

Sir Frederick Middleton (1825-1898): Biography

The third son of Major-General Charles Middleton and Fanny Wheatley, Sir Frederick Middleton, was born on November 4, 1825 in Belfast, Ireland. He went to school at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, England and was commissioned in 1842. Two years later he was sent to Australia to serve as a guard on convict ships, and was stationed by the penal colony of Norfolk Island. In 1845, his regiment was sent to New Zealand to quell a Maori resistance led by chief Hone Henke. Middleton was later mentioned in dispatches for his courage and for his part in repelling an attack on Wanganui.

In August 1848, Middleton rose to the rank of lieutenant in the 96th Foot Regiment before being transferred to India. Then, after completing a surveying examination, he became a captain, July 6, 1852. In 1855, he commanded a cavalry troop that suppressed an uprising in India. When he returned to England, he was transferred to the 29th Foot Regiment, which was serving in Burma. In 1857, serving as an orderly officer, he was once again transferred to Calcutta in order to put down the Indian Mutiny. Middleton returned to England in 1859, and then, for 1861-62, was off to Gibraltar and Malta.

Middleton was a career soldier in the old British military tradition. He therefore wanted to improve his rank through professional training. He received a 1st class certificate at the School of Musketry at Hythe, Kent, England. Then he went to the Staff College at Camberley in December 1866. He was still in his class when the 29th Foot Regiment was sent to

Canada, so he rejoined them when he was finished in August 1868. His first stop in Canada was Hamilton, Ontario. He stayed there for six months and worked at various jobs. He also married his second wife, Eugénie Doucet from Montréal, on February 17, 1870 before returning to England. Not much is known about Middleton's first wife, Mary Emily Hassall of Haverfordwest, Wales.

Middleton moved up in rank to colonel in July 1875, and then was appointed as commandant in 1879. Then in 1884, he was given the position of general officer commanding the militia in Canada. On March 23, 1885, he was sent to Winnipeg a few hours after news reached Ottawa that Louis Riel had taken hostages near Batoche and had set up a provisional government. He arrived in Duck Lake (in the Saskatchewan District of the North-West Territories) on March 27, 1885, a day after the battle had taken place. At the Battle of Fish Creek (April 24, 1885), he lost six men and had 49 wounded. He advanced on Batoche on May 9, and by May 12, the Métis' resistance had ended. After Louis Riel surrendered on May 15, Middleton led his troops to Battleford to accept Pitikwahanapiwiyin (Poundmaker)'s surrender. He then continued to pursue Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear), which proved unsuccessful. General Strange would eventually capture Mistahimaskwa on July 2, 1885.

For his role in suppressing the 1885 Resistance, Middleton received \$20,000 and a knighthood from Canada. He also rose in rank to major-general and was granted a British pension of £100 a year for distinguished

service. The War Office put him on the retired list in 1887, with the honorary rank of lieutenant-general.

However, at the height of his power and fame, his career was suddenly destroyed. Charles Bremner, a Métis, discovered that on being released from prison after being arrested in 1885, his furs, which were being held by the North-West Mounted Police had been stolen. Evidence led to Middleton and his staff, which led to an inquiry. On April 1, 1890, the committee found that the seizures of the furs were unwarrantable and illegal, and that Middleton's conduct was highly improper. The federal government disowned him. As a result, in July 1890 he resigned from his position as general for the Dominion of Canada's militia. The official British position was that Middleton was the victim of a political conspiracy. He moved back to England with his family and spent the last years of his life writing articles for various magazines. He was appointed Keeper of the Crown jewels in 1896. Middleton died on January 25, 1898, in his quarters at the Tower of London.

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Further Reading:

German, Daniel. "The Political Game and the Bounds of Personal Honour: Sir Frederick Middleton and the Bremner Furs." *Saskatchewan History* Vol. 45, No. 1 (1993), pp. 18-32.