedings, contracts, etc., were not legally recognized as binding on that day. In other words, the British "leaped" over that day as though it did not officially exist, and thus the name Leap Year.

**Sources:** "Take the Leap," Julie Fishman; msn.com.; "Leap Year Superstitions and Customs"; voices.yahoo.com.; "Leap Year," Nature Bulletins, hosted by Newton, newton.dep.anl.gov.

## **BESSIE COLEMAN, AVIATOR**

By Jarrelyn Lang

Bessie Coleman was both African American and female, and she is known as an aviation pioneer for both groups.

Coleman was born January 26, 1892, in a one-room, dirt-floored cabin in Atlanta, Cass County, Texas, the tenth of thirteen children. Her parents, George and Susan Coleman, were illiterate children of slaves. Her father was part African American and part Cherokee, and her mother was African American. When Bessie was two years old, her father, a day-laborer, moved his family to Waxahachie, Ellis County, Texas, where he bought a quarter acre of land and built a three-room house, in which two more daughters were born.

The Coleman family, like most African American families who lived in the deep South during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, faced many disadvantages and difficulties. They were deprived of the right to vote and other rights of citizenship.

When George Coleman's hopes for a better living in Waxahachie didn't pan out, he decided to move the family to Indian Territory (Oklahoma). There, because of George's Native American heritage, he believed he would be given the civil rights denied to both African Americans and Native Americans in Texas. Bessie's mother did not want to live on an Indian reservation and refused to go with him, so George moved to Oklahoma on his own in 1901, leaving his family behind in Waxahachie. Susan found work as a domestic, her two sons became day laborers, and Bessie was left to care for her two younger sisters and assist with the washing and ironing that her mother took in.

Bessie's education was sporadic. The one-room, eight-grade schoolhouse closed whenever students were needed in the fields to help with cotton harvest.

Already responsible for her sisters and the household chores while her mother worked, Bessie was a reluctant cotton picker, but an intelligent and expert accountant. Being the only one in her family who could accurately add the total weight of the cotton they picked, she increased the total whenever she could by putting her foot on the scale when the foreman wasn't looking.

Despite working long hours, she still found time to educate herself by borrowing books from a traveling library. Bessie learned enough on her own to graduate from high school.

Coleman easily established her position as family leader, reading aloud to her siblings and mother at night, winning the prize for selling the most tickets for a church benefit, and assuring her mother that she intended to "amount to something."

After she finished high school, Coleman worked as a laundress and saved her wages until 1910, when she left for Oklahoma to attend the Colored Agricultural and Normal University in Langston, Oklahoma, now known as Langston University. However, due to limited finances, Bessie was able to attend only one semester.

Back in Waxahachie, Coleman again worked as a laundress until 1915, when she moved to Chicago to live with her brother Walter, a Pullman porter. She attended beauty school then worked as a manicurist in the White Sox Barbershop and moved to a place of her own. Bessie married Claude Glenn in 1917, while she was working in the barbershop. She never publicly acknowledged the marriage, and the pair soon separated. She was also reported to have been married to a man by the name of Charles William Pankey for a short while.

After reading about aviation and watching movie newsreels about flight, Bessie considered becoming a pilot. When her brother John returned from World War I, he talked about how

French women flew airplanes and declared that flying was something Bessie would never be able to do. That was just the push that Bessie needed to start pursuing her pilot's license, and she immediately began applying to flight schools across the country. However, because she was both female and African American, none would accept her.

Not long after that, Bessie met Robert Abbott, publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, the nation's largest African American weekly newspaper. Abbott recommended that Bessie save some money and move to France, which he believed was the world's most racially progressive nation, and obtain her pilot's license there. She quickly heeded his advice; she quit her job as a manicurist and took a job as manager of a chili parlor, which provided a higher salary. She also studied French in her spare time. In November 1920, Bessie took her savings, along with monies contributed by Abbott and Jessie Binga, a wealthy real estate dealer, and sailed to France, a daring move for that era, especially for a woman.

Bessie was able to attend the Caudron Brothers' School of Aviation in La Crottoy, France, where she learned to fly French airplanes. She was awarded her F.A.I. (Federation Aeronautique Internationale) license on June 15, 1921, just seven months after her training began. She was the first woman in the world – and the first African American of either gender – to earn an aviator's license. After some additional training in Paris, Coleman returned to the United States in September 1921.

