

History of Perry County, Pennsylvania, Including Descriptions of Indian and Pioneer Life from the Time of Earliest Settlement Sketches of Its Noted Men and Women and Many Professional Men, By H. H. Hain, Harrisburg, Pa., 1922 - Hain-Moore Company, Publishers, Harrisburg, Pa.

Governor Stephen Miller of Minnesota.



Gen. Stephen Miller. Third Governor of Minnesota, Born in Carroll Township, Perry County.

Perry County also has the distinction of having furnished the third governor of Minnesota, the thirty-second state to be admitted into the Union, which attained statehood in 1858. The lands patented by **George West**, in Carroll Township, Perry County, on March 12, 1793, passed to **Melchoir Miller**, grandfather of **Governor Miller**, who emigrated from Germany in 1785. His son **David**¹, who became **Governor Miller's** father, inherited his share of the estate, two other heirs being his sister, **Mrs. Henry Lackey**, and his brother, **Daniel**, who had a son, **John T. Miller**, who was elected sheriff of Perry County in 1865. Accordingly many persons who were born in Perry County, or who can trace their lineage there, are kin to **Governor Miller**.

Stephen Miller was born on his father's farm, now the **G. W. Keller** farm, in Carroll Township, Perry County, January 7, 1816, where he grew to young manhood. His mother was **Rosanna**² (**Darkess**) **Miller** (sometimes called **Rosa**). Some histories name his mother as **Barbara Miller**, designated "a widow," teaching school at **Daniel Cowen's**, fourteen miles west of Marysville,

in Rye Township, which is not correct. He attended the local schools and was an expert penman.

He early devoted his attention to the milling business, and in 1837 — the year he became of age — he engaged in the shipping and commission business at Harrisburg. Here he was successful and became a man of considerable importance and political standing. In 1849 he was elected prothonotary of Dauphin County, and in 1852 he was reelected. An ardent Whig, from 1853 to 1855 he was the editor of the *Pennsylvania Telegram*, a journal published at Harrisburg devoted to the principles of that party, and not to be confused with a later paper known as the *Harrisburg Telegram*, whose standard of morality is not to be mentioned in the same breath.

Governor Polleck appointed him flour inspector at Philadelphia, in 1855. Prior to this time he had become greatly interested in the temperance cause, and procuring a large canvas tent, he visited many parts of Pennsylvania as a lecturer, meeting with great success. His health

¹ The will of **Melchoir Miller**, dated January 5, 1824, was probated at Landisburg, then the county seat, March 31, 1824. It names his children as **Elizabeth**, **Rosanna**, **David**, **Anne**, **Susanna**, and **Daniel**. It also designates **Rosanna Miller** as his wife. **Rosanna** was also the name of **David's** wife, who became the governor's mother.

² **Mrs. Elizabeth Miller**, residing with her daughter, **Mrs. Chas. Etter**, 208 Pine Street, Harrisburg, and who is in her ninety-third year, spent much time with the governor's mother, whom she knew as "**Aunt Rosa**," being a niece by marriage, which substantiates the fact that that was her given name.

becoming impaired, he thought a change of climate would be beneficial, and moved to Minnesota, settling at St. Cloud, where he entered business. It was soon perceived that the town had gained more than a merchant; that it had a man of alert mind, positive convictions and wisdom, and whose aid in the directing of public affairs would be invaluable. His evidencing an interest in politics had an almost immediate effect, and in 1860 he was sent as a delegate to the National Republican Convention which nominated Lincoln for the Presidency. He was also placed at the head of the Republican electoral ticket of the state that year. He was prominently brought before the people of his chosen state by holding joint discussions or debates with General Christopher C. Andrews, a Douglas elector, in the principal towns and cities. Then the pent-up slavery agitation of almost a century came to a crisis and Governor Ramsey, with whom he had early formed a friendship while yet in Pennsylvania, was instrumental in having him made Lieutenant Colonel of the First Minnesota Infantry, his commission being dated April 29, 1861. This friendship was not alone responsible for this assignment, for **Stephen Miller** had shown more activity in raising recruits than any man in Minnesota, and undoubtedly had great personal merits.

Of his meritorious military record let us give the words of "Minnesota in Three Centuries," edited by a historical commission of that state, which says:

"**Colonel Miller's** military career is resplendent with chivalrous actions and acts of bravery. He commanded the right wing of his regiment at the first Battle of Bull Run. He was in personal command of the regiment during many battles of the Army of the Potomac of Eastern Virginia. He was engaged with the enemy at Yorktown, West Point, in the two Battles of Fair Oaks, at Peach Orchard, Savage Station, White Oak Swamp, Nelson's Farm and Malvern Hill. He was on the rear guard on the retreat to Harrison's Landing and held in reserve at the Battle of South Mountain. On August 24, 1862, he was commissioned Colonel of the Seventh Minnesota Infantry, and was transferred to that regiment just before the Battle of Antietam. On account of an accidental fall from his horse, the result of which was serious, he was obliged to rest awhile at home before taking command of his new regiment. Therefore he was not in personal command during the two Indian campaigns in which his regiment took part. He, however, assumed command at Camp Release. He was subsequently the commander at Camp Lincoln, near Mankato, and had charge of the three hundred Sioux Indians, also was entrusted in December, 1862, with the execution of the thirty-eight that paid the penalty for their crimes."

