

MFA November 2018 Newsletter

The Middlebrooks Family Association 274 Wilder Drive, Forsyth, Georgia 31029

Greetings Middlebrook Family. Hope this MFA Newsletter finds you well, warm, and happy. First of all, we want you all to have an update on our Annual MFA Meeting held in September in Jackson, Tennessee. We had 35 folks join us including our guest speakers. Eight attendees were “first-timers.” Ancestor lines represented were Isaac, John, Nathaniel, Robert, and Sims. Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Tennessee were states represented. Our guest speakers were awesome as were our members who so graciously contributed their time and energy to present a plethora of information.

Bob Middlebrooks was elected to another term as President. Lanelle Middlebrooks was elected as the new Secretary/Treasurer. Neal Middlebrooks and Lesley Shealy will continue another term as board members. Angelia Middlebrooks Gantz was elected to the board of directors. Please refer to the last page for all contact information.

We approved a meeting site for the 2019 MFA Meeting! Bob and Ruth Middlebrooks will host the event at the Round Hill Inn in Orange, Virginia. The projected date is the last week of September on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. More information will be given about our 2019 meeting.

As always, the concern was expressed about bringing in new members. Talk about our association, share your information, reach out to people, **communicate!** Please access our MFA Facebook page. Although Facebook can be troublesome in our society today, it is a good way to share ideas and, at the very least, connect with people. As previously mentioned, I do have a collection of names (along with some contact information) of those who have been involved in some way or another with MFA in the past. I have them separated in decedent lines and will be happy to send any of you the list. Also, we created a pictorial directory of those attending this year’s meeting. I will be glad to share that as well.

We did have a guest from Jackson who just happens to be very involved in the Daughters of the American Revolution. Should any of you be interested in contacting her, I will send you her information.



President’s Message

Congratulations to our Arkansas team of Dale, Ella, Kathleen and Lucy who hosted our Jackson, TN meeting. It was wonderful. One of our best.

New England Project: We are announcing the commencement of a project to connect our New England ancestors to our Southern ancestors. A certified genealogist has been engaged to lead this research project which will consist of an initial phase and followed by a second phase if warranted. This subject is complicated and elusive. There is a great deal of information available, some of which is inaccurate or missing primary sources, and we must also contend with imperfect personal memories and simple human error.

Kerry Middlebrooks continues in recovery from a stroke he had last year. He is in a facility in Georgia. Cards and letters may be mailed to him in care of his son-in-law. The mailing address is: Kerry Middlebrooks, C/O Cobie Lee Tomlinson, 153 W Main St, Lakeland, GA 31635

We look forward to 2019 as a great year for our MFA family.

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Texas Jean Shroyer contributed the following will of John Middlebrook. Jean's contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

Thank you, Jean!!!

*Note from Dale: Although I did retype the document for publication, I did leave the document in it's original state. The lack of commas can be a little confusing, but the document is priceless.

**WILL OF JOHN MIDDLEBROOK OF NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA
GREAT-GRANDSON OF JOSEPH MIDDLEBROOK 3RD OF FAIRFIELD, CONN.**

In the name of God, amen.

I, John Middlebrook of County of Newton, and State of Georgia, being of sound mind and memory knowing the certainly of death and the uncertainty when it may come, do make and make this my last will and testament revoking all others.

Item 1st. I recommend my soul to God who gave it, and my body to be decently buried at the discretion of executors.

Item 2d. I give to my son Zera Middlebrook ten Dollars.

Item 3d. I give to my son Anderson Middlebrook Ten Dollars

Item 4th. I give and bequeath to my daughter Abigail Stanton Ten Dollars.

Item 5th. I give to my son Isaac S. Middlebrook a certain negro man name Boling at Five Hundred Dollars.

Item 6th. I give to my son David Middlebrook one hundred and twenty-five acres of land whereon he now lives at Two Hundred Dollars.

Item 7th. I give to my son John Middlebrook a certain tract of land that he sold to Henson at Four Hundred and Fifty Dollars.