Bessie's main goals upon her return to America were to make a living flying and to establish the first African American flight school. Because of her color and gender, however, she was somewhat limited in her first goal. Barnstorming seemed to be the only way to make money, but she would need more training if she were to become an aerial daredevil. She again applied to American flight schools and again was turned down, so in February 1922, she returned to France, completing an advanced course in aviation in two months' time. In Holland, she met with Anthony H.G. Fokker, one of the world's most distinguished aircraft designers, and traveled to Germany to visit the Fokker Corporation and to receive additional training from one of the company's chief pilots. In August 1922, she returned to the States with the confidence and enthusiasm she needed to launch her career in exhibition flying.

As often as she was able, Bessie spoke to reporters as to the objectives she intended to pursue for the remainder of her life. She said she would be a leader in introducing aviation to her race. She would found a school for aviators of any race, and she would appear before audiences in churches, schools, and theaters to arouse the interest of African Americans in the new, expanding technology of flight. She occasionally achieved brief notices from the Anglo press, which ordinarily limited its coverage of African Americans to actors, athletes, entertainers, and criminals. But the nation's African American press proclaimed Bessie to be "Queen Bess."

Bessie flew in her first air show on September 3, 1922, at Glenn Curtiss Field in Garden City, New York. The show, sponsored by Abbott's *Chicago Defender*, was a promotional vehicle to spotlight Bessie. Thanks to Abbott's help, she became a celebrity, touring the country and giving exhibitions, flight lessons, and lectures. During her travels, she strongly urged African Americans and women to learn to fly.

The first airplane Bessie owned was a JN4, or "Jenny" – a surplus training plane from World War I. However, on February 4, 1923, within days after getting the plane, Coleman's first major accident occurred, while she was preparing for an exhibition in Los Angeles. The Jenny's engine unexpectedly stalled, causing the plane to crash. She was knocked unconscious, one of her legs

was broken, some of her ribs were cracked, and she had multiple cuts on her face. Badly shaken by the incident, it took Bessie over a year to recover fully.

She returned to Chicago to recuperate and to find backers for a series of shows in Texas. Her flights and theater appearances there during the summer of 1925 were highly successful, so much so that she earned enough to make a down payment on another surplus Jenny she had found at Love Field in Dallas. To raise the remainder of the money, Coleman returned to the East Coast, where she had signed up for a number of speaking engagements and exhibition flights in borrowed planes in Georgia and Florida.

In Florida she met the Rev. Hezekiah Keith Hill and his wife, Viola Tillinghast, community activists from Orlando, who invited her to stay with them. She also met Edwin M. Beeman, heir to the Beeman Chewing Gum fortune, whose interest in flying led him to give her the payment due for repairs on her airplane in Dallas. She wrote to one of her sisters that, at last, she was going to be able to earn enough money to open her school for fliers.

Bessie began performing again in 1925. On June 19, she amazed thousands with her barrel rolls and loop-the-loops over Houston's Aerial Transport Field, her first exhibition in her home state of Texas. Local whites, as well as African Americans, attended, although they were seated in separate bleachers.

Coleman knew she had to work within the general confines of southern segregation, so she tried to use her fame to challenge racial barriers, even if only a little bit. After her Houston performance, Bessie returned to her old hometown of Waxahachie to give an exhibition. Again, both whites and African Americans wanted to attend. Officials wanted them to enter through separate gates, but Bessie refused to perform under that condition, demanding that there be only one admission gate. After much negotiation, Bessie got her way. Texans of both races entered the air field through the same gate, then separated into their designated seating areas.

Tragically, Coleman's aviation career ended in 1926, when she was just thirty-four years of age. On April 30, she died while preparing for a show in Jacksonville, Florida. She was riding in the passenger seat of her open-cockpit Jenny, and her mechanic, William Wills, was piloting the plane. Bessie was not wearing her seat belt because she wanted to lean over the edge of the cockpit to scout potential parachute-landing spots. (She had recently added parachute-jumping to her repertoire and was planning to perform the feat the next day.) While Bessie was scouting from the back seat, the plane suddenly dropped into a steep nosedive then flipped over, causing her to fall to her death. Wills, still strapped into his seat, struggled to regain control of the plane but died when he crashed in a nearby field. After the accident, investigators discovered that Wills, who was Coleman's mechanic, had lost control of the airplane because a loose wrench had jammed the plane's instruments.

