

## **Micajah Middlebrooks...the Mysterious Micajah**

by Jean Shroyer (TXJean@aol.com) and Leonard Middlebrooks (gambol@juno.com)

In 2003 the first MAZE editor, Dianne Middlebrooks, wrote brief articles about each of the North Carolina Middlebrooks brothers. In this article Dianne labeled Micajah Middlebrooks "*The Mysterious Micajah.*" Micajah's background still remains a mystery in 2017.

In an effort to determine Micajah's background, Jean Shroyer and I have endeavored to resolve some of his mysteries but have not been totally successful due to an unforeseen event. The event was the complete destruction of the 1883 Hancock County Courthouse in the summer of 2014, thus hindering research of records dating to 1795.

Original property deeds, birth and marriage certificates and other vital records dating back to 1795 were destroyed and the originals lost forever. Some of these early records are available on microfilm, but to date no Middlebrooks inventory has been compiled of these records. Fortunately not all of this information is lost as many copies of county records exist at the Georgia State Archives, local county archives and at Ancestry and Family Search repositories.

### **WHAT IS KNOWN FROM THE 1909 REGISTER**

Louis Middlebrook in his compiled 1909 Middlebrook Register mentions Micajah as a member of a North Carolina Revolutionary War regiment (p24). No record of Micajah's involvement has been found and, like other information, it is not known where the information was obtained. The same can be said for Micajah's inclusion as one of the North Carolina brothers born in 1758, with no death information (p46). There are no property or other records of his existence in North Carolina; he was certainly old enough to own property, pay taxes, marry and be part of a militia unit.

Micajah is listed in Louis's family register as one of the North Carolina brothers. It is unknown how Louis developed this list of siblings. Research at the turn of this century has led to an additional brother and the exclusion of another, leading to the verification of a non included Virginia line of Middlebrooks.

The added brother is Isaac, born 1753 in Virginia or North Carolina. This Isaac's line was commingled in the 1909 Register with one of John 1755's sons, Isaac (182, p96), and the Harris County, Georgia Middlebrooks. The deleted brother is Garland; subsequent 1909 research has found Garland to be part of the Virginia Nathaniel Middlebrook line, a line not included in the 1909 Register. Hard evidence points to four living in what is now the Caswell County area; they are Isaac, John, Sims and Thomas. These four are documented in either land, marriage or tax records. A fifth Middlebrooks, Robert born 1766, is first found in 1804 Hancock County, Georgia tax records and a sixth Middlebrooks, Joseph born 1770/73, is first mentioned in 1794 Hancock County tax records.

Louis additionally lists David, the middle brother, Micajah, and James. David born in 1757 and James in 1759 are not found in any North Carolina records and each would have been of age to have left a footprint in time. Both are noted as Revolutionary soldiers with no records found to substantiate their involvement and neither appear beyond the initial Register listings. They are in themselves a conundrum, while Micajah next appears on page 64 living in

Hancock County, Georgia.

There may be a logical reason for the lack of further Register information for David and James. Both were listed as Revolutionary War soldiers; David (1757-1829) is said to be in the North Carolina Militia and held as a prisoner by the British and James is listed as a Captain in the Virginia Continental Regiment. James is noted as dying young (1778-79 ) and it is not known what happened to David after his capture nor are there any further comments on David's 1829 death at age 72.

James as an officer in a typical Virginia Continental Regiment would have been one of 30 officers commanding 600 enlisted men. The 30 officers would be a lieutenant colonel, commandant and captain, one major and captain, six captains, one captain-lieutenant, seven lieutenants, nine ensigns, one surgeon and one surgeon's mate. The 600 enlisted would be comprised of eight companies of 75 men each.

Typically an officer was a person of high social or political standing. It is not apparent that the North Carolina Middlebrookses were in the socio-economic group required for a Continental Line Officer. Additionally Louis states that James died young; did he die in service or from some other reason? Youth is generally considered to be from age four to 21 and James' service period of 1778-79 would place his age at 19 years and within this youth period. In addition to not belonging to the upper class or politically known, James would have been young for an officer. One wonders if James died while in service; unfortunately Louis does not provide a death date, only mentioning that James dies young.

