

LINDEN PLACE

MANSION SCULPTURE GARDENS BALLROOM

Linden Place Mansion and Museum

www.lindenplace.org



Stories Series.....

Introducing our "Stories" Series..... Over two hundred years of history are tucked into the corners of this house and hidden among its fascinating families.

Here is just one of the stories.

From time to time this series will share stories of the mansion and the people and events connected to its history. We hope that you will enjoy the diversion and learn a little history about the families, the house, and its neighborhood.

Story One

Charlotte Middleton DeWolf and Edward Padelford DeWolf

Will a tree grow at Linden Place some day?



Fall River Line Steamer BAY STATE Rounding the Battery, NYC, 1847
William G. Muller

Louis Hunter, in his book *"Steamboats on the Western Rivers,"* estimated that steamboat accidents accounted for about 7,000 deaths between 1807 and 1852. There were 300 boiler explosions that caused over 3,000 of those deaths. Another 9,000 people died between the mid 1800s and the end of the century.¹ Nevertheless, travel by steamboat was a popular choice, perhaps because in the 1830s there were only about 23 miles of railroad track in the United States. By 1851 there were 1400 steam vessels carrying 32 million passengers a year. But by the 1880s railroads caught up: 23 miles of track grew to 93,000 miles.² However, steamboat accidents were so prevalent that in 1852 federal regulations

were passed to set standards for safety, and inspections, and accident and death investigations.

¹ Hunter, Louis *"Steamboats on the Western Rivers"* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949; and Frankel, Oz, *"States of Inquiry"* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 2006.

² www.newyorksocialdiary.com

Four who died in one of those steamboat accidents were the young DeWolf sisters: Annie Eliza, born in 1837; Charlotte, born in 1841; Mary Arnold, born in 1843, and Maria, born in 1846. Four other children, along with their mother and father, would survive.

Father William Frederick DeWolf was born in 1811 and in 1835 he married Margaret Padelford Arnold, a Providence woman. A lawyer, they lived in Alton, Illinois for a while and in 1846 he served in the state legislature. In 1847 they moved to Chicago, 108 Pine Street. He dabbled in real estate, and then was chosen to be the Treasurer of the City of Chicago in 1855. The couple added eight children to their family, and came east often to visit relatives in Providence, Newport and Bristol. William Frederick was the son of William "The Major" DeWolf – whose brothers were James and Charles, the father of George DeWolf who built Linden Place in 1810. The home of "The Major," *Hey Bonnie Hall* in Poppasquash, was often filled with summer guests. Both homes were designed by architect Russell Warren.

William Frederick's sister Maria married Robert Rogers, and she founded the Rogers Free Public Library. William Frederick's brother Henry married Anne Marston – and their daughter Annie connected the DeWolfs to the plantation-owning Middletons of South Carolina by marrying Nathaniel Russell Middleton of Charleston in 1842.

Their Bristol romance was brief – they married in three weeks' time!



Charlotte Hellen Middleton (Mrs. E.P. DeWolf) and Nurse Lydia, 1857
by George Smith Cook (American 1819-1902). Ambrotype on glass.
Courtesy Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, 1937.05.10

According to a remembrance written by family descendant Matthew Perry, Annie and Nathaniel's first child, Maria, was born in the Calhoun House in 1844; then came Anna Elizabeth in 1847 while they were living at Bolton Home on the Stono River. Alicia was born in Bristol in 1849; Nathaniel was born in 1851 in Charleston in the family home on South Battery Street. Yellow fever forced them out of town to safety on Sullivan's Island, and there Charlotte was born in 1854. The Middletons lived a life of privilege with numerous "Negro servants" (never called slaves).³

In 2019 Dr. Kelly Sharp published a blog as part of a Black Women's Studies Program at Luther College entitled "Small Finds, Big Lives" in which she documents the life of Lydia Middleton, the black bondswoman who cared for many of the Middleton children in Charleston. "Over the decades," Dr. Sharp writes, "Lydia cared for three generations of Nathaniel Russell's family." Dr. Sharp's research uncovered that after the Civil War, Lydia Middleton and her husband Sam, both listed as 75 years of age in the 1870 census, were

living in Lowndes Township, about 30 miles from Charleston, categorized in the census form as former bondpeople.⁴

³ Perry, Matthew C. "Cousin Alicia Hopton Middleton" personal reminiscence

⁴ www.blackwomensstudies.com/blog/2019/9/28/small-finds-big-lives

As an instance of the effect, he states that the plate glasses through which the workings of machinery are so frequently observed by spectators on board, were shattered into fragments. At the moment of the explosion the pressure was only 25 pounds to the inch, and the engine immediately shut her off.

This gentleman luckily escaped without receiving injury.