Coleman had three memorial services – in Jacksonville, Orlando, and Chicago – each attended by thousands of mourners. She is buried in Lincoln Cemetery, near Chicago.

Bessie Coleman's impact on aviation history, and particularly on African Americans, quickly became apparent following her death. Bessie Coleman Aero Clubs sprang up throughout the country. On Labor Day, 1931, these clubs sponsored the first all-African American Air Show, attracting approximately 15,000 spectators. That same year, a group of African American pilots established an annual flyover of Coleman's grave. Her name also began appearing on buildings in the Harlem neighborhood of New York.

In spite of her relatively short career, Bessie Coleman strongly challenged early 20<sup>th</sup> century stereotypes about white supremacy and the inabilities of women. By becoming the first licensed

African American female pilot and performing throughout the country, Coleman proved that people did not have to be shackled by their gender or the color of their skin to succeed and realize their dreams.

Although Coleman was unable to fulfill her dream of establishing a school for young black aviators, her pioneering achievements served as an inspiration for a generation of African American men and women. Over the years, recognition of her achievements has grown. Coleman's impact on aviation history, and particularly African Americans in aviation, quickly became apparent following her death.

In 1934, Lieutenant William J. Powell wrote in his book *Black Wing*: "Because of Bessie Coleman, we have overcome that which was worse than racial barriers. We have overcome the barriers within ourselves and dared to dream." Powell served in a segregated unit during World War I and tirelessly promoted the cause of black aviation through his book and his journals.

In 1989, First Flight Society inducted Coleman into their shrine that honors those individuals and groups that have achieved significant "firsts" in aviation's development. A second-floor conference room at the Federal Aviation Administration building in Washington, D.C., is named after Coleman. In 1990, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley renamed Old Mannheim Road at O'Hare International Airport "Bessie Coleman Drive." In 1992, he proclaimed May 2 "Bessie Coleman Day in Chicago."

In 1993, Doris L. Rich wrote *Queen Bess: Daredevil Aviator*. In the afterword to the book, Mae Jemison, physician and former NASA astronaut, wrote: "I point to Bessie Coleman and say without hesitation that here is a woman, a being, who exemplifies and serves as a model to all humanity: the very definition of strength, dignity, courage, integrity, and beauty. It looks like a good day for flying."

In 1995, the U.S. Postal Service issued a 32¢ commemorative stamp in Coleman's honor. On November 20, 2000, Coleman was inducted into the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame. In 2002, the Texas Historical Commission placed a marker honoring Coleman in her hometown of Atlanta.

**Sources:** "Bessie Coleman (1892-1926)"; American Experience. Fly Girls. People & Events, online; "Bessie Coleman – Aviator"; rootsweb.ancestry.com; "Bessie Coleman," Wikipedia; "Bessie Coleman, Aviator," Biography from Answers.com; "Bessie Coleman," *Gale Encyclopedia of Biography*, online; "Bessie Coleman," U.S. Centennial of Flight Committee; centennialofflight.gov.

## THE VALUE OF TAX RECORDS

Contributed by Dianne Middlebrooks

Early in our nation's history, many colonies collected poll (head) taxes on each male from the time he reached adulthood (usually 21, but sometimes 18 or even 16 years of age) until he reached the 50- to 60-year age limit, depending on location. Veterans, paupers, ministers, and some others were exempt. Some colonies collected quitrents, a tax on land holdings paid to proprietors or to the Crown. Because quitrents were viewed as a holdover of the English feudal bondage system, they were abolished during the Revolutionary War, and taxes were instead based on real property (land) or personal property (especially livestock). Various direct taxes were levied by the Federal government to raise money for wars at various times until 1917 when personal income taxes were instituted by the Federal government.

For the most part, each state had jurisdiction over what was to be taxed and how often the tax was to be collected. Either the county or the state was the caretaker of records collected by the various militia captains, constables, justices of the peace, or, especially in New England, town clerks. Some records were begun earlier than others, some are more continuous than others, and some are better or more available than others. When you are able to access tax records, study them carefully. They can help to provide a better picture of a family's financial standing in the community as well as aid in solving stubborn genealogical problems which may have no other proof.