The middle brother, *The Mysterious Micajah*, found on page 64, is said to be of Hancock Co, Georgia, born in 1757 [one yr difference from his age given on page 46], and from Caswell County; Louis lists two sons, James Hawley (Register #184) and a Thomas. There is no register number given for this Thomas indicating there is no further information available. In parenthesis Louis notes that this Thomas is of Queen Anne Co, Maryland with no further information given. It is believed that Louis placed questionable information in parenthesis to denote his uncertainty.

Research after 1909 indicates that Micajah had two wives, first an Ann Alford and second a Rachel Ellis. Louis does not mention either of these wives, nor does he mention the son Alford by the first wife, or any of Micajah's daughters by both wives. The James Hawley line is the only line mentioned; Louis notes him as the son of Micajah, born 1800 in Hancock Co, married Cassandra W. Howell. There is one child listed of this union, Henry Lafayette MKs (#367) and no mention of James Hawley's mother or James' three sisters. Even in 1909 Micajah was a mystery.

Though there are many unanswered Micajah questions, Louis does give a birth year, a birth place and the names of two sons, James Hawley and Thomas. James Hawley we find in Hancock Co, Georgia along with his father, Micajah. Thomas, on the other hand, is noted with some uncertainty to be from Queen Anne Co, Maryland. No further information is given on this Maryland Middlebrooks, and now we have a *Mysterious Thomas*. Is this an additional mystery or a significant clue to another Maryland line of Middlebrookses?

Could there have been two Micajahs? Possibly but this does not seem likely as Micajah is an uncommon name. And what accounts for the lack of information about Ann Alford and her son Alford Middlebrooks? The Alfords and Ellises do not appear to be estranged and based

on marriage records, their children are seen in intermarriage. This lack and the failure to list Micajah's daughters provide further mysteries.

## **TRAVELING TO GEORGIA**

After 1790 there are no Middlebrookses found in North Carolina. Later in 1793 Micajah is living in the southern part of Georgia's Green County; this area, in the same year, will become part of the new Hancock County. With the exception of Isaac the other brothers most likely traveled south of the wagon road to Salem and Charlotte, North Carolina, then on to Columbia, South Carolina and into Georgia just north of today's Augusta. While most of the Middlebrookses – John, Sims, Thomas, Robert and Joseph -- initially settle in Hancock County, within the next few years they relocate to newly formed counties further west and north.

John moves to the southern area of nearby Walton County; this is an area that soon becomes part of Newton County. Sims, Thomas, Robert and Joseph move into Baldwin and Putnam counties and eventually settle in Jones County. Micajah is the only one to remain in Hancock County; he rears two families and is most likely buried in the area between Hancock's Culverton and Mayfield communities, near the Augusta highway.

The Augusta highway passed through Georgia's Richmond County and into the 1784 newly-formed Washington County and was the main migration route into early middle Georgia. This new county stretched from Georgia's Atlantic Ocean tidewater counties north to the southern end of Franklin County; it was Georgia's largest county. In two years the population growth resulted in Washington's division into Washington and Green Counties, Greene being formed from the northern part of Washington. In the next seven years the area population increased and warranted another county division. Green and Washington Counties each give up roughly a half of their areas to form Hancock County in December of 1793.

The area east of these counties was safe, but in the area to the west of Green County and across the Oconee River lived the Creek Indians. Being continuously pushed westward from their native land, they were not friendly neighbors. This early 1793 area is where Micajah is first found. He is recorded as a member of the Green County Riflemen's second battalion, a local militia unit.