The following is a complete list of the killed and injured, so far as ascertained :

KILLED.

LIST OF THE SUFFERERS WHO DIED AT THE NEW-YORK HOSPITAL LAST EVENING.

CHARLOTTE DE WOLF, aged 13 years, daughter of **WM. DE WOLF**, of Chicago, Ill

MARY DE WOLF, (sister of CHARLOTTE,) aged 10 years.

MARIA DE WOLF, (of the same family,) aged 7 years.

THOMAS WARREN was scalded from the crown of his head to his feet, and expired at midnight.

INJURED.

The following is a list of persons brought to this City on board the *Connecticut*, who are badly scalded :

Mrs. DE WOLFE, mother of the above children, severely scalded.

ANNIE WOLFE, (her daughter,) aged 15 years, not dangerously.

[Of this family, three lads and one little girl escaped uninjured.]

CHARLOTTE SNOW, of Dartmouth, Mass., dangerously about her face, arms and breast.

[These persons are still at the City Hospital, under the care of Surgeon **DEBBY**. The situation of Miss **SNOW** is critical.]

Mr. ABBOTT, of Boston.—Scalded on the hands; put up at the *Astor*, and returned home in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. WHEELER, of Fall River.—Mrs. **WHEELER** pretty badly injured; staying at a private house in this City, and will probably recover.

New York Times Sep 9, 1853

Note: Annie dies a day later.

Survivors are Mr. and Mrs. DeWolf and children William, Henry, Edward and Cecilia

Now... go back in your memory to the part of this story about the horrendous steamboat accident of 1853. The Bay State Steamboat Company had been formed in 1847, and offered trips between Fall River and Newport and New York. Some guests would ride the train from Boston to Fall River and then board the ship; some embarked at Fall River, some at Newport. The ultimate destination was the Hudson River Dock in Manhattan, New York City. An advertisement from 1881 lists a first class ticket at \$3; second class at \$2.25; and sleeping rooms for between \$1 and \$5 per person. The steamboats were designed to be "floating palaces," attractive to the likes of the Vanderbilts and Astors and the Newport 'summer cottage' crowd. Mr. and Mrs. DeWolf and their brood of eight eagerly marched up the gangplank with the expectation of an enjoyable journey to New York. They had booked sleeping cabins for the overnight trip. But at 3:30 in the morning of the 7th of September, somewhere between New Haven and Bridgeport, the crank pin broke, and "the crank fell upon the boiler with a tremendous crash. The consequence was that at the next revolution the head of the cylinder was knocked off and the steam escaped with great force".

Ironically, if the children had stayed in their cabin they might have avoided death. But hearing the crash it is likely they ran out of their stateroom and into the corridor and were "terribly scalded." All of the injured were taken to New York City Hospital by the Steamer *Connecticut*; the four DeWolf girls died enroute to or in

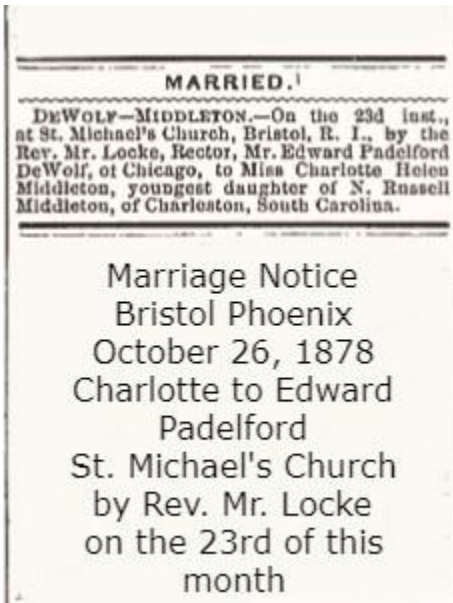
that hospital. Gone were Anna, age 16; Charlotte, age 14; Mary, age 10; and Maria, age 8. William, Henry, Cecelia, and Edward Padelford DeWolf (age 5) survived, with their parents.⁵

"On the morning of September 22," says the article in the Bristol Phoenix, "the bereaved parents with their surviving children took the leave of their anguish...for their Western home, which a few months since they left under circumstances of joyful anticipation. Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day shall bring forth."⁶

Twenty five years later, however, there would be a day of celebration.

⁵ New York Times, September 9, 1853

⁶ Bristol Phoenix, September 24, 1853



Edward Padelford DeWolf, the little five year old who survived the accident, grew up in Chicago. Charlotte Middleton, born on Sullivan's Island to escape yellow fever, grew up in Charleston. On October 16, 1878 they were married in St. Michael's Church in Bristol, Rhode Island.⁷

Edward Padelford, or E.P. as he was known, was educated in the Chicago public schools. His business life began with the Bowen Brothers, wholesale drygoods merchants. Later he ran a stock farm in Ottawa, Kansas where he developed a love for pacers – the trotter horses of the day. For a while he was in the wool business, and then the glue business. He and Charlotte moved to Waukegan in 1882.