Tax record research is easily accomplished if a man lived in the same community throughout his lifetime. His children's birthdates can sometimes be estimated by the year in which they began to show up on the tax records. A wife's name may be found by comparing the disappearance of a man and the subsequent appearance of a woman of the same surname with a similar number of taxed items. A father's name may be linked to a known ancestor if the son first shows up as "Jr.," if the father paid taxes for a son (as was sometimes the case in areas that taxed individuals beginning at age 16), or if the surname is unusual and the only one in the area. When several people of the same name are found in the same area, tax records may help to link a child to the correct father, as the records sometimes show how many children between the ages of five and sixteen (school age) or males of 16 to 21 were in the household. The appearance of a young male next to one of the men suggests that they are father and son.

Difficulty in proving kinship may be solved by circumstantial evidence of tax records, if a person shows up in the records of one place for several years, then disappears and shows up in the records of another place. In some cases, such as in Kentucky in 1790 and Texas in 1840, tax records have been used as a partial substitute for lost census records. They also may be among the few surviving records in Southern states whose records were burned during the Civil War, when copies of tax records were often sent to state capitols.

Be aware that there are some omissions of taxed persons. If possible, look at the original lists as received by the clerk; these often contained names of others living with the head of the household who were omitted from the final county lists, including some children. In general, children, slaves, and indentured servants were not named. Men over the poll tax age who did not own land, paupers, ministers, justices of the peace, militia officers, and tax assessors were usually excused from paying taxes. A state could also grant exemption for any other reason it decided.

**Source:** Ancestry.com: "For the Record," Kathi Satner, Feb. 1, 2000.

## "Beware the Ides of March!"

By Jarrelyn Lang

Most everyone recognizes this warning to Julius Caesar, delivered by the Soothsayer in Shakespeare's play. And, of course, Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March (15) in 44 B.C. In Roman times, every month had an *Ides* – and a *Kalends* and a *Nones*. The *Kalends* (from which we derive our word *calendar*), was always the first day of any given month, but dates for the *Ides* and *Nones* varied. So, although the *Ides* of March was always on the 15<sup>th</sup>, it did not fall on that date in every month. The *Nones* came eight days before the *Ides*.

The original Roman calendar was based on three phases of the moon, and the days were counted backward from each lunar phase. The *Kalends* marked the date of the new moon. The moon's first quarter was on the *Nones*, and the *Ides* fell on the day of the full moon. In March, May, July, and October, the *Nones* was on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, and the *Ides* occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup>. For all other months, the *Nones* fell on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, and the date for the *Ides* was the 13<sup>th</sup>.

# A Secret "Weapon" that Helped POWs to Escape

By Jarrelyn Lang

Who would have thought that a board game could help a man escape from a life-or-death situation? That's exactly what the board game Monopoly® did during World War II. Because many Allied soldiers were captured in Germany during the war, the British Secret Service devised a plan to get maps and escape gear to the men. They obviously wanted a device that wouldn't raise suspicions. Paper maps fell apart when wet and made a noise when unfolded, which would very likely catch the attention troops guarding Allied POWs.

They decided to print the maps on silk instead. Silk maps could hold up in all kinds of weather; more importantly, they would make no noise. In addition, the maps wouldn't tear or dissolve in water as easily as paper and were light enough to be folded into minute sizes to stuff into a boot or pack of cigarettes.

M19, the British secret service unit responsible for escape and evasion, turned to John Waddington Ltd., a company in Leeds, England, that specialized in the process of printing on silk. The company was already manufacturing silk escape maps for British airmen to carry.

Initially begun as a printing business, Waddington's entered into game production in 1922, due to the high demand for playing cards during World War I. Later, Waddington's became the UK publisher of Parker Brothers' Monopoly® game.

In 1941, M19 teamed with Waddington to use the board game as the means for sending supplies to POWs who were inside German camps. Far from ordinary, these were "special edition" games.

Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of specially selected workers, sworn to strict secrecy, began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were located. In this room, skilled craftsmen sat and painstakingly carved small niches and openings into the games' cardboard boxes.