Along the Oconee, west of where Micajah settled, a series of log forts were built to protect new settlers. One of these was at the mouth of Shoulderbone Creek, a creek beginning about ten miles north of the original southern Green County boundary. Further up Shoulderbone Creek, in the early 1790s, is where the North Carolina brothers John, Sims, Joseph, Thomas, and Robert Middlebrooks settled. It is an area considered the best farming land in the new Hancock County. About 18 miles further south of where they settled, Mysterious Micajah is found just north of the original Green County line near the Oconee. This area will soon be incorporated into the new Hancock county.

## **THE FIRST WIFE, ANN ALFORD:**

Micajah marries his first wife, Ann Alford, in about 1793 and by 1797, they have three children. Two are daughters, Ann and Elizabeth, and one a son, Alfred, born about 1797. In the years between Alfred's birth and 1804, Ann dies. The cause, date and her burial location are not known. The year 1804 is the year before James Hawley is born; his gravestone notes

17 Apr 1805 as opposed to the 1800 year in the Middlebrook Register.

Though exact vital dates of Micajah's family members are unknown, the Alford Family Association does provide their names and a feeling for their ages. Their association has made available the will of William Alford, the father of Ann Alford, Micajah's first wife. This will fills in basic information about the couple's family in the early days of Hancock County. William Alford wrote his will in 1822 and named his children and/or their families.

Abstracting from William Alford's will shows that he gave his 200 acre plantation to his son Jacob and equal divisions of the remaining real and personal estate to his living children, John, Milly Read, William Jr, Jane Ellis, Owen, Jacob and Martha Newsom. Ann Alford Middlebrooks is not mentioned as she predeceased her father. The other unnamed child is Elizabeth Alford Grace, the mother of Joshua and Cannon Grace. She had also predeceased her father.

The will text continues with William giving two dollars to Micajah Middlebrooks, Alford Middlebrooks and Joshua Grace, but does not state the relation. He bequeaths a much larger sum, \$150 each, to Elizabeth Driskill and Ann Vinson, both named as loving [Middlebrooks] granddaughters. An even larger sum, \$350 is bequeathed to Cannon Grace, his loving [Alford] grandson. One of the executors is Joel Dortch Newsom, who in 1833, marries Micajah and Ann's daughter, Mary E. Middlebrooks. He is the brother of John Newsom and the husband of Martha (nee Alford) Newsom.

Why the large difference in the amounts given to Micajah and Alford Middlebrooks and the other Middlebrooks? Micajah was William Alford's son-in-law and Micajah's family had reached majority. There was no need to leave anything to Micajah, other than the token amount recognizing the relationship.

Alford's bequest, on the other hand, appears out of line in relation to those of William's other Middlebrooks grandchild, Ann Vinson. But in light of the fact that William gave Alford four slaves in 1811, a value of \$1200-\$2000, the two dollar recognition seems more than enough.

The existence of this first family is not in question as William Alford's will clearly indicates its existence. What is not definitive is the birth, death and burial locations of the family. The first child, Ann Middlebrooks, is believed to have been born between 1793 and 1795. This leads to an estimated marriage with Ann Alford between 1792 and 1794. The second child, Elizabeth Middlebrooks, is believed to have been born about 1796 and the third child, Alford, is believed to have been born about 1797. The best estimate of Ann's death is between the birth of Alford and Micajah's marriage to Rachel Ellis.

### **THE SECOND WIFE, RACHEL ELLIS:**

Other than names and relationships, little is known of Micajah's first family. Particularly unknown is the family history between 1797, his son Alford's birth year, and 1804, the latest year he would have married his second wife, Rachel Ellis. One of the many unanswered questions is how and where did he rear his three young children after Ann's death? At the best by 1804 they would have been eleven, eight and seven years of age. Did his in-laws, William and Martha Alford, assist or was it one of his sisters-in-law Milly, Elizabeth, Jane or Martha?

