

Today in Columbus History:

On Tuesday, October 4, 1874, the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* announced that Hiram Middlebrook ran "The Oldest Business House in Columbus." This was the first of at least two biographical sketches of him. The other was in the *Biographical Souvenir of the States of Georgia and Florida* from 1889. According to both, he was born in New York, reared in Connecticut, and moved to Columbus in 1834.

The *Biographical Souvenir* adds several more details about him. It mentions his parents Samuel Middlebrook and Jerusha Mills, and his wife, Clara E. Hand. It says that he had opened a saddle, harness, and shoe shop in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1826, prior to his move to Columbus. It also says that he was the oldest Mason in the state of Georgia. He took the first degree in 1822 in Bridgeport, Connecticut then the chapter and council degrees in 1823. He took the commandery degrees in Columbus in 1858, where he was eminent commander for twenty years.

He is also mentioned several times in John Martin's book, *Columbus, Geo. From Its Selection as a "Trading Town" in 1827, to Its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid, in 1865*. Middlebrook was one of the anti-Van Buren mechanics that gathered in 1840, a victim of the Great Fire of 1847, treasurer of the Independent Home Guard in 1863 and in the appendix under the History of Masonry in Columbus.

Principally a saddle and harness maker, he offered a much wider variety of goods in his 1835 advertisement for H. Middlebrook and Co. His business went through several changes, and he had different business partners over the years. In the 1840's, he was a partner with William Wade until their dissolution in 1849 and Wade's retirement in 1853. He was with William Morrison and S. H. Heard who manufactured the saddles in Connecticut and constituted the "Co." until 1869, when he bought them out. Jesse J. Bradford succeeded him briefly in 1875, but it didn't work out. Bradford suffered from consumption that eventually killed him in 1878. His younger brother, Mark A. Bradford took over from Middlebrook in 1877 who remained with the saddle shop as each man took over. Middlebrook didn't retire until 1886.

He should not be confused with another Hiram Middlebrooks of Harris Co., who was born about 1863. The Hiram of this story is enumerated in the 1840 census of Columbus as a free white male between 30 and 40, along with a free white female between 20 and 30 and another free white male between 20 and 30. The female may be his wife, Clara, but there is no way to tell for sure. This would be the only time she shows up in a Columbus census. It looks like she lived in Connecticut for most of their marriage. She appears in the Guilford, Connecticut censuses of 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880. She died there on June 10, 1884.

In contrast, Hiram Middlebrook may have split his time between Georgia and Connecticut. He was enumerated in Guilford, Connecticut census of 1850 and then the Columbus censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880. He was double counted in 1860 and 1880 as he is also listed in Guilford, Connecticut those years, as well.

Middlebrook remained healthy until shortly before his death at age of eighty-seven. The *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* of February 2, 1888, first noted that he took ill the day before with what appeared to be a stroke in the office of the Central Hotel, where he lived. The newspaper gave an update on February 3 saying he was better, but chances were against recovery. On February 4, it said he was very much improved. Finally, it reported on his death the day before on February 14, 1888.

His Muscogee County will left his considerable estate to a sister, and several nephews and nieces in New York and Connecticut. For comparison, \$1 in 1888 would be worth almost \$29, today, making his bequests of \$18,000 worth over half a million dollars.

Hiram Middlebrook lived in a hotel, so he had no grand home for us to admire. He also had no children, so there are no descendants to remember him. He has a very nice monument at Linwood Cemetery, but the stone has some errors. His date of death is off a year. It says 1887 instead of 1888. It also says that he is a native of Bridgeport, Connecticut. As mentioned earlier, he was apparently born in New York.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

The Oldest Business House in Columbus.
The saddlery and harness house of H. Middlebrook was established in Columbus in December, 1834, six years after the laying out of the city. The location was then where now stands the furniture warehouse of Rooney & Warner. The firm name was Wade & Middlebrook, and continued so until 1853. Mr. Wm. Wade died eleven years ago. In 1839 they bought the property where the present store is located, and removed thither that year. The great fire of March 3, 1847, destroyed their building and much of their stock. Shortly after the present structure was erected under the personal supervision of Mr. M., and it is, perhaps, the best constructed store in the city, having separate fire-proof walls and other permanent advantages. It is the favorite house for insurance agents to show off to

A portion of an article announcing the of "The Oldest Business House in Columbus" from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 4, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

Office corner Bridge and Oglethorpe sts, Columbus, Ga.

H. Middlebrook,

MANUFACTURER AND DEALER IN

Saddles, Harness,
Trunks, Valices.
Carriage Trimming



Saddlery and Harness Materials,
Leather and Rubber Belting, Belt Rivets, Lace Leather,
Collars, Hames, Whips, Enameled Cloth of all
kinds, Enameled Leather, Patent Leather.
No. 94 Broad st., Columbus, Ga.

Ad for Middlebrook from the 1873-74 *Haddock's City Directory*, <https://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/chat/ccd/pdfs/dir-columbus1873-74.pdf>

Boots, Shoes, Hats, Clothing, &c.
H. MIDDLEBROOK & Co.