Along with the standard thimble, car, and Scottie dog, the POW version of Monopoly included additional "playing" pieces: a metal file, a magnetic compass, and the silk escape map, which showed where safe houses could be found along the escape route. All these were neatly concealed within the game box. Allied soldiers and pilots who were headed to the front lines were told to look for the special edition game if they were captured. The identifying mark to check for was a red dot in the corner of the Free Parking space.

In addition to Monopoly money, there was also real money. Actual German, Italian, and French currency was concealed under the play money for escapees to use as bribes.

Waddington could track which sets would be delivered to which camps, meaning escape maps that were specific to the area could be hidden in each game set. The games were always sent via private, often fictitious, organizations, such as the Licensed Victuallers Prisoner Relief Fund. No escape aids were enclosed in Red Cross packets, so that the Germans would have no justification for stopping these much-needed parcels from reaching the prisoners. Although several sources stated that safe houses for each area were shown on the maps, such was not the case at any time. There was a virtual certainty that some of the maps would fall into German hands, thereby bringing danger upon those who operated the safe houses.

At the time, the Nazis were having trouble buying supplies for their own men and welcomed the Red Cross aid packages sent to POWs. Since Monopoly was already popular throughout Europe, the German guards welcomed it as a way for the detainees to occupy their time in a harmless fashion. The Germans were then able to use funds allocated to POW care for their own men instead, which didn't exactly follow the Geneva Convention's guidelines for care of POWs.

The British Official Secrets Act prevented anyone involved from disclosing the plan. While there is no way to tell how many escapes were attributed to the games, it is certain that Monopoly was responsible for at least a few of them.

Strict secrecy about the plan was maintained during the war, not only so that the British could continue using the game to help POWs, but also because Waddington feared reprisal by German bombers. Monopoly's role in the war would not be known for many decades following the end of World War II.

At war's end, the remaining "special edition" games were destroyed and all involved in the plot, including the escaped prisoners, were sworn to continue their secrecy. The reason for the secrecy, even though war had ended, was that, should another war occur, Allied officials would be able to use the game again to aid escaping POWs.

Monopoly's role in the war would go unrecognized until 2007, when the case was de-classified. Surviving craftsmen from Waddingtons, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony.

More about this service provided by Parker Brothers can be found in *The Game Makers: The Story of Parker Brothers, from Tiddledy Winks to Trivial Pursuit*, by former Parker Brothers executive Philip Orbanes, published in October 2003.

**Sources:** Sarah Sullivan, "How Monopoly Saved WWII POWs," associatedcontent.com; Brian McMahon, "How a Board Game Helped Free POWs," *Mental Floss*; discovergames.com; Ki Mae Huessner, "Get Out of Jail Free: Monopoly's Hidden Maps"; abcnews.go.com; "Monopoly Game Used to Assist POWs Escape Germany in WWII – Truth!"; truthorfiction.com.; "War Games," snopes.com.

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Gloria Robinson Middlebrook** passed away in August 2011. Survivors include a daughter, Donna Middlebrook Tanner; one granddaughter; two great grandchildren; four great-great grandchildren, and three step-grandchildren.

Gloria was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas 1763 descendant Walter Middlebrook, and by her son, Joe Anderson Middlebrook.

Funeral services were held August 25, 2011, in the chapel of Claybar Kelley-Watkins Funeral Home in Beaumont, Texas. The family had a private burial at a later date.

**James Edward Middlebrooks**, a Sims 1762 descendant, passed from this world on January 2, 2012, at Central Carolina Hospital in Sanford, North Carolina.

James was born to Isaac Homer Middlebrooks and Emma Mae Rucker Middlebrooks April 25, 1929, in Autaugaville, Alabama. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Isaac Homer Middlebrooks Jr. He was retired from the U.S. Army on June 30, 1973, after serving in World War II, in Korea twice, and in Vietnam.

Survivors include his wife, Sumiko June Akune Middlebrooks; daughters Susan Middlebrooks Madden, and Michele Middlebrooks Brinkley; and four grandchildren.

Funeral mass was conducted at St. Stephen Catholic Church on January 6, 2012. Burial, with Full Military Honors, was conducted by Bridges-Cameron Funeral Home at Sandhills State Veterans Cemetery in Spring Lake, Cumberland County, North Carolina.