After Micajah's marriage to Rachel Ellis vital information is found to be more substantial. Their first child is James Hawley, born 17 Apr 1805. He could have been born on the 200 acres that Micajah owned on the waters of the Oconee. This property is surrendered the following year in a Sheriff's sale, settling an obligation with a William Biggins. An abstract from the *Farmer's Gazette*, dated 31 Oct 1806, states *on the first Tuesday of December Next, at the Market House...200 acres of land lying on the Oconee River, joining Jesse Talbort: levied upon as the property of Micajah Middlebrooks, to satisfy William Biggins.*

It is about this time that Micajah could have moved to the county's Culverton area, a community east of today's Sparta and where a number of Maryland Chesapeakers settled. It is also possible that he did not live on the 200 acres since there is no evidence found, one way or the other.

Of the two wives, Rachel Ellis is better documented. She is found in the 1895 *Memoirs of Georgia* sketch, where Rachel, son James Hawley and James' children are noted. The *Memoirs* is a compilation of short biographies about prominent Georgia families. These biographical sketches are arranged by counties existing in 1895 and each gives an idea of the residents' character and occupation. They indicate the county's lifestyle, in affluence, economy and implied demography. In the Middlebrooks sketch one finds Micajah's second family.

The sketch first talks of Micajah and his good character, then the Hancock County Chesapeakers, then his wife, Rachel Ellis, and finally their children. There is no mention of Micajah's first marriage to Ann Alford, nor their three children; neither does Louis' 1909 Register mention Ann nor Rachel.

From the sketch: "...Micajah was a member of the colony which settled in the eastern part of Hancock County about the closing years of the last century [1795-1800]. They were familiarly known as "Chesapeakers" having come from the bay of that name in Maryland. Soon after arriving he married Rachel Ellis...raised their children...of the Methodist faith."

The sketch's phraseology has led to numerous misunderstandings, one major misunderstanding being Micajah was a member of the Chesapeake colony at the time they settled in Hancock County. It was the group of Maryland Chesapeakers that settled and not Micajah. Micajah is previously found in the southern part of Green County, an area that was incorporated into Hancock County in 1793.

### **THE STATEMENT LEADS TO AT LEAST THREE MYSTERIES:**

One mystery is where did these Chesapeake settlers live. Were they from the Virginia side or the Maryland side of the Chesapeake Bay? Is it possible that Micajah is from one of these areas and not North Carolina and was he the forerunner of the Hancock County colony?

The second mystery comes from the statement "*Soon after arriving he married Rachel Ellis...and raised their children...of the Methodist faith.*" This precipitates a compound conundrum; did he arrive in Hancock County in the 1790s and when did he actually marry? It is known that Micajah was in Green, now Hancock, County by 1793, but the portion about "*Soon after arriving he married Rachel Ellis*" does not meet the facts. Another observation is the family was "*of the Methodist faith.*" The North Carolina Middlebrooks are believed to have been Primitive Baptist, though it is certainly possible Micajah converted to Methodism or

the children were raised in his wife's faith.

In the midst of these conundrums is a sidebar question raised by a MFA member. The other North Carolina brothers have simpler one or two syllable Bible names. The name Micajah is from the old testament, First Kings, verse 22; "*he is the prophet not believed*" and seems out of place in relation to the other given Bible names.

Some interpret "the soon after arriving" statement to mean Micajah married Rachel Ellis as soon as he came to Hancock County." If Micajah married immediately after arriving, there would have been approximately eleven years before their first child was born. Were there non-surviving children or did they marry closer to 1804?

The marriage date could be anywhere from the date of Alford's birth to before the birth of Rachel's first child, James Hawley. This time span may be narrowed by determining the arrival of the Ellis family in Hancock County. Further research into any existing property records is needed. This information may only be found in the state and local archives, or personal research records. It certainly will not be found in the Hancock County courthouse records and if any reader has hard proof, please contact these writers.

