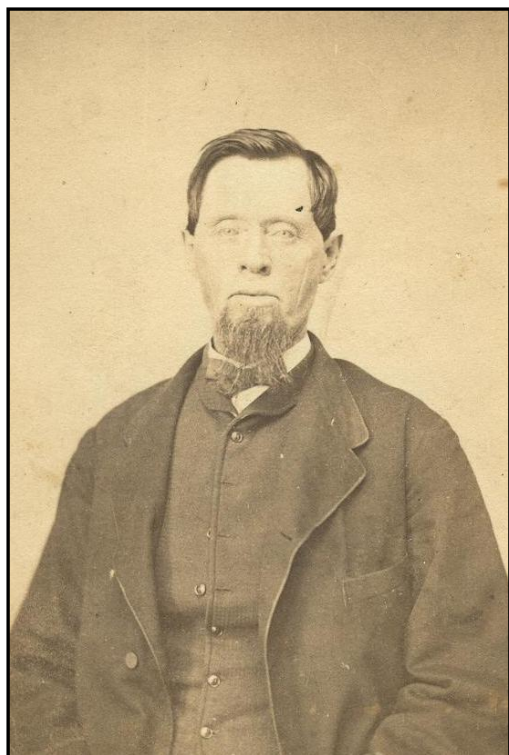


The Reverend Samuel Middleton of Ohio and Illinois: Nineteenth-Century Itinerant Methodist Preacher

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Religion figured prominently in the lives of many of the first Europeans to settle on the east coast of America. As these families and their descendents moved west into Ohio and Illinois, they brought their religion with them. Along with farmers and tradesmen came itinerant preachers. They would spend many hours on horseback or holding the reins of horse-drawn buggies, ministering to the families in the small towns and farming communities on their circuit. One of these ministers was the Reverend Samuel Middleton.



Undated photo of the Reverend Samuel Middleton sent to me by descendent Julie Owens.

By all accounts, Samuel Middleton, pictured at the left, worked long and hard in the ministry of saving the souls of men. According to a biographical sketch printed in the *Journal of the Illinois Annual Conference of Episcopal Methodist Churches*, he received his formal religious training at Greenfield Seminary in Highland County, Ohio. In 1848, the Reverend Samuel Middleton commenced the laborious work of an itinerant Methodist preacher. He had thirty-four assignments over the course of his ministerial career. The Reverend “was a man of positive temperament, deep religious convictions, and had a rich Christian experience ... His method of preaching was argumentative and pronouncedly biblical ... When his message was delivered, no interpreter was necessary ... He rebuked sin with boldness and commended righteousness with loving eloquence.” His ministry spanned forty-six years. (A copy of the biographical sketch is reproduced at the end of this article.) In his book *Highways and Hedges*, written in 1870, the Reverend John Stewart had this to say about his colleague: “He proved to be a zealous and useful minister and commanded the confidence and the respect of the people.”

Samuel Middleton had been thoroughly schooled in Methodism. Several sources attest to his religious upbringing. According to the biographical sketch found in the Journal listed above, Samuel Middleton “was a descendant of Godly parents ... of Center County, Pennsylvania. In 1821, they left their native state and settled in the state of Ohio. In their home the first Methodist Episcopal Society of that locality was organized.” From another source it is stated, “For many years [Jacob Middleton’s] house was a preaching-place, and also a home for the itinerants of different denominations. He was liberal with his money in building houses of worship and the support of the ministry. All of his children are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (Obituary of Jacob Middleton, Samuel Middleton’s father). In her book on Jacob Middleton, Ruth Coleman states that “Jacob Middleton and his wife, Rebecca, are named along with his brothers, James and William, as organizing a Methodist Class at the home of James and Elizabeth Middleton. This class was the beginning of the Bethesda Methodist Church in Paint Township [Ross County, OH].” (Source: Coleman, Ruth. *James Middleton of James Middleton of Centre County, Pennsylvania*)

Samuel's Birth:

Samuel Middleton was born on March 31, 1825 in Eaton, Preble County, OH to Jacob Middleton and Rebecca Bathurst, both of Centre County, Pennsylvania. In 1828, the family moved to Ross County, Ohio.

On April 1, 1851 Samuel married Mary Easterbrook, the daughter of George W. Easterbrook and Elizabeth Ann Purcell, in Fayette County, OH.