Item 8th. I give to my wife Milly the following property, viz, the land whereon I now live, together with Jim a man Clary a woman and Riake a girl during her life and after her death to be equally divided between my son Isaac, David and John.

Item 9th. It is my will at my death the following negroes should be sold, and divided so as to make what my three sons, Isaac, David, and John have received equal viz. Joe a boy Ben a boy Louisa a girl Rachel a girl Washington a boy and Nance a woman.

Item 10th. It is my Will that my wife shall have at my death one good serviceable work brute, and four head of cattle together with all my household and kitchen furniture during her life and after her death to be divided agreeable to Item the Eighth.

Item 11th. It is my Will at my death that all my perishable property heretofore not mentioned shall be sold and out of the proceeds arising from that sale that my executors pay to Zera Middlebrook Anderson Middlebrook and Abigail Stanton agreeable to my last Will and the remainder then to be divided between my three sons so as to make what they have and are to receive equal viz. Isaac, David and John.

Item 12th. I ordain and appoint my three sons Isaac David and John Middlebrook executors to this my last will and testament.

In testimony whereof, I have hereto set my hand and seal this 27th day of February 1828.

JOHN MIDDLEBROOK (L. S.)

Witnesses
Jesse M. Carter
C.A. Carter

Anna Westberry sent an email (and posted on our Facebook page) inquiring about allergies. Since I often wonder about similar physical traits in our family, I wanted to share her email

“Anna Westberry : westberrysmama@gmail.com

Hi There,

This is Anna Westberry. My maiden name is Middlebrooks. Our line of Middlebrooks is from Middle Georgia.

I am trying to figure out where my daughter’s allergies came from. I am curious if any other Middlebrooks are allergic to wheat, dairy, pineapple, and fire ants. She carries an epi pen for emergencies for these allergies. Also, bees. Another Middlebrooks cousin I know is highly allergic to bees. Just those I would ask.

Thanks,
Anna Westberry

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Frogs, Enforcer, Death

Submitted by Neal Middlebrook

Edited by Dianne Middlebrooks

First appeared in June 2006 MFA Newsletter

James Bryan Middlebrooks, J. B. as he was known, was born July 29, 1897, in Hempstead County, Arkansas, to James L. and Fannie D. (Hinton) Middlebrooks. J.B. was born just two years before his father's death in 1899. It is believed that, at the time of James's birth, the family was either living on rented property south of Hope in the Bodcaw Township or had moved to Hope. Like the rest of his brothers and sisters, J.B. attended Center Point Elementary School.

J. B. loved to hunt and fish as a boy growing up on a farm, and later in life, also. J. B. and his brother Verdo (grandfather of Neal Middlebrook) were always looking for opportunities to get together and go hunting or fishing. On one such trip, J. B. invited Verdo to come down to Pine Bluff and go frog gigging. [2] Verdo left the farm on Patmos Road early one morning with his son, Ray, in their Model T Ford. They met J. B. and R. H. "Buss" Tunstall and a relative of Buss's, Tunce Walton, who was attending the school for the blind in Pine Bluff. Verdo said he would drive, and they ended up at an "oxbow lake" across the Arkansas River. It was remembered that, on the way down, Tunce started drinking moonshine. Not long after they arrived, he crawled under the car and went to sleep. After dark, they pushed off from shore in the boat and followed the shoreline. They used a spotlight hooked up to the car battery to locate the large bullfrogs. The trip was a real success, with three dozen large bullfrogs for dinner! This was the first time that Ray, Verdo's son, had tasted frog legs. (Ray is the father of Neal Middlebrook)

J. B. left home, the Old Hinton Home Place on Patmos Road, at the age of 18, and went to work for the Pine Bluff Fire Department in 1916. Two years later, he joined the Pine Bluff Police Department and served as a motorcycle officer. It was remembered that, after J. B. started to work for the Pine Bluff Police Department, he would ride his motorcycle home on weekends to visit his mother. While visiting, he would give the neighborhood kids rides on the rough and dusty dirt roads. It was funny to see a motorcycle coming down Patmos Road, since most of the farm kids had seen very few motorcycles.

