

# Curious Adventure



## Middleway, West Virginia

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## **PLAN A VISIT TO MIDDLEWAY, WEST VIRGINIA** **HISTORICAL STRUCTURES, CIVIL WAR (AND OTHER) HISTORY &** **THE STRANGE LEGEND OF THE WIZARD OF CLIP**

From: MiddlewayConservancy.org

### **About Middleway, West Virginia**

Middleway is located at the intersection of two trails used by Native Americans: one trail ran southward from Packhorse Ford (near present day Shepherdstown) and the other ran east and west. Besides the transportation advantages these trails afforded, Turkey Run which comes from a large underground spring which forms Lake Louise about one mile east of the village, provided pure water for the area. Middleway occupies a small part of the original land grant made to Lord Fairfax by the King of England. When John Smith visited the area in 1729, he found these features attractive. By 1734, he and his son together with John's brother, Rees, had established grist and hemp mills along Turkey Run.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, a small farming and milling community had developed. The Smith family had the town surveyed in 1794 and began selling town lots in 1795. The promotion of the village was quite successful, and in 1798 the town of Smithfield was incorporated.

In 1807, a post office under the name of Middleway was established. This name was used to avoid confusion with the other Smithfield in Tidewater Virginia. This post office was located in various buildings in the village at different times. It operated until 1905, when it was closed due to the inception of Rural Free Delivery.

In the early 1800s, the town was a prosperous regional trading center with a main street lined with shops and houses. According to Charles Varle, in 1810 the town had two churches as well as three well assorted stores, an apothecary shop, one distillery, four shoemakers, five weavers, one wagon maker, one saddle-tree maker, one hatter, three blacksmiths, three tailors, and one tanner; and that there was an attorney at law and a physician.

In the 1830s, when the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was planning a railroad line from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, many people assumed its path would follow the traditional travel route through Middleway. When the railroad bypassed Middleway, and went through Summit Point instead, the town began a slow process of attrition. However, the commercial decline helped the village retain its early nineteenth century character, as there was little incentive to tear old buildings down and replace them with newer, bigger, more modern ones.

Middleway suffered, along with the rest of the countryside, during the Civil War. For northern armies, Jefferson County was a gateway to the South through the Shenandoah Valley. Middleway was at the intersection of two important roads, and it was located close to major trade centers. Soldiers from both the Union and Confederate armies came through the village throughout the war, and several skirmishes occurred in and around the town. At least four doctors lived in Middleway, and a building, which still stands, served as a hospital. After the battle of Antietam in 1862, wagons brought wounded soldiers to the hospital, straining its capacity of 50 patients.

The largest engagement in the town was the battle of Smithfield in August 1864. Union losses were placed at 35 killed or wounded, and Confederate losses at 10 killed and 75 wounded.

Among the soldiers who died in the fighting were several from North Carolina, who are buried behind the Masonic Hall. Another local reminder of the Civil War is a bullet that is still lodged above the vestry room door of Grace Episcopal Church.

After the war freed slaves established a community, Slabtown, on the southern edge of the village. They built two frame churches and a number of homes there. Although the community no longer exists, the foundations of several buildings can still be seen. A cemetery that served Slabtown also remains.

From the Civil War through the 1880s, times were hard. Many young people left the village to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Stagnation continued for many years, and Middleway remained a small country village, with many buildings dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a manufacturing plant opened on the outskirts of the village, near the site of John Smith's original mill. It, too, relied on water from Turkey Run for its operations. To accommodate the traffic to the plant, the main road (Queen Street) through Middleway was widened, and many large trees that had lined the smaller road were removed in the process.

In 1980, in recognition of the rare character of the village, the Middleway Historic District was created and added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Middleway Conservancy was formed in 1982 to preserve, restore, acquire, and revitalize, when and where possible, the Historic District, surrounding rural areas, and the areas adjacent to the Historic district. The Middleway Conservancy is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, and membership is open to any person who supports its purposes.

More information about the history of the village is available in the two-volume book, *The Story of Smithfield (Middleway), Jefferson County, West Virginia*, by Robert L. Bates. Originally published in 1958, the book has been reprinted and is for sale by the Middleway Conservancy.

### **The Strange Legend of Wizard Clip**

Middleway is also noted for its Legend of Wizard Clip. Many people still refer to the village as Clip. In the 1770's Adam Livingston, a Lutheran, moved with his family from Pennsylvania to a farm northwest of present Middleway. Although they prospered at first, some time prior to 1790 strange events began to afflict the family. Unusual noises and voices were heard in the house, crockery was thrown on the floor and rocks were rolled across rooms when no one could have done these things. There was a persistent clipping sound and clothes were mysteriously cut into pieces, boots and harnesses were cut up and the pieces were said to be in a crescent shape. These troubles seem to have continued for several years. Adam Livingston sought help from various Protestant ministers to no avail. Eventually, Adam had a dream in which there appeared a church and a figure dressed in a black robe, which he later identified as a Roman Catholic priest he saw in Shepherdstown. Following several visits by two priests, Father Cahill and Father Gallitzin, who said prayers and celebrated Mass in the Livingston house, the voices and strange activities slowly ceased. Adam Livingston later converted to Catholicism, and donated about 35 acres of his farm to the Church, which is now a Catholic pastoral center known as Priest Field.

# “WIZZARD CLIP” (Wizard Clip)

by W. S. Laidley

*West Virginia Historical Magazine Quarterly*  
*January 1904*

From the "Eastern Pan-Handle" we take the following ancient ghost story.

A town was laid out by John Smith in 1794, a town on his lands, then in Berkeley county, since in Jefferson, then in Virginia, now West Virginia. This was by Act of 1798 made a town by the name of "Smithfield" with John Packett, Moses Smith, John Smith, Jacob Rees, and Joseph and John Grantham, Trustees.

It has since been known as "Middleway" and it is located about five miles west of Leetown, and has about eight hundred inhabitants.

The earliest record of the story was written by Rev. Demetius A. Galletzen, whose memoirs were prepared in 1797, and about the same time, Mrs. Annella McSherry, wrote letters containing about the same facts, and since then there have been other papers written, all giving about the same facts, and the further fact that for fifty years the original name of the place was lost and it was only known as "Wizzard's Clipp," shows that the people there had no doubt of the facts related. The story gathered from the various publications is as follows:

Adam Livingston, becoming dissatisfied with his residence in Lancaster county, Penn., determined to remove to the State of Virginia, and carried his purpose into effect by the purchase of a house and lot in Smithfield, Va., and seventy acres contiguous thereto. This was about the year 1790. He had the reputation of being an honest and industrious farmer, of fair intelligence, and brought with him his wife and a family of three sons and four daughters, of whom Eve and Catherine are the only daughters and John and Henry the only sons who are referred to in any of these memoirs. Livingston continued to reside there without attracting any particular notice, until 1794, when a stranger, of middle age and of respectable appearance, made a visit to the place and was received as a boarder in his house. In a few days after the arrival of this traveler he was taken sick and as his illness became more threatening he called Livingston to his bedside, informed him that he was a Catholic, and inquired of him if there was not a priest somewhere in his neighborhood whose services he could procure, should his malady prove fatal, which he had reason to then fear it would. Livingston, who was

an intensely bigoted member of the Lutheran church, very gruffly replied to him "that he knew of no priest in that neighborhood, and if there was one, he should never pass the threshold of his door." The dying man repeated his entreaties for the spiritual aid of a Catholic priest, but Livingston was inexorable and refused to countenance his request. The stranger died, his name being unknown to his host, and there being nothing among his papers to throw any light upon his history.

On the night of his death Livingston employed a man by the name of Jacob Foster to sit up with the corpse. But so soon as the candles were lighted in the chamber of the dead, after giving a weak and flickering light, they went out and the room was left in darkness. They were relighted several times, supposing it to result from some remedial defect in the cradle, but with the same result. Livingston then brought two candles into the room which he had been using in his own family room, which were about one-third burnt down and which he knew to be good. But so soon as they were placed in the room with the corpse they became immediately extinguished. This so alarmed Foster that he abandoned his vigils and left the house. Fifty years ago the grave of the stranger could be distinctly pointed out.

On the night succeeding the burial the peace of Livingston was much disturbed by the apparent sound of horses galloping round his house. He frequently rose during the night - which was a beautiful moon-light night - to satisfy his mind. While he could distinctly hear the tramp of steeds, he could see nothing to assure him that it was anything more than a figment of his own imagination. In about a week afterward his barn was burnt and his cattle all died, the crockeryware in his house, without any visible agency, was thrown upon the floor and broken; his money disappeared; the heads of his turkeys and chickens dropped off; and chunks of burning wood would leap from the fireplace several feet out into the floor, endangering the building unless promptly replaced. Soon the annoyances, which were then destroying his peace, assumed a new form.

The sound of a large pair of shears could be distinctly heard in his house, clipping in the form of half moons and other curious figures, his blankets, sheets and counter-panes, boots and shoes, clothing, etc. This was all in one night, but the operation of clipping continued for upwards of three months, a small portion of it only being done at a time, but the inexorable shears never being silent twenty-four hours at a time. By this time the news of these strange proceedings was spread through the country for thirty miles around, and attracted in an especial manner the curiosity of the citizens of Smithfield.

An old Presbyterian lady of Martinsburg, hearing of the clipping that was going on at Livingston's to satisfy her curiosity, she went to Livingston's house. Before entering the door she took from her head her new silk cap, wrapped it up in her silk handkerchief and put it in her pocket to save it from being clipped. After awhile she stepped out again to go home, and having drawn the handkerchief out of her pocket and opened it, found the cap cut in narrow ribbons.

Many other phenomena are stated and testified to by many witnesses. The long continuance of this mysterious clipping had now aroused the country for many miles around. Three daring and adventurous young men from Winchester came to Smithfield declaring their utter unbelief in the reports and offered to sleep in the house all night and to face the devil himself, if he were the author of these doings. But as soon as they became comfortably seated in the house, a large stone was seen to proceed from the fireplace and to whirl around the floor with great velocity, when they took to their heels and made their escape.

The condition of poor Livingston had become deplorable, he had lost much rest, and his imagination was so worked upon by his nocturnal visitor that his health began visibly to fail. He applied to three professed conjurers, but their incantations were all in vain. Shortly after this Livingston had a dream. He thought he was climbing a high mountain and had great difficulty in the ascent. He had to labor hard, catching at roots and bushes, and moving forward slowly by their aid. Reaching the summit, he saw an imposing personage, "dressed in robes," as he described it. After contemplating for some time the person in view, he heard a voice saying: "This is the man who can relieve you." His wife heard him groaning in his sleep and she waked him, thereupon he communicated to her his dream and said he did not know of any minister who wore robes, but he would make inquiry in the morning. The result of the inquiries led him to visit an Episcopal minister, who

then resided in Winchester, but he derived little satisfaction from this visit, and returned home much disappointed. He was then advised to see the McSherry family, who were Roman Catholics, and who resided in a very fine estate called "Relevation," about on mile each of Leetown, at which place the priest was often in the habit of stopping while discharging his spiritual functions in that neighborhood. Late in the evening of the same day Mrs. McSherry saw a man coming to her home, she met him at the gate when he told her he wanted "to see the priest." She informed him that the priest was not at her house, but there would be church in Shepherdstown the following Sunday, when he would have an opportunity of seeing him. Mr. and Mrs. McSherry, in company with Mr. Minghini, went to church on the appointed day, and there they saw the man who had inquired for the priest, and who proved to be Livingston. As the priest appeared at the altar, dressed in commicles, Livingston seemed to be perfectly overcome. He wept bitterly, and exclaimed loud enough to be heard by the small congregation:

"This is the very man I saw in my dream; he is the one that the voice told me would relieve me from my troubles." When the service was over, he promptly called on the priest and told him his sad story; but the priest, the Rev. Dennis Cahill, laughed at him and told him it must be some of his neighbors who were plaguing him, and that he must go home and keep a strict watch for them. Richard McSherry and Joseph Minghini, who were present at the interview, were much moved by the old man's tears and tried to comfort him.

After much urgent persuasion. Father Cahill accompanied by Mr. McSherry and Mr. Minghini, agreed to visit Livingston's house and to inquire into the strange transactions which he had related. They found his story corroborated not only by the family, but by most of the people with whom they conversed in Smithfield. Father Cahill resorted to the remedy of sprinkling the house with holy water, which did not, however, expel the troublesome visitor from the house, but it was followed by a deposit of the money, which had previously been taken away, on the doorsill. The strange clipping still continuing after that time it was determined by Father Cahill to have mass celebrated in the house, which was done, and Livingston was relieved from all annoyances of his ghostly visitor. From that time until he left Virginia he had frequent communications with the Spiritual world, and many facts are related where those communications were realized in a striking manner; but as these throw no light upon the simple historical fact which it is the purpose of this article to elucidate no further reference need be made to them.

# The Livingston Wizard Poltergeist of Middleway, West Virginia

Jennifer Eblin

Yahoo! Contributor Network

During the 1700's, the small town of Middleway experienced a tremendous boost when one of its residents began experiencing poltergeist activity in his home. Though it's now been over 200 years since those events took place, some believe his property is still haunted.

Adam Livingston was a fairly normal man when the poltergeist took up residence at his home. Supposedly he witnessed things flying around the house and saw fires go out as if someone had blown on them. He also noticed things were missing from his home, including some money and some of his animals.

Eventually he began hearing someone screaming outside his house, and the odd sound of a bell ringing. The things he experienced ranged from the normal poltergeist activity, to things no one had ever experienced before. People began calling the poltergeist the Livingston Wizard.

A few days after the events started, a man on the road outside his house confronted Livingston. The man claimed to see a rope on the road that prevented him from moving forward. Livingston couldn't see anything, but a second man passing along the road also claimed to see it. Both men attempted to cut the rope down, but there was nothing there. Finally, they drove on in disgust.

Livingston was not the only one to experience strange things in the house; his family shared the experiences. On several occasions they heard what sounded like scissors. The next day they would invariably find something in their home cut into pieces, yet they could never find the mysterious pair of scissors. Some claimed that visitors to the house would see cloth wrapped in paper cut into pieces, though the paper was untouched and the parcel never left their side.

Oddly enough the family experienced a strange event just days before the poltergeist activity started. A man came out of nowhere and asked the family for a place to stay. After examining his shoddy clothing and scrawny body, they agreed and gave him dinner and a place to sleep. The man became sick in the middle of the night, and as a Catholic, asked for a priest to administer his last rites. The priest was never called, and when the man died the next day, he was buried on the land. Not long after, the poltergeist activity started up.

The Livingston Wizard as it became known, continued to work its magic on the family for a number of years. A Lutheran pastor attempted to bless the house, and an Episcopalian minister was also called in, but nothing changed. Several Methodist ministers also offered to help the family, though their efforts failed. Finally a Catholic priest was brought in to help.

Father Cahill is something of a mystery. According to some reports, Adam Livingston dreamed about the priest, which caused him to seek out the man. Others believe that he heard the name before, and manifested it in a dream. Regardless, Father Cahill did bless the house and many believed that things would improve; unfortunately that wasn't to be.

The Catholic diocese in Baltimore, Maryland eventually sent their own investigator to the house. Father Gallitzin lived in the house for several months before announcing that an exorcism was

needed. Three priests performed the exorcism and to everyone's surprise, the behavior stopped completely. The Livingston family instantly converted to Catholicism and Adam later left his property to the Catholic Church.

Some believe that the exorcism ended the poltergeist activity against the family, but not the poltergeist itself. A religious retreat now sits on the property and some have had some strange experiences there. People touring the area claim to find that cloth is mysteriously cut right off their body, and some religious men believe the poltergeist has targeted them.

It looks like the Livingston Wizard might just still be hanging around West Virginia today.

**Sources:**

<http://www.wvtourism.com/hauntings/locations.asp>

<http://www.wvculture.org/HISTORY/notewv/wizardclip1.html>

**DIRECTIONS FROM HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA AREA:**

(About a two-hour drive from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)

Take 83 North for about 2 miles to 81 South.

Travel 81 South for 103 miles.

Take WV Route 51 exit, Exit 5 toward Inwood.

Turn LEFT onto WV-51/Gerrardstown Road.

Go ½ mile and make a RIGHT onto Winchester Pike/Winchester Avenue/US Rt. 11/WV Rt. 51.

Take an almost immediate LEFT onto Middleway Pike/WV Route 51.

Travel 5 miles to Middleway.

# A Walking Tour of the Village

Tour Information and Photos from: [MiddlewayConservancy.com](http://MiddlewayConservancy.com)



The following is a list of some the historic sites and structures in the village.

The numbers correspond to locations on the map and markers placed throughout the village. The scissors and crescent on these signs reflect the Legend of Wizard Clip. King Street is believed to have been the original main street of Smithfield. It was supplanted by Queen Street early in the history of the village.

- 1. MYER HOUSE**  
This log house is believed to have been built around 1818.  
This is one of the finer examples of a log house with a plaster exterior.
- 2. MIDDLEWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
This church was built in 1885 on the site of an earlier church and retains its Victorian interior.
- 4. This greatly altered structure is the site of a blacksmith shop dating to at least the early 19th century.**
- 5. This house is an excellent example of the small clapboarded log houses built in Smithfield in the 1790's. One of the villages two town wells was on this property.**
- 6. DANIEL FRY HOUSE**  
This early log structure was once the home of Daniel Fry, Middleway's first postmaster and is presumably the location of the first post office established in 1807 and operated until 1835. The house has an interesting board and batten exterior.
- 9. The house was built between 1750 and 1780. The Middleway post office was in the small brick section when John Henry Smith was postmaster from 1851 to 1865. It was also a dental office at one time.**
- 10. This brick and log house was probably built in the 1790's and once housed the village shoemaker.**
- 11. JOHN F. SMITH HOUSE**  
This log and stone house was built between 1750-1770 and was the home of John Fry Smith who operated the general store next door during the mid 19th century. Later it was used as the village undertaker's house & office and housed a barber shop.
- 12. DAVID SMITH HOUSE**  
This brick house was built about 1804 and was used as the parsonage for the Lutheran (Union) Church in the 19th century.



#2-Methodist Church



#5-Built in 1790s



#6-Daniel Fry House



#10-Old Village Shoemaker



#12-David Smith House



#### 14. GILBERT HOUSE

The Gilbert House is the only remaining large stone house in the village. The original structure was built prior to 1800. The stone front section of the house was built about 1830 as the residence of Dr. Randolph Kownslar. In 1854, it became the residence of the village druggist after whom it is now named. The drug store (no longer standing) was located by the present driveway.



#14-Gilbert House

#### 44. TOWN WELL

This is the site of one of Middleway's two town wells which supplied water to village residents in the 19th century. The well continued to be used by residents into the 1970's. The current pump was reconstructed by the Conservancy in 1991 and the site was restored to reflect its appearance from before the Civil War.

#### 16. VIRGINIA INN (SAM STONE'S TAVERN)

The earliest portion of this house, the back section on the Grace Street side, was built by John Smith about 1750. During the early 19th century the front part of the house was used as an inn called the Virginia Inn. A tavern was also located in a section of the house. An apothecary shop is also believed to have been located on this site.



#16-Virginia Inn (Old Tavern)

#### 17. THE OLD RECTORY

This house was originally built as a two-story brick house about 1830. It served as the rectory for the Grace Episcopal Church for some 110 years. The exterior has changed little since 1864.



#18-Union Church & Cemetery

#### 18. UNION CHURCH AND CEMETERY

This church is the oldest one remaining in Middleway. A church was originally built on this site in 1798 for the Lutheran and Presbyterian congregations. The present structure is believed to date from the 1820's. One of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in the valley, Bullsken (Hopewell) was established about 1740 and moved here in the early 19th century and continued to meet in this building until 1933.

#### 19. MASONIC LODGE AND CEMETERY

The lodge hall was built in 1852 on land purchased from Dr. Samuel Scollay. The Triluminar Lodge No. 117 was originally established in Brucetown in 1819 and moved to Smithfield in 1832. This building also housed the Jefferson Academy in the early 1900's.



#19-Masonic Lodge/Cemetery

#### 20. GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND CEMETERY

This church was built in 1851 on land provided by Dr. Scollay. The congregation had been organized in 1830. The church retains its original interior. There is a minié ball embedded in the front of the chancery door from a Civil War skirmish.



#20-Grace Episcopal Church

#### 22. GIBSON'S MILL RUINS

The site and ruins of one of Smithfields early mills is located at the end of East Street along Turkey Run. The mill wheel is the only one remaining in Middleway.

#### 23. SCOLLAY HALL

This house was built in three stages during the 18th and early 19th centuries. The oldest section was built before the Revolutionary War. The main brick section was built by Dr. Samuel Scollay about 1823. In the early 1790's Nicholaus Schall conducted Lutheran services there.



#23-Scollay Hall

#### 24. WAR HOSPITAL

This early brick house, possibly from the 18th century, was used as a hospital during the Civil War and housed soldiers injured during the battle of Antietam. It was used as a general merchandise store during much of the 19th century operated by the J. W. Grantham family.



#24-Civil War Hospital

#### 25. MINGHINI HOUSE

This early log house is another good example of the plastered log houses built during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A school was once located in the house as well as an undertaker and casket maker.



#25-Minghini House

26. This house has a colonial era stone house in the rear to which an early 19th century federal portion was added. It is an excellent example of house evolution in Middleway. It was occupied for many years in the early 19th century by the Seibert family.

#### 27. HENRY SMITH TAVERN

The Henry Smith Tavern and Inn was located on this site. It was a well known inland hostelry in the early 19th century and was a main stopover point for settlers moving West. The tavern building was razed in the early 1950's.

The OLD ENGLISH CEMETERY is behind the current house on this site.

This early cemetery contains some graves of soldiers killed during the Civil War, including the Battle of Smithfield.



#26-Colonial Era House

#### 28. MOSES SMITH HOUSE

This house was built in 1752 by Moses Smith. It was later occupied by Edward Bell.

35. This house is a fine example of an early Middleway log house built in the late 18th or early 19th century. Its original clapboard exterior was removed during recent renovations.



#35-Late 18th/Early 19th Cen.

#### 36. MASONIC LODGE AND SCHOOL HOUSE

This house was used as a Masonic Lodge and as a school house from the 1830's until 1851.

37. This house may have been used by Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee after the Battle of Antietam. It was occupied by Henry Smith.

38. This is an example of a log house with a brick addition that was probably used for commercial purposes.

41. This clapboarded log house, probably dating from the late 18th century, is believed to have been used as an inn and tavern in the 19th century named Ramsey's Tavern. It was occupied by Dr. Alan Davis.



#44-Town Well  
(passed earlier on the tour)

#### 42. & 43.

These early 19th century houses are examples of the types houses that existed along King Street prior to the Civil War. Several houses were destroyed during the war.

#### 45. SLABTOWN CEMETERY

This old cemetery contains graves of area African-Americans and was the site of the small village of Slabtown.

MAP OF THE MIDDLEWAY, WEST VIRGINIA HISTORIC DISTRICT  
FIRST SETTLED IN 1729—INCORPORATED 1798