He served as Mayor of Waukegan for one term, 1895-1897, but was defeated in his bid for re-election. Some say it was his plan for the redevelopment of the harbor that did him in. Some say he was a little too cozy with the Chicago and Milwaukee Electric Rail Company searching for right-of ways in order to install the new trolleys in town. Some say it was his temperament. Short-tempered is

an understatement. He was sanctioned by the horse racing association for his 'foul' language to a judge.



1895 to 1896

Mayor

E.P. DeWolf

<https://www.waukeganil.gov/332/Past-Mayors-of-Waukegan>

He was charged with assault and battery – over a battery. It didn't work, so he threw it at the store clerk. When he was Mayor, George Herman, the local grocer, approached him for some official help in collecting a bill from a customer. Enraged by the audacity, fisticuffs ensued. Then there was the dust-up with the local newspaper and its reporting on his capabilities. In 1914 he entered the offices of the *Sun*, "admitted he used profane language in front of a lady bookkeeper," ignored the warning to shut up or get out, and claimed that two men in the office threw him to the floor and held him there, which led to the charge of assault and battery. However, testimony revealed that there was no dust at all on his jacket or pants, so there was no way he ever even touched the floor. Mr. Dady, the state's attorney, presented compelling evidence that Mr. DeWolf was treated "far more gently than his actions justified." Mr. DeWolf seemed to reinforce that opinion, because as the jury was out deliberating, he got into an argument with Assistant Chief Tyrell. The Chief said the only thing that prevented him from treating Mr. DeWolf more harshly were his gray hairs.

"I guess I am alone in Waukegan," sighed Mr. DeWolf to no one in particular. "Well," somebody replied, "I guess you *ought* to be - the way you are trying to hand it to everybody all the time."

The jury was out but a short time before returning the unanimous verdict of NOT GUILTY, freeing the Mssrs. W.J. Smith and F.G. Smith from the charges levied against them.

E.P. was traveling and in Buffalo when he suffered a ruptured appendix at age 79. He came back to Waukegan, was admitted to the hospital, had surgery, fought for five days, but passed away. "In 79 years," one friend said, "he lived 100." Another obituary summed up his life this way: "The career of the deceased was unusual, varied, and hectic."

He and Charlotte were married for forty-one years until her death in 1919. When they settled in Waukegan, they bought a 40 acre tract of land. They picked that spot because of the unusually beautiful flowering trees on the property.

⁷ As of February 2014, 24 U.S. states prohibit marriages between first cousins, 19 U.S. states allow marriages between first cousins, and 7 U.S. states allow only some marriages between first cousins. First cousin marriage is legal in Rhode Island.

Charlotte was so taken with them that in 1902 she sent a sample in to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston (Jamaica Plain), Massachusetts, managed by Harvard University.



Charlotte had a good eye – she thought the trees, a flowering crabapple, were unique. The curator of the Arboretum agreed, and named the newly discovered species “*malus coronaria Charlotta*”. After contacting the Arboretum about the story in July of 2021, the staff sent a scan of the actual plant cutting that had been sent in by Charlotte and E.P. Student researchers there are currently searching for any correspondence between then curator C.F. Sargent and the DeWolfs. Research is ongoing to locate a living tree. The hope is that a graft or sapling may be sourced which then can be planted on the grounds of Linden Place.

If E.P. were to be described as brash and brusque, Charlotte could be described as sweet and Southern. Her express final wishes were that she not be buried unless her gravesite could be covered with the sweet, pink, and lusciously fragrant flowers of her beloved crab apple tree. So although she passed in December of 1919, she was not buried until the following June of 1920. Her grave at the Graceland Cemetery of Chicago was “covered with a mass of the exquisitely beautiful blossoms that bear her name” as reported in the New York Times of June 5, 1920. Charlotte Middleton DeWolf and Edward Padelford DeWolf share the plot with E.P.’s sister Cecelia, another survivor of the 1853 steamboat explosion, and her husband Albert Erskine, brevetted as a Brigadier General because of his “gallant and meritorious service” with the 13th Illinois Volunteer Calvary during the Civil War.

If we locate a sapling or graft that can be planted in Bristol, stay tuned for the rest of the story. Charlotte would be thrilled.

This article is written by Lynn Smith, volunteer and board member. Although not a trained historian, Lynn makes every effort to ensure that the information in the article is as accurate as possible. As always, suggestions, comments, corrections and input are welcomed.