Callie Lucretia Cunningham was born on March 22, 1900, in Lincoln County, Arkansas. Her parents were Albert and Lillie (Shumake) Cunningham. J. B. and Callie were married on May 15, 1918, at Pine Bluff, Arkansas. [3]. [4]

Less than a month after being married, James registered for service in World War I on June 5, 1918. [5] His birth date, however, was listed as July 29, 1896 (instead of 1897). He listed Hope, Arkansas, as his birthplace. His mother was listed as the nearest relative. He was employed by the City of Pine Bluff and listed his home address as his place of employment. He was described as being tall, with a medium build, gray eyes, and light-colored hair, and he was not disabled.

On August 25, 1918, J. B. Middlebrooks (Serial # 814746) was enlisted at Pine Bluff as a private with Company C, Development Battalion #3, 162 Depot Brigade, for a period of

emergency. His unit was demobilized at Camp Pike, Arkansas, and J. B. was honorably discharged from the U.S Army on December 18, 1918.^[6]

In 1926, J. B. was appointed a Deputy Sheriff. J. B.'s younger brother, Tom, and his wife, Zora, moved to Pine Bluff. J. B. helped Tom to get a job with the Pine Bluff Police Department.

Nine Years Later.....^[7]
Officer Middlebrooks
Found Dead — May 14, 1935
How Did J.B. Die?

James Bryan Middlebrooks was found dead on May 14, 1935, four miles south of Pine Bluff, near the Ohio Street Pike. He succumbed to a wound in his chest from his own .38-caliber Smith and Wesson service revolver. J. B. was found the next morning near his parked car by two Deputy Sheriffs. The area was one of J. B.'s favorite quail hunting spots.

According to the Sheriff's Department, J. B. had been in "...ill health for a number of months, and his condition had grown worse since an automobile accident several months ago." The Sheriff also mentioned "...his poor physical health, his eyesight had also started to fail him, and he was very despondent...."

J. B. was scheduled to enter the Veterans Bureau Hospital in Little Rock for a checkup. The Sheriff told J. B. to meet him at 8:00 A. M.

After the evening meal, J. B. had gone into the living room and removed his shirt. He was sitting around with some of us including mama (Callie) and Sybil (his daughter). The phone rang in the hall and mama answered the phone and told daddy it was for him. He went into the hall, talked a minute, came back, and started to put his shirt back on. He told mama he had to 'go down to the Pike' and see a couple of men. He left the house about 8:15 at night and did not return the next morning.

When J. B. failed to come home that night, Callie, his wife called the Sheriff about 7:30 a.m. the next morning, she said, "J. B. arrived home late yesterday, cancelled an appointment with (the) Deputy ... because he said he was not feeling well ..."

Two witnesses who lived near the Ohio Street Pike said J. B. had stopped to ask them directions to the cattle gap in the old Taylor field at about 9:00 p. m. They pointed him in the right direction and heard his car drive over the cattle gap, about 15 minutes later they heard a gunshot. The witnesses did not investigate that night but waited until morning, when they walked to the field and saw the top of the car in the woods. They then immediately went to town to report to the Sheriff's office that they had found the car in the woods.

Unanswered Questions:

- Who were the men J. B. receiving the phone call from around 8:15 the night before (May 14) that wanted to meet him at the Ohio Street Pike?
- If J. B. was not feeling well (as he had already cancelled the appointment with the Deputy), why would he agree to meet the two men at the Ohio Street Pike around 9:00 P. M.? Moreover, he had to meet the Sheriff at 8:00 A. M. the next morning to go to Little Rock.
- What was the appointment with the Deputy about the night before?

- Why would J. B. have to ask the two men where the cattle gap was in the old Taylor field if this was one of his favorite quail hunting spots?
- Why would the Justice of the Peace order the body removed from the scene and have it sent directly to the mortuary? Why was the coroner not summoned to the scene to take charge of the body? Was an autopsy performed?
- Why was the funeral service scheduled for the next day (May 15), instead of waiting the normal three days? This would not allow adequate time for relatives living out of the area to attend the funeral or time for the coroner to inspect the body.
- Were ballistics tests performed to make sure it was J. B's revolver that inflicted the fatal wound to his chest?
- Why would J. B. remove his jacket and shirt before taking his life?
- Would it not take more than 15 minutes, as reported by the witnesses, to drive over the cattle gap, park the car, walk to an elevated spot, take off your jacket and shirt, lie down and mortally wound yourself?
- Why were several shells in the magazine ejected from the rifle lying in the back seat on the car's floorboard?
- Why were family members not more aware of the serious nature of J. B's health?

We may never know if J. B. committed suicide or not, based on the accounts in the newspaper. His death certificate lists the cause of death as a gunshot wound self-inflicted with his service revolver. However, the account of events during the evening before, when J.B. left the house, as described above by his daughter, Sybil, at the age of 16, brings into question whether others were involved in his death. It is not known if an official investigation into his death was ever conducted. Others feel J. B. may have been trying to deal with health problems and took his own life.

Epilogue

J. B. served as a Deputy Sheriff for nine years at Pine Bluff (1926-1935). As reported in the newspapers by his fellow officers, **Officer Middlebrooks had an enviable record as a courageous, clean and efficient peace officer and was widely known throughout Arkansas as one of the finest.** He was also a member of the American Legion and the Fraternal Order of Eagles.

James Bryan Middlebrooks was buried May 15, 1935, at the family plot in Hickory Grove Cemetery, Star City, Lincoln County, Arkansas. Callie L. (Cunningham Middlebrooks) Craig died June 5, 1970, in Pine Bluff. She is also buried in the Hickory Grove Cemetery.

Callie L. (Cunningham) Middlebrooks married Albert B. Craig April 8, 1937, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Children of J. B. and Callie were:

1. Sybil Eloise
2. Alton "Buddy" Lawrence
3. Carlton Ray
4. James Bryant "J. B."
5. Mildred Louise
6. Baby Girl (died at birth)
7. Lillie Mae

Middlebrooks Family Association, Inc.

Bob Middlebrooks, President

Dale Kidwell, Vice President

Lanelle Middlebrooks, Secretary/Treasurer

Board of Directors

Bob Middlebrooks, President 2018-2020

Dale Kidwell, Vice President 2017-2019

Lanelle Middlebrooks, Secretary/Treasurer 2018-2020

Angelia Middlebrooks Gantz 2018-2020

Neal Middlebrook 2018-2020

Charles Middlebrooks 2017-2019

J.A. Middlebrooks 2017-2019

Leslie Shealy 2018-2020

Ella Tripp 2017-2019

Ancestor Team Leaders

Isaac born 1753: Leonard Middlebrooks and Jean Shroyer

John b. 1754: Neal Middlebrook

John b. 1755: John David Middlebrooks and Leslie Shealy

Joseph b. 1610: Leonard Middlebrooks

Joseph b. 1773: Dave Clark

Micajah b. 1758: Mary Baker

Nathaniel b. 1764: Ella Tripp

Robert b. 1766: J.A. Middlebrooks

Sims b. 1762: Neal Middlebrooks

Thomas b. 1763: Joyce Arnold

England Middlebrooks: Ian Middlebrook and Neal Middlebrook

Unknown Ancestors: Leonard Middlebrooks and J. A. Middlebrooks

On-Going Projects

Cemetery: J.A. Middlebrooks and William Sterling

DAR-UDC: Jean Shroyer

DNA: Bob Middlebrooks and Dave Clark

Family Register Update and Repository: Leonard Middlebrooks

MFA Newsletter: Dale Kidwell

MFA Website: Dave Clark and Leonard Middlebrooks

Military Register Update: Kerry Middlebrooks

Email Directory

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William Sterling

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Ella Tripp

Middlebrooks Family Association, Inc. (MFA) was found in 2001 for the purpose of assembling and preserving genealogical and historical material for our future Middlebrook/e/s generations.

MFA Web Site: <http://middlebrooksfamily.org/>

The *MFA Newsletter* (currently MFA's only publication) is published and sent to all present and former members and is available to the general public each February, May, August, and November. You may request to be removed from this list by contacting Dale Kidwell at dalekidwell07@gmail.com