TAKE this opportunity of informing the inhabitants of Columbus and its vicinity that they have taken the store in Broad Street a few doors below the City Hall and next to Messrs. Bonney & Brokaw, where they are now offering to the public, a good assortment of the above named articles, which they sell cheap for cash, viz:

Gentlemens & Ladies Boots & Shoes of all descriptions
Misses Seal and Morocco Slippers, Lasting do.
Boys Seal and Morocco Dancing Pumps, Walking do.
Mens do. do. Dancing Pumps and Walking do,
Children's shoes of all kinds, Infant's shoes.

ALSO CLOTHING,
Consisting of Brown Linen Frock Coats, Coatees
Pantaloons, Round Jackets, Vests, Bosoms, Collars
Stocks &c. Fine Silk Hats, Fur Hats,
Fine Drab Hats, Pamleaf Hats trimmed, a neat article
for Summer, Wool Hats, Silk and Cotton Umbrellas &c
Saddles and Tridles, Waggon Whips,
Riding Whips, Travelling Trunks, Carpet Bags.

CUTLERY,
Consisting of Pocket Pen and Dirk Knives
Razors, Razor Strops, Scissors, Pocket and Belt Pistols
Holster Pistols, Powder Flasks, Shot Belts
Percussion Caps, Pocket Books, Beads, &c. and many
other articles too numerous to mention.
Persons wishing to purchase the above articles are re-
quested to call and examine for themselves.
Columbus, May-15 15 tf

Early Middlebrook ad, note the wide variety of goods offered, from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 5, 1835, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Photo of Hiram Middlebrook's grave at Linwood Cemetery (Daniel Bellware). Note that his death date is off by year (he died in 1888, not 1887) He was also a native of New York.

MEETINGS.

CALLED Communication of Columbian Lodge No. 7, F. & A. M.—Members will meet promptly at Masonic hall, at 2 p. m., Tuesday, to attend funeral of our venerable brother Hiram Middlebrook. Members of Mt. Herman and Wilson Williams lodges, as well as every Mason in good standing, are fraternally invited to attend. J. S. B. Crossman, secretary. By order W. W. Bussey, W. M.

ATENTION, SIR KNIGHTS.—Members of St. Aldemar Commandery will meet in Asylum, Tuesday, at 2:30 p. m., to attend as escort the funeral of past eminent commander Sir Hiram Middlebrook. Every member will appear in full dress uniform. J. K. Orr, E. C. E. M. Wheat, Recorder.

Meeting notices for Hiram Middlebrook's funeral from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* Sun Feb 14, 1888, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

SADDLES, HARNESS, ETC.

H. MIDDLEBROOK,

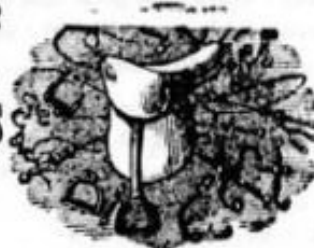
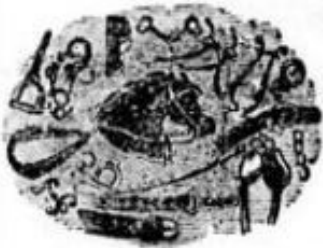
MANUFACTURER

AND DEALER IN

Saddles, Harness, Bridles

AND

Martingales,



Has on hand a large stock of every style and quality, from the cheapest to the best.

Ladies' and Gents' Trunks, Valises and Traveling Bags,

ALL STYLES AND PRICES.

PATENT DASH ENAMEL LEATHER, HARNESS, SOLE AND UPPER LEATHER,
Enameled Cloth of all kinds, Leather and Rubber Belting,

Collars, Hames, Trace-Chains, Whips, Blind-Bridles, Back-Bands, Bits,
Buckles, Spurs, and all articles in this line usually kept in a first class house.

All goods in my line will be sold at reduced prices, with a view of closing out my business at an early day. **TERMS STRICTLY CASH.**

Mr. **MARK A. BRADFORD**, formerly with Mr. W. R. Kent, is with me, and would be pleased to see all his old customers and friends.

H. MIDDLEBROOK,

No. 94 Broad Street.

oct4 eod&w3m

Ad for H. Middlebrook close to the time of the article from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 15, 1874. Note that Mark A. Bradford has left W. R. Kent, a competing saddle shop, to work with Middlebrook.

<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

SADDLES, HARNESS AND TRUNKS.

Saddles, Harness and Trunks.

J. J. BRADFORD,

(Successor to H. Middlebrook,)

NO. 94 BROAD STREET, COLUMBUS, GA.

Saddles, \$5.

Harness, \$12.

Ladies' Trunks, \$5.

ALL OTHER GOODS IN OUR LINE AT

EQUALLY LOW PRICES.

All Kinds of Repairing Done at Short Notice!

Messrs. **H. MIDDLEBROOK** and **MARK A. BRADFORD** are with me.

J. J. BRADFORD.

oct10 eod&w1m

Ad for J. J. Bradford showing that Hiram Middlebrook and Mark A. Bradford were working with him, from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 13, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.