Family of Samuel and Mary:

The couple had six children, five surviving to adulthood, and all were born in Ohio:

George Delbert - B. abt.1852; M. 1888, res. in Boulder Co., CO in 1900; a widower living with step-mother in TX, 1910

Francis Jacob - B. May 27,1854; M. Lulu Kennedy, 1889; D. Dec. 20, 1911 in Las Vegas, NM

Alvaretta - B. abt. 1857; never married; living in Texas with step-mother in 1910

Kate Rush - B. abt. 1861, school & music teacher, never married, died in Champaign, IL sometime before 1903

Samuel See - November 22, 1863; M. Lulu Cackley Nov. 7, 1888; D. Dec 16,1929 in LeRoy, McLean Co. IL

Elizabeth - B. and D. abt. 1866

According to descendent Edmund Burrus Middleton (son of Francis Jacob and Lulu Kennedy), Mary died shortly after the birth of her sixth child, who lived only a few days. No record of Mary's death has been located, but she must have died about 1866.



Family of Rev. Samuel Middleton c. 1889: Front row (L to R) Lulu Cackley (wife of Samuel See), Francis Jacob, Lulu Kennedy (Francis' wife). Behind: Kate Rush, Earl, and Alvaretta (Undated photo courtesy of Julie Owens; might be following the wedding of Francis and Lulu)

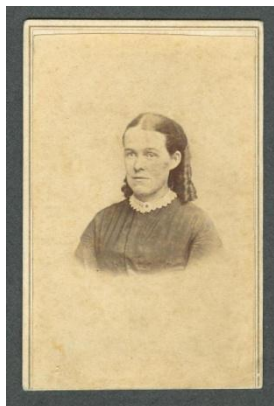
Samuel married Margaret McCann Williams about 1869 (U.S. Census record of 1900).

Family of Samuel and Margaret: one son, Earl Winterbottom, B. Oct 1, 1874 in IL; M. Marinda Ice, D. Sept. 1, 1945.

Samuel and his family moved a number of times in the course of his career. In the U.S. Census of 1860, Samuel, his wife Mary, and the oldest three children were living in Jackson, Pike County, Ohio. In the U.S. Census of 1870, Samuel and his wife Margaret were living with the five children of Samuel's first marriage in Randolph Township, McLean County, IL. In the U.S. Census of 1880, Samuel, his wife Margaret, and six children were living in LeRoy, McLean County, IL. In the U.S. Census of 1900, Samuel and his wife Margaret were living in Champaign, Champaign County, IL with Alvaretta, Earl and his family. The U.S. Census records capture only a few locations. A more complete history of his places of residence is provided in his biographical sketch.

Death:

The Reverend Samuel Middleton died on March 5, 1903, age 77, in Champaign-Urbana, Champaign County, Illinois. He is



*Margaret Williams
Middleton, second wife of
Samuel Middleton (Photo
courtesy of Julie Owens)*

buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Champaign. After he died, Margaret moved to Colorado County, Texas with step-children Alvaretta and George Delbert.

More about Samuel's parents and siblings:

"Jacob Middleton [Samuel's father] was born in Philadelphia [PA], April 19, 1794. He joined the Church in 1814; was married to Miss Rebecca Bathurst in 1815; moved to Preble County, Ohio, 1821, and located where the town of Eaton now stands. The first Methodist society was organized at Eaton in his house in 1822, by the Rev. James Murray. In 1828 he moved to Ross County, Ohio, and settled at Rapid Forge ... He afterward lived near Greenfield, Highland County, Ohio, for several years ... After this he lived in the State of Illinois for several years. Five years ago [Abt. 1870] he returned to Ohio and settled in Bloomingburg, Fayette County. In February, 1870, he was struck with paralysis ... Five of his children preceded him [in death]. He leaves an aged widow and four children. His son Joseph lives in Iowa; Samuel is a minister of the Gospel and belongs to the Illinois Conference. J.C. [Jacob Cyrus] Middleton lives in Bloomingburg, Ohio. His daughter, Mrs. Hannah J. Easterbrook, is now living in McLean County, IL ... [Jacob died] February 5, [1875], in his eighty-first year." Rebecca died February 19, 1892 in Saybrook, McLean Co. IL at the age of 97. Children were Lawrence, Joseph, Jonathan, Samuel, William, Seth, Hannah, and Jacob Cyrus. (Excerpts from the obituaries of Jacob and Rebecca Middleton)

Edmund Bathurst, in his report "The Middleton and Bathurst Families" (included as an addendum to Ruth Coleman's book on Lawrence Bathurst), notes that the Reverend Samuel Middleton wrote an autobiography in which he stated that he was the son of Jacob Middleton and Rebecca Bathurst, that Jacob was the son of James Middleton, Sr. and that Rebecca was the daughter of Lawrence Bathurst.