Colonel Miller received his appointment as a Brigadier General of Volunteers, October 26, 1863, but resigned that position to assume the office of governor.

At the Republican State Convention held in 1863, **General Miller** still a Colonel at that time — was nominated for the office of governor, and at the fall election was elected, receiving 19,628 votes to 12,739 cast for his opponent, Henry T. Welles, the Democratic candidate. He was inaugurated on January 11, 1864, and served one term, which expired January 18, 1866, not being a candidate to succeed himself. In his inaugural address he expressed profound gratitude to the Deity; dwelt upon the improvement of the schools and university; showed a thorough knowledge of the matter of railroads, in his judgment there being nothing more certain than the construction of a northern line of railroad to the Pacific Ocean — a fact long since realized; commended the citizens on the improved condition of Indian affairs, and complimented them on the glorious record they were making in helping keep inviolate the Union.

In 1871 he removed from St. Cloud to Worthington, where he was connected with the St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad Company, as general superintendent of their large land interests in southern

Minnesota. In 1872 he was elected and represented his district, the six southwestern counties, in the state legislature.

Again let us quote from the pages of "Minnesota in Three Centuries":

"**Governor Miller** was a rough and ready speaker, with remarkable wit, originality of style, and a somewhat brusque manner on the rostrum. No man's private character stood higher in all respects, with amiable domestic affections and strongly religious convictions. He was a man of moderate means, never a money-maker, and his last days were somewhat clouded by comparative poverty, but his rugged honesty and manly principles were never questioned." He died at Worthington, Minnesota, August 18, 1881.

In 1839 **Stephen D Miller** had been united in marriage to **Miss Margaret Funk**, of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, becoming the father of four children. Of these **Wesley F. Miller**, a lieutenant in the Union Army, fell at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, while bravely fighting; **Stephen C.**, a second son, was a captain in the commissary department, and **Robert D.** resided in Pennsylvania. A **daughter** died in infancy.

The execution of the thirty-eight Indians responsible for an uprising, of which **Governor Miller**, then a Colonel, was in charge, was probably the greatest number of human beings ever executed at one time in the United States. The scaffold from which they were all hanged at the same moment was erected in the open and was surrounded at some distance by a column of infantry, at a further distance by another column of infantry, and at a still greater distance by a column of cavalry. Outside of this cordon of military protection was the populace, prairie schooners, "dead" wagons, etc. — a scene never to be forgotten. A military commission had convicted 303, but President Lincoln commuted the death sentences of 264, and one proved an alibi.

Governor Miller was a man of considerable literary ability and was the author of a number of poems, many of which were of a serious or meditative nature. In 1864 there appeared from the press of a Chicago publisher, a volume entitled "The Poets and Poetry of Minnesota," by Mrs. J. W. Arnold. She dedicated the volume "to the Honorable **Stephen Miller**, Governor of Minnesota, the Soldier, the Patriot, the True Friend." Speaking of his poetical works the author said: "His verses are remarkable for the beauty and truth with which they express the reflections of the general mind, and emotions of the heart. Their tone is grave and high, but not gloomy nor morbid. The edges of the cloud of life are turned to gold by faith and hope. Making him, therefore, the Chaucer of our 'goodly companie,' he must lead the van of 'The Poets and Poetry of Minnesota.'" Accordingly; nine poems from the pen of **Governor Miller**, with a sketch of his life, occupy the first few pages of the volume. From them we have selected the following poem for the history of his native county:

SOW IN TEARS AND REAP WITH JOY.

*Thine is the lot, 'mid stormy scenes,
To sow the seed in tears,
And watch — with disappointment, oft —
For fruit in following years.
Perchance it by the wayside falls,
Where friendless birds devour;
Or blooms upon the stony ground.
To wither in an hour;*

*Or thorns may choke the tender blade,
And prospects pass away;
And toil, the hope of months and years.
May perish in a day.*

*But, written in the book of God,
Behold the great command;
"At morn and eve dispense the seed,
Nor once withhold thy hand."
When bird, and storm, and thorn shall die,
And stones and earth decay,
"Some shall bring forth a hundredfold"
On that great gleaning day.
Then scatter seed, and deeds, and tears
Where'er thy feet may roam,
So shall thou shout, with angel bands,
A blessed harvest home. -*

The remains of **Melchoir Miller**, the ancestor, rest in the churchyard at Snyder's Church, in Wheatfield Township. The governor's mother **Rosanna Miller**, lived to be well up in years, and resided in Duncannon for a long time prior to her death, in the house located where **Abraham Spence** long had a jewelry store, now owned by **Thomas Hunter**. She is still remembered by some of the older people there, who recall the visits of her noted son.

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