



William Edgar Knowles Middleton

Atmospheric Science

Wrote classic text on meteorological instruments, optics, and other books on the history of meteorology instrumentation.

The Story

W. E. Knowles Middleton wrote 15 books and 75 to 100 scientific papers related to the science of weather instruments and meteorological optics as well as their history. His major contribution was the book *Meteorological Instruments*, first published in 1941 with the third and final publication in 1953. This was the classic text in the field. Only recently have other texts appeared to cover this area. He also wrote three books on the history of meteorological instruments, also classics. In 1953 he wrote "Vision through the Atmosphere" again a seminal text in the field.

Middleton could read and write in a number of languages and spent years abroad in places like Florence, Italy poring over Latin manuscripts from the 17th century in his research on the history of scientific instruments. He also wrote papers in German and French.

He worked for the Meteorological Service of Canada between 1929 and 1946 where he specialized on measurement and instrumentation including Canada's first automatic weather station. From 1946 to 1963 he became a Research Officer at the National Research Council in Ottawa in the optics branch of the Division of Physics where he specialized in colourimetry.

During much of this time (1935 on) Middleton taught a course at the University of Toronto on meteorological instruments.

After his retirement, Middleton moved to Vancouver, BC where (from 1967-78) he was a professor emeritus and honorary lecturer associated with the Department of the History of Medicine and Science at the University of British Columbia.

He died in his sleep in 1998 in Edmonton at the age of 95.

The Person

Birthdate

June 23, 1902

Birthplace

Wasall, England

Date of Death

January 30, 1998

Place of Death

Edmonton, Alberta

Family Members

- Spouse: Dorothy (Day)
- Children: John and Diana

Title

Chief of the Instrument Division

Office

Meteorological Services of Canada, and National Research Council

Status

Deceased

Degrees

- BSc U. of Saskatchewan, 1927
- MSc U. of Saskatchewan, 1929

Awards

- Fellow of Royal Soc. of Can., 1943
- Ives Medal, Optical Society of America, 1959
- Patterson Medal, 1979

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