A biographical sketch of the Reverend Samuel Middleton, printed in the *Journal of the Illinois Annual Conference of Episcopal Methodist Churches*, follows.

in that city and later filled the pastorate at Hannibal, Mo. In 1853 he was appointed to Griggsville, Illinois Conference, where he was in charge of the Academy. From this, on to the time of his retirement from the active ranks, in 1881, he was a leading factor in the work of this great Conference as pastor of such charges as Jacksonville, where he was president of our female college and twice pastor; Quincy, Charleston, Carlinville; Urbana, where he was thrice pastor, and other important points, as pastor and presiding elder. In all his offices and works he was recognized as a moulding factor in the better life and progress of his state. Since 1890 his home has been in Pueblo and his church relation with St. Paul's, formerly Broadway Church. During this time it is safe to say that no man has been more relished in the ministers' meetings and in a broad, genial Christian fellowship. In his death every member of the Ministers' Association of Pueblo felt a sense of personal loss. A man of rich insight and original grasp of Bible teaching, catholic spirit, affectionate disposition, gracious wit, one felt in every contact with him a positive increment of Christian knowledge and life. He reminded one of the thought: "To love is a liberal education." Sister McCoy and a large family of sons and daughters survive him. One son, Major McCoy, being now in the United States army in the Philippines, making preparations for the journey home. For the ten months preceding his death he was almost constantly a sufferer. His sick chamber was a veritable sanctuary of praise. "I want you to know," he would say, "that Christ does not disappoint me. My soul is flooded with His peace." Thus, after fierce pain had racked his feeble body to exhaustion, he died a beautiful, triumphant death. Brief services were held at the home, participated in by his pastor, the writer, Presiding Elder J. F. Harris, and his ministerial friends of the city. In Jacksonville, Ill., the casket was taken to the College Chapel, where services were rendered as for an honored chief. The Rev. Dr. W. F. Short and others participated. Certainly one of the stalwart heroes of the generation of yesterday has passed from sight, but not from gracious influence and honored memory, in the going to his crown of this sainted educator, pastor, friend. Pueblo and Jacksonville blend their tears and praise over this father in our Israel.

R. A. CHASE.

Rev. Samuel Middleton.

Rev. Samuel Middleton was born in Eaton, Preble county, Ohio, March 31, 1825, and died in Champaign City, Ill., March 5, 1903. He was a descendant of Godly parents. His parents were natives of Center county, Pennsylvania. In 1821 they left their native state and settled in the state of Ohio. In their home the first Methodist Episcopal society of that locality was organized. Hence it was the subject of this sketch was cradled in Methodism. He was educated at Greenfield Seminary in Highland county, Ohio. On May 24, 1842, he was converted and formally united with the church. The meetings were held in a stone school house, six miles north of Rapid Forge, in Ross county, Ohio. In 1848 he commenced the arduous work of an itinerant Methodist preacher. He served 34 charges. His first year's ministry was in the capacity of an assistant preacher, on the Winchester circuit, in Ohio Conference. From 1848 to 1866 he served the following charges in that Conference: Winchester, Jamestown, Washington, Deer Creek, West Jefferson, Darbyville, Deer Creek, a second time; Staunton, Jeffersonville, Hanging Rock, Wheelersburg, Rockville and Bournville. In the Conference year of 1866 he was transferred to Illinois Conference and appointed by the bishop to Old Town circuit. He served this charge faithfully and efficiently for two years. His subsequent charges and the dates of his pastorates were as follows: 1868, Arming-ton; 1869, Heyworth; 1870-71, San Jose; 1872-73, West Jacksonville; 1874-75, Jacksonville circuit; 1876-77, Chatham; 1878, Waynesville; 1879, Leroy circuit; 1880-81, Martinsville; 1882-83, Lovington; 1884, Morrisonville; 1885-88, Edinburg; 1887-88, La Prairie; 1889, New Salem; 1890, Fithian; 1891, Gifford; 1892, White Heath, and in 1893, Ludlow. His son informed me that his father had said that no less than 4,000 souls were converted under his ministry. Surely he will have many stars in his crown. In the fall of 1894, the Conference held its session in Champaign City, at which session he was granted a

superannuate relation at his own request. In less than a year from that time, or in 1895, he took up his residence in this city. Here he quietly passed the evening hours of his long and active life. The ministry of the deceased was bounded by forty-six years and extended to thirty-four charges. In that time and over that vast field many men for whom Christ died heard his proclamation of salvation. He was a man of positive temperament, deep religious convictions and had a rich Christian experience. He was, in the completest sense, a Christian according to Methodism. He knew well and loved both the doctrines and polity of our church. As a preacher he was fully abreast of the ministers of his day. The desperate reality of sin, the universality of the atonement by the death of Christ, the possibility of conscious pardon for all men and the attainableness and retainableness of perfect love for God in this life was the substance of his preaching. His method of preaching was argumentative and pronouncedly biblical. When his message was delivered no interpreter was necessary to acquaint the audience with his meaning. He rebuked sin with boldness and commended righteousness with loving eloquence. In the year 1888, when he was sixty-five years of age, the writer heard him deliver the opening sermon at a ministerial association that held its session in Perry, Ill. The spirit of the Lord took possession of him and the audience was greatly moved. The inspiration of that sermon was more or less manifest throughout the association. It was a flash of the old-time illumination that was so often witnessed in the earlier days of his ministry, when many of his hearers were turned from sin to righteousness. A wife, four sons, one daughter and nine grandchildren lament the departure of the husband and father. One sister, Mrs. J. M. Esterbrook, of Saybrook, Ill., and one brother, C. J. Middleton, of Kansas City, Mo., are the remaining representatives of his father's family.

The funeral services were conducted by W. A. Smith, assisted by Dr. W. H. Wilder, Presiding Elder, and Rev. M. W. Everhart, J. R. Reasoner, L. F. Walden and J. T. Orr. Ten of his brethren in the Conference were in attendance. Brother Everhart prepared and read the memoir. His remains rest in Mount Hope cemetery, Champaign.

M. W. EVERHART.

Dr. W. H. Milburn.

William Henry Milburn was born in Philadelphia, Pa., Sept. 26, 1823. He emigrated to Jacksonville with his parents in 1838. He entered the Illinois Conference the day he was twenty years old, and was assigned to Winchester, a large four-weeks circuit, as junior preacher, under Norman Allen as preacher in charge, and Peter Cartwright, Presiding Elder. He traveled two years in the Illinois Conference, when he was elected chaplain of Congress, then only twenty-two years old. Afterward he went South for the benefit of his health, preaching in Mobile and other cities in Alabama. Returning North, he was again elected chaplain in 1853. For a time he was with the Episcopal Church, and accepted a rectorship, thinking that a settled pastorate would be more favorable to him in his blind condition. In a few years he withdrew, and came back to his home Conference in Illinois in 1878, occupying the relation of supernumerary and superannuate, in the meanwhile traveling and lecturing over a wide field in this country, Canada and England. He was again elected chaplain of Congress in 1885, in which position he was afterwards continued as chaplain of Congress or Senate until his resignation a short time before his death at Santa Barbara, April 10, 1903.

Such is a brief statement in ordinary terms of an extraordinary career. Starting out with the disadvantage of blindness, he achieved a position in life that persons possessing all their faculties unimpaired have seldom attained. His career from the beginning was singularly brilliant and successful. Several things are to be considered as contributing to this result. One was his early training. He was the son of pious parents. Like all great men, he had a most excellent mother, who early instilled in his mind the importance of religion as the basis of character. As a result he early gave his heart to Christ and began a Christian life. Though I was a small boy

Sources of information for this article on the Reverend Samuel Middleton:

Cemetery Records, *Find A -Grave Website*

Everhart, M. W., "Rev. Samuel Middleton" (Biographical Sketch). *The Journal of the Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, p. 102-103. There is no date or other publishing information accompanying the sketch and the publication has not been found online. This copy of the biographical sketch comes from the collection of Julie Owens, a Middleton descendant.

Marriage record of Samuel Middleton and Mary Easterbrook, from Fayette County, OH

Obituaries for Jacob and Rebecca (Bathurst) Middleton (Name and dates of publications are unknown. In the possession of Susan McNelley)

Obituary for Kate Rush Middleton (In the possession of Susan McNelley)

Ruth M. Coleman, *James Middleton of Centre County, Pennsylvania and Some of his Descendants who Migrated to Ross County, Ohio* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Sim's Press. 1977), p 31. Information also found in Coleman's book, *Lawrence Bathurst, 1757-1845 of Centre County, Pennsylvania* in the Addendum: "The Middleton and Bathurst Families by Edmund B. Middleton" on page 55.

Stewart, Rev. John. *Highways and Hedges: Fifty Years of Western Methodism*. Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1870. p. 283.

U.S. Census Records:

U.S. Census Record of 1860 for Jackson, Pike County, OH

U.S. Census Record of 1870 for Randolph Township, McLean County, IL

U.S. Census Record of 1880 for LeRoy, McLean County, IL

U.S. Census Record of 1900 for Champaign Township, Champaign County, IL

U.S. Census Record of 1910 for Eagle Lake, Colorado County, TX

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