Middlebrooks Family Association sends our sympathies to James's family.

**Denzel "JoRetta" Lewis** was called home by her Lord and Savior on January 9, 2012, at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. She was laid to rest at a gravesite service at Grove Hill Memorial Park Cemetery in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

JoRetta was an early contributor to the *Register* update for the Joseph 1773 family. MFA sends our prayers to JoRetta's family.

**Leah Middlebrook Tucker**, a Thomas 1763 descendant, passed gently into the presence of the Lord on January 15, 2012, at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas. She was born July 23, 1914, to Dr. George Frederick Middlebrook and Leah Carter Middlebrook in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Leah graduated from Baylor University with a B.A. and an M.A. in English, and she later studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. While at Baylor, she was active in campus affairs and was selected as a Baylor Beauty in her senior year.

She taught school for two years, then on November 20, 1937, she married Dr. J. Norris Tucker Jr., whom she met at Baylor. They moved to Houston, where she stayed for the remainder of her life. The couple had two children, J. Norris Tucker III and Leah Brooke Tucker.

Leah was a member of the Greatest Generation and exhibited all the noblest qualities of that age. As a young wife and mother, Leah bade farewell to her beloved husband as he went to serve in World War II, in Italy and in the Philippines. Upon his return in 1944, they resumed their roles of work and service.

Leah was active in a number of educational, charitable, cultural, and social organizations, including Blue Bird Circle, the Bayou Bend Docent Organization, and Pi Beta Pi sorority. She joined the River Oaks Blossom Club in 1943, serving as its president twice. She was president of the Guild of Houston Baptist University and later served two terms as a Trustee of the University. She was a member of the American Museum Society, River Oaks Country Club, and the Petroleum Club.

Over the course of approximately seventy-five years, Leah was an active member of two churches, River Oaks Baptist and Second Baptist. For decades she faithfully taught Sunday School, worked with the young people, led Bible studies, and in various ways supported the work of the church and the cause of Christ.

Leah will be remembered as a person of strength, dignity, character, and wisdom. She was always warm and loving, with a real zest for life. The greatest loves of her life were her Lord and His Word, her wonderful husband, and her two children. She had a sense of honor that never failed and a deep commitment to the importance of duty.

Her happy disposition brought joy and encouragement to all who knew her. She walked in gratitude because that was the condition of her heart. She was a wonderful gift from God for 97½ years.

Leah was preceded in death by her husband of 55 years; her son, Jay Norris Tucker III; her parents, Dr. and Mrs. George Frederick Middlebrook; her brother, George Frederick Middlebrook Jr.; and her sisters, Mrs. N.G. Bright.

She is survived by her daughter, Dr. Leah Brooke Tucker; sisters Mrs. Stephen P. Sakach and Mrs. Edwin Gaston; several nieces and nephews. One surviving nephew is MFA member Henry Mast Middlebrook.

A funeral service was conducted January 27, 2012, in the Sanctuary of Second Baptist Church in Houston. A reception was held following the service in the Deacon's Parlor. A private service and interment were conducted at a later date in Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County, Texas.

Our prayers and sympathies go out to Henry and all of Leah's family.

**Mildred Capp Tacker**, 97, passed away February 2, 2012. She was the fifth child of seven born to the Reverend Cal W. Capp and Margaret Middlebrooks Capp.

Mildred grew up in Shawnee, Oklahoma, graduating from Shawnee High School, and earned a bachelor's degree, with a teaching certificate, from Oklahoma Baptist University at the age of nineteen. During her junior year at OBU, she was voted Best All Around Girl by the student body. She taught school for one year in Crescent, Oklahoma, and for thirteen years in Shawnee.

She married Heber Barney Tacker on May 21, 1939. He preceded her in death February 20, 2000, in Hillsboro, Texas. While living in Hillsboro, she was on the building committee of the First Baptist Church. Since her husband's death, she has lived in Tyler, Texas.

Survivors include one daughter, Susan Mach; one son, William Mark Tacker; one sister, Euna Lee Fawcett; one granddaughter, two great-grandsons, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Burial was conducted in Fairview Cemetery in Shawnee, Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma.

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## FAMILY TREE RESEARCH JOURNALS

contributed by Neal Middlebrook from an online article in *Family Tree Magazine* by Sharon DeBartelo, September 24, 2009

A family history research journal is different from keeping an account of your life and activities for your descendants, although that is extremely important. This article is about a specialty journal that recounts your genealogical research discoveries.

A family history journal is also different from what genealogists generally think of as a "research log" or "research calendar. In a log or calendar, you primarily record the facts of your research – the date of your search, a source citation for the records you've viewed, the results of the search. These logs serve a function in research, but pedigree charts, which state birth dates, times, and places, etc., can be boring to others.

Instead, record your joys, frustrations, and feelings about your ancestor research. You might also include impressions you have of about one of your ancestors, such as: "I'm not sure I like Great-grandpa Andrew. I found a divorce record today in the county next to the one he and Great Grandma lived in, accusing him, accusing him of beating his first wife. Wonder what Great Grandma saw in him. She must not have known about his past in the next county when she married him." Or: "Wow, I didn't know my third great-grandmother went to law school and had to hide being married so she wouldn't get thrown out. She must've been quite some woman!" This makes the journal so much more meaningful, allowing your descendants to know your thoughts and feelings about this hobby of collecting dead relatives that gives you so much pleasure. It also makes keeping a journal a lot more fun – and you don't have to be a polished writer. Mistakes don't matter; you're keeping the journal for yourself and for your descendants.

### Five Perks of Journaling:

- ◆ **Analyzing and organizing**  
Your journal enables you to sort out what you've uncovered, helping you ponder and analyze your findings and formulate a plan for the next step in your search.
- ◆ **Reviewing and planning**

Unlike a research log, your journal has room for you to record why you think certain things and look at particular records. It will refresh your memory on what you'd been working on when you set it aside, and what leads you were planning to follow next. During your off-research time, you can make notes in your journal as ideas come to you for your next research trip. Now you never have to worry about losing your to-do list.

- ◆ **Recording and researching family stories**

Through your journal, you'll also be recording family stories you've heard from Uncle Harry or Aunt Virginia – the stories you knew you should be recording somewhere, but you haven't figured out exactly where, since there's no room on your charts and forms, and the stories haven't been verified yet.

- ◆ **Sharing your search**

Journaling is a good way to share your excitement over discoveries that non-genealogists just don't understand or fully appreciate. Non-genealogist family members just don't appreciate why you're happy to find a death certificate or why you treasure the special, happy moments in your search.

- ◆ **Telling the whole story**

By keeping a journal, you're telling the whole story of your search for your family history as it happens. The documents you find, the names you add to the charts, and those research logs only tell the facts.

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## Saint Patrick

By Jarrelyn Lang

(information from about.com)

St. Patrick, the man who would be known for introducing Christianity to Ireland, was born in the late fourth century (traditionally A.D. 390) in Roman Britain. At the age of 16, Patrick was kidnapped, sent to Ireland, and sold into slavery to serve as a shepherd. His period of servitude lasted approximately six years. It was during that time that Patrick developed his deep faith in God.

It is possible that Patrick devised his analogy that the three-leaved shamrock was a symbol for the Trinity during his years as a shepherd. He certainly would have spent plenty of time in the meadows. This one explanation of why St. Patrick is associated with the shamrock, the national flower of Ireland.

Following his escape from captivity, Patrick returned to Britain, then traveled to Gaul (now France), where he studied under the bishop of Auxerre for twelve years before returning once more to his homeland.

Sometime later, Patrick was sent by the church to convert his former captors in Ireland. Although other missionaries had been sent to Ireland previously, he was the one who succeeded. He stayed in Ireland for another thirty years, converting, baptizing, and setting up monasteries.

Perhaps the best-known legend about St. Patrick is that he drove all the snakes out of Ireland. According to various sources, there were never any snakes for him to drive out, and the story is meant to be symbolic. Snakes were thought to stand for pagan beliefs of the heathens that St. Patrick converted, or even for evil itself. So the parallel would be that he drove out pagan beliefs or evil, not snakes.

The exact years of Patrick's birth and death are not known, but he is believed to have died on March 17. His burial place is a mystery. Several places in Ireland claim that he is interred there, among them a chapel at Glastonbury and a shrine in County Down.