The third mystery is the mentioning of only the one son, James Hawley, and only two of James' five sons, James Thomas and Henry Lafayette Middlebrooks. There are no other children mentioned as well as no previous wife nor any other children. The sketch listing is repeated in Louis Middlebrook's 1909 Register, with the exclusion of the mother, Rachel Ellis, and the mention of the Mysterious Thomas. It appears that someone in this Hancock County line of Middlebrooks provided Louis with the 1895 *Memoirs* sketches and only the second part of Micajah's family is listed.

Like many of the early Middlebrooks, Micajah's burial spot is not known. His second wife Rachel Ellis, a known Chesapeake, and their only son, James Hawley, are buried in the Coleman-Middlebrooks Cemetery, located northeast of Culverton and not far north of the Folsom Creek Road.

### **THE CHEASAPEAKERS (from the Delmarva Peninsula):**

Based on census and tax records the Alfords, Ellises and Middlebrooks lived in the eastern part of Hancock County, not too far north of the wagon road from Augusta and the Carolinas. The Alfords were living closer to Powelton, a community about 13 miles north-northeast of Sparta and the Ellises and Middlebrooks were living closer to Culverton. No more than ten miles separated their farms.

The Levin Ellises, a family from Somerset Co, Maryland, are in this area. Levin and his wife Isabella were the parents of Rachel Ellis. Both are Chesapeake and are referred to separately in the 1895 *Hancock County Memoirs*.

Micajah's first child, Ann Middlebrooks, married Selby Vinson, from eastern Maryland. His second daughter, Elizabeth, married Wooten Driskill, another Chesapeake from Maryland. His third child, Alford, marries Sarah Ellis. She is the granddaughter of Levin Ellis from eastern Maryland and William Alford from Virginia.

In Micajah's second marriage we see James Hawley marrying Cassandra Howell; she was born in Georgia and her parents in South Carolina. The next child of this marriage, Nancy,

marries a Ryel Black. Little is known of this couple; they seem to vanish, leaving no footprints. The third child, Mary Ellis Middlebrooks, marries Joel Dortch Newsom from North Carolina. His last child Martha D. dies, apparently single, in Hancock County. She is 47 years old and it is not known where she is buried. This in itself is a mystery, as she would be expected to be buried in the Coleman-Middlebrooks Cemetery with other members of her family.

The Alford family is also well intertwined with the Chesapeakers. Jacob Alford marries Martha Culver; her father was from eastern Maryland and part of the clan who formed the community of Culverton. William Alford Jr. marries Jane Ellis, whose father is from the same eastern Maryland area. Jane Alford marries Isaac Ellis, a Chesapeake and son of Levin Ellis.

From these marriages it is easy to become lost and not realize who is on first. The Alfords, Ellises and Middlebrookses of both marriages are all intertwined in Hancock County. One thing is certain, Micajah did settle with the Chesapeakers. Whether he was an actual Chesapeake from Maryland or Virginia is not known.

## **In summary -**

### **What is known of Micajah Middlebrooks:**

- a] Micajah is first found in Green, now Hancock Co, in 1793.
- b] He first married Ann Alford (family from inland Virginia). They were not Chesapeakers.
- c] His first wife, Ann Alford, dies before 1804.
- d] His children by Ann Alford are known; they are named in Ann's father's will of 1822.
- e] He settles with the Chesapeakers in the early part of the nineteenth century.
- f] He marries Rachel Ellis in this time period. Her family is proven to be Chesapeakers.
- g] Micajah dies 19 Jan 1830, per the James Hawley Family Bible.

### **What is not known of Micajah Middlebrooks:**

- a] Where he was born. He lived some distance from his reported brothers John, Sims, Thomas, Robert and Joseph. Were they estranged or not related?
- b] Where did he raise his three children prior to his second marriage?
- c] It is implied the Micajah is a Chesapeake, but not proven. His being a member of the Chesapeake group does not make him a Chesapeake.
- d] Where Micajah is buried; it is suspected it is in the 111 District in the Folsom Creek area but not proven. Folsom Creek is about a mile beyond the Coleman-Middlebrooks Cemetery.

The mysteries of Mysterious Micajah continue.