

# Rev. Joseph Miller (1794-1872)

By Jerry Long, Owensboro, Ky.



The History of Methodism in Kentucky, Vol. III, Rev. A. H. Redford, D.D., Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1870, pp.326-330:

Joseph Miller was born in Rockbridge county, Virginia, January 22, 1794. In the autumn of 1818, he came to Kentucky, and settled in Shelby county. At a meeting held at William Long's, in Franklin county, he was converted under the ministry of David Gray, October 27, 1820, and a short time afterward received into the Church by Josiah Whitaker, by whom he was licensed to exhort, August 11, 1822. On the 12th of August, 1826, at a quarterly -meeting held at "No Creek Meetinghouse," in Ohio county, he was recommended to the District Conference as a suitable person to receive license to preach. From the time that he was invested by the Church with authority to preach the gospel, he was a zealous and active co-worker with the itinerant preachers in the great work of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land. Brought to Christ through the instrumentality of Methodism, he not only accepted its doctrines as the teachings of the Bible, but the polity and usages of the Church were also dear to his heart. He watched with a jealous eye every invasion of its principles, or any attack upon its doctrines.

In the year 1836, Minor Ford, a prominent Campbellite preacher, while preaching in Daveiss county, at a Baptist church called Bethabara, as was his custom, rudely attacked the evangelical denominations. After disposing of the Baptists and Presbyterians, he drew from his pocket a Methodist Discipline, and read from it so as to pervert its meaning. Joseph Miller was present, and unwilling that Methodism should be caricatured by Mr. Ford, he arose and requested him to repeat what he had read, which was promptly refused. He then proposed to read it for him, which was likewise declined. Mr. Miller then said to Mr. Ford: "You have misrepresented the Baptist Church and others, but you shall not, without rebuke, misrepresent the Methodist Church;" and then publicly announced that, four weeks from that time, he would reply to all he had said, and invited him to be present. Controversies on the doctrines of Christianity were not common at this period in that portion of Kentucky. The entire community, however, was now aroused and determined to hear Mr. Miller's defense; and the interest of the occasion was greatly enhanced by the announcement of Mr. Ford that he would be present.

Uncle Joe, as he was styled by the people, was not familiar with the rules of debate, nor was he concerned in reference to the forms. He understood the doctrines of the Bible, and was familiar with the passages of Scripture by which they were supported. Soundly converted, he was able to give to every one that asked him a reason for the hope which cheered his heart. After presenting, in a bold and artless manner, the teachings of his Church which had been so ruthlessly assailed by his opponent a few weeks before, and then offering in their vindication the

declarations of Christ and the apostles, he calmly took his seat to listen to the response. Persons who have heard discussions between the "evangelists" of these self-styled Reformers and ministers of the orthodox Churches, need not be told that invective is too often employed for argument, and that wit and repartee are too frequently substituted for the teachings of the word of God. Unable to meet the questions at issue by an appeal to the pages of inspired truth, Mr. Ford called up his fund of anecdotes to supply the deficiency ; boasting, at the same time, that many from other Churches were joining the Reformation. Here, too, however, he was promptly met by his opponent. But few men, at that period, were so well supplied with wit and anecdotes as Joe Miller. It was the element in which he floated with ease. "A Campbellite preacher," said he, "preached for several days in a community where Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, had worshiped together for years. The demon of discord had never invaded the sacred inclosure where they mingled their tears and prayers to a common Redeemer, and many had been the souls won to Christ from their united efforts. The sermons of the preacher were unlike any ever delivered in that country before. Water, water, WATER, was the only theme on which the preacher dwelt. He was zealous, but not to persuade sinners from the paths of sin, but to proselyte from evangelical Communion the unwary and unsuspecting. In every community some persons are to be found upon whose hearts the truth has made but little impression, and who are always ready to accept any new theory. It was so on this occasion. From each of the Churches a few had gone to swell the ranks of Campbellism. The Churches became restless. No preacher was present to reply to the invader of their peace. A council was held, and it was decided to call upon a Dutchman who lived in the community and was an exhorter in the Methodist Church, and request him to reply to the Campbellite. 'Me can't, for me has no book-learnin',' was the prompt response of the German brother. His brethren insisted, but he still refused. They repeated their solicitation, and importuned him, until at last he yielded, and appointed the following day for the achievement. The hour rolled around ; a large audience assembled ; the Campbellite preacher in person was present. At length, in his every-day apparel, the little Dutchman made his appearance, and taking the stand, said: 'Bruders and sistern, I ish von Dushman; you all does know me, and I does know you, and ve does know von anuder. I docs own von saw-mill, and two uder men does own de mill vid me, and ve tree does own it togeder. Ye does saw a great deal ob gude lumber, and does sell it, and does duwide de profits. Ye does also saw much vat is bad : some of it is shiverdefall, some too short, some too crooked, some outside slab, and some rotten at de heart. Ye does n't know vat to do vid dis. Ye does put it in a bile py itself, and de high vaters does come and vash it out ob our vay. Now, mine bruders and sistern, ve, the tree mens vat does own de mill, does rebresent de Metodists, de Pabtists, and de Brespyterians. Ye does hab one great revival ob religion, and does git many volks converted, and ve docs duwide um: de Metodists does git some, de Pabtists some, and de Brespyterians some. But den der pe some vat ain't so gude. Ye hardly knows vat to do vid um. Dey are outside slab, too short, shiverdefall, too crooked, and rotten at de heart. Bad cases, dem ! But pless de Lord for Cambfellism ! for here docs come along Mr. Carnbfell vid his great vater-machine, and does vash um out of our vay, and save us cle trouble ob turning 'em out. Bruders, I ish dun answer dat Cambfellite: so gude-pye.'"

To this Mr. Ford could make no reply, and, retiring, he left Uncle Joe master of the field. He yet lives, having reached a good old age, and patiently waiting until his change comes.



History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, 1883, pp.58-59, section on Early Preachers:

Jo Miller was of German origin. He had removed from Shelby County. Ky., and settled on North Panther Creek. Uncle Jo was a low, heavy, powerful man as to muscular strength. When lie preached he put forth his whole physical and intellectual strength, and was more of an exhorter than preacher. He was fond of camp-meetings, where he was always in his element. He could do more crying, and have more crying done, and more tears shed, than any man of his day. He was an industrious and hard working man. Uncle Jo seemed to have a passion for saw-mills and improvements of that character. He spent almost a fortune on saw-mills and mill-dams on both North and South Panther Creeks, but his creeks were without rocky bottoms or banks, were low, sluggish streams, and he had great difficulty in making his efforts remunerative. Jo Miller was a worthy