

(An undated typewritten letter from Robert W. Miller to his nephew, Robert W. Miller)

SOME TRADITIONS OF THE MILLER FAMILY

Mr. R.W. Miller,
Centeron, Arkansas

My Dear Nephew:

In response to your request for such information as I may have touching the Miller family, of which we are members, beg to say; that like your own, my knowledge of our "Family Tree," is largely traditional. However, by reason of greater age, I have had opportunity that enabled me to meet and converse with older members of the family, who had passed to the great beyond, years before you saw the light of day, and from some of these, listened attentively to sundry stories of our remote ancestry, and was privileged to see a few of the old souvenirs, calculated to give historic character to some of the stories told.

According to tradition, our family tree, had its initial rooting, not in the historic Anglo saxon line, but rather in the heterogenous mix up of Scotch-saxon, following the Saxon invasion of England, Scotland and Wales, in the 12th and 13th centuries, a general knowledge of which invasion will be found in Wells' Outline of History. Uncertain tradition, has associated our family tree, with the great geologist, Hugh Miller, of Scotland.

Highly creditable tradition, with a few old family souvenirs, corroborating statements of older persons, have satisfied me, that my great, great grandfather Miller, was born and reared to early manhood, near Abberdeen, Scotland, and that he intermarried with a Miss. Elizabeth Gordon, daughter of a Highland Chieftain, and that of the union, there were born three sons, Robert, William and James, and two daughters, Mary and Rachel. Of the offspring, represented William, James, Mary and Rachel, I have no Knowledge or information not even the uncertain current of tradition. Of Robert, however, am advised, that he intermarried with a scotch lassie, named Ruth Elliot, and that shortly after the marriage Mr. Elliot, father of the bride with other members of his family, including Ruth and her husband, Robert Miller, emigrated to America, and settled in Pennsylvania, near the present sight of Germantown, and that to the marriage of the young couple, there were born three sons and two daughters; who ware respectively named, James, Robert and William, and the two daughters were named, Jane and Mary. William, the youngest of the three sons, was born the 11th of March, 1757, and at the outbreak of the revolutionary war, enlisted in the Pennsylvania Line Infantry, and was at the seige of Yorktown, to within a few days of the surrender of Lord Cornwallace, when he received word of the death of his father, at Germantown Pennsylvania. He made application for a furlough, that he might attend his father's funeral, and his request was granted. The leave of absence was written on a sheet of blue tinted dispatch paper, and signed: "G. Washington, Commanding, American forces." (This bit of paper, was one of family souvenirs, above referred to.)

At the close of the revolutionary, William returned to the family home near Germantown, Penn. , where a few years later, he intermarried with a young woman of scotish extraction, named Rachel Art, and a few years later, his mother having died, with his brothers and sisters, and their respective families, emigrated from Pennsylvania to Ohio, and settled on the Little Miami River, near the present site of the City of Dayton, where he lived until 1816, when he again joined a caravan of emigrants bound for the broad prairie lands of Illinois. He crossed the Wabash river, near the old town of Vincenes, Indiana, and settled at a place then known as Hoags Prairie, near the present site of

Russellville, Illinois, where he erected a substantial farm-house for the accommodation of his rather large family, and at once engaged in agricultural pursuits, but in the latter part of 1816, he sickened and died, leaving him surviving his widow and nine children to wit: Robert, James, Jane, John, Elizabeth, Samuel, Rachel, Thomas and Belinda. John Miller, my father, and your grand-father, was born at Dayton, Ohio, Nov. 20th, 1799. The record of birth, is taken from Grandfather's old family Bible, now in the hands of my son, R. Justin Miller, of Minneapolis Minnesota. The old Bible is a small edition of the Old King James Translation, printed in 1783, and was placed in my hands as a family souvenir, in 1872, by my father, Uncle Thomas Miller, John Price, uncle by marriage, with Jane Miller, who had been the custodian of the old book, after the death of her father (my grand-father, and your great grandfather, that occurred as above stated, in the late fall of 1818. I retained possession of the book, from 1872, to 1915, when in a condition of what appeared to be failing health, I gave it into the hands of my son.

John Miller, my father and your grandfather, in 1826, intermarried with Miss Mary Kennedy, at Lamotte Creek, near the old town of Palestine, situate on the bank of the Wabash, in Crawford County, Illinois. Shortly after the wedding, the young couple, moved from Crawford County a distance of some thirty miles, into Jasper County Illinois, and settled on entered Government lands on the present site of Willow Hill, Illinois.

Mary was a daughter of the Reverend Thomas Kennedy, of Irish extraction, whose early ancestry emigrated from Northern Ireland, and settled in Virginia, in 1730, near the historic old town of Jamestown. Thomas Kennedy, was born in 1773, March 24; He graduated from William & Mary's College, in 1792, and on the 9th of May, 1793, intermarried with Miss Elizabeth Eaton, of Richmond Virginia. Miss Eaton, was of English extraction. Immediately after the marriage, the newly-weds, started on their honey moon trip, mounted on good saddle horses, bound for Bourbon County Kentucky, where they reside until 1808, when they moved to Vincennes, Indiana. The Rev. Kennedy acted a Chaplain to the military forces under General Harrison, and was present, when Harrison so systematically defeated the red-skins at Tippecanoe, Indiana, in 1810. During the Indian Campaign, that covered a time period, from 1809, to the early part of 1812, Kennedy moved his family from Vincennes to Lamotte Creek, near the old town of Palestine, Illinois where had been established a Government Land Office, for the then territory of Illinois, and where, on the 12th of March, 1810, Mary Kennedy, my mother, and your maternal grandmother was born.

To the union of John Miller and Mary Kennedy, sixteen children were born, four of whom died, in early infancy; and the twelve who survived to mature age, were Elizabeth, William, Jane, Thomas, John, Achsah, James, Nancy Ellen, Belinda, Robt. W., Jesse K. and Hiram.

Your personal knowledge of the family, is perhaps quite as good as is mine, as my close relations with the family ceased in the spring of 1886, when left the place of my nativity and went into the central part of Illinois, and thereafter only returned to the old home for occasional visits.

On the 4th of June 1854, my Mother, your paternal grandmother, died, and on the 24th of April, 1874, my father, your paternal grand father died.

Of your uncles and aunts on the paternal side, but three now survive, to wit: Your Aunt Belinda Miller, nee Peck, now residing at Rogers, Arkansas, Your humble servant Robert W. Miller, and your Uncle Jesse K. Miller residing at Kintla, Montana.

A most thrilling incident relating to Indian raids, and in one of which your grandmother Miller played an active, though an wholly involuntary part, was current fifty years ago, and may perchance, be interesting to your posterity. It seems that shortly after the battle of Tippecanoe, the Iroquois and Kickapoo Indians of Eastern Illinois, took to the "warpath," and raided several settlements on the

westerly bank of the Wabash, and among others, the sparsely settled region between Palestine and Russellville, was raided, and the settlers were forced to seek shelter and protection at a Government Post, locally known as Fort Allison.

Thomas Kennedy, my maternal grandfather, (your great grandfather,) had secured comfortable for his family, just outside the stockade of the fort in a somewhat pretentious log house, thought to be safely within the protection of the fort. Grandmother Kennedy was alone with her several small children, temporarily, however, as the husband and father, had gone out with a scouting party, to watch the approach of the redskins. In the early night, a signal of alarm was sounded, and mother Kennedy, determined to enter the stockade of the fort; but preparatory to doing so, determined to carry her bedding into a back lot, adjacent to the ground occupied by the log house, being impressed with the idea, that in so doing, the bedding might escape the flames that would certainly destroy the house, so assisted by her eldest child, a sturdy boy of about seventeen years, named Joe, her work was quickly accomplished, and Joe, in his eager haste, had taken a feather mattress, with some quilts and bed clothing, and dumped them in the backyard, wholly unaware that a part of his burden, was a sleeping babe of six months; and now in her haste, the mother and her brood, sought the safety of the stockade, and once within the confines of the fort, she proceeded to take an inventory of her stock, when it was discovered that baby Mary was missing. She recalled, the early retirement of her babe, and the fact that Joe, had carried the feather mattress with, other appurtenances from the house, and on questioning the boy, was told that he had seen nothing of the baby; but Joe's boyish, manhood was aroused, and scaling the stockade, he discovered that the house so recently vacated was then in flames, vaulting to the ground, Joe made his way to the back lot, and crawling on hands and knees sought the discarded bedding, as savage Indians danced about the burning building, unnoticed by the savages, he carefully unfolded the bedding and found to his great delight, baby Mary peacefully sleeping, and wholly unconscious of her perilous environs. With his precious burden, he speedily made his return to the fort, and laid the still sleeping babe in the arms of its distracted mother. The lad, Joe, was the acknowledged hero of the occasion; and the commander of the Post, a Mr. Numan Parker, voiced appreciation of the lad's bravery, in a few eloquent words, quilled in a sprawling hand on a small bit of brown wrapping paper, that for many years was a prized souvenir, in the Kennedy home

It is an historic fact, that James Miller, brother of your great paternal grandfather, was on the outbreak of the war with England, commonly known as the "War of 1812," was commissioned as colonel of an Ohio regiment, as was sent to the Niagara Frontier, and that he participated in the sanguinary fight of Lundy's Lane, where he achieved some renown for bravery and strategic maneuvering. On one occasion, a British outpost, well entrenched and in charge of a strong battery, was giving the American forces some trouble, when Colonel Miller, was approached by a superior in command, and asked: "Colonel Miller, can't you take that position?", pointing to the disturbing battery; and Colonel Miller, laconically replied: "I can try sir." He did try, and in the course routed the British and captured the position, which assured victory to the American arms.

You will find mention of both William and James Miller, in Edgar's "Pioneer Life of Dayton and Vicinity."

Jane Miller, daughter of your great, great paternal grandfather, Robert Miller, married a man, named James Davidson, and your father James Miller, was named in memory of him.

Mary Miller, daughter of your great, great paternal grandfather Robert Miller, married James Tate, and moved west at the same time your great grandfather, William Miller, emigrated to Hoag's Prairie, in Lawrence County, Illinois; the Tates however settled in the neighborhood of Danville, Illinois, (present site of Danville, Illinois). I have heard my father say that his Uncle Robert Miller, moved from Dayton Ohio, in about 1820, to the vicinity of Chatanooga, in eastern Tenn., and some years ago, I met a man in Los Angeles, Cal. Who spelled his name, Robert W. Miller, just as we do. He said his

father's name was Robert Miller, and that he was born in East Tenn., near the City of Chatannoga, and that his father had moved, first from Jermantown Penn., to Dayton, Ohio, and later to East Tenn. He was a good representative of the Miller stock, and he and I were agreed, that we had a common origin. He was engaged in the practice of medicine, and stood well in his profession.

Some of James Miller's (your great grandfather's brother) folks, in about 1822, moved to South Bend Indiana, but of that branch of the family, I have little reliable information; however have been informed that Senator John Miller, Ex senator of California, was a son of the said James Miller.

Well, I will stop hear.

Very respectfully, your Uncle,

(signed) Robt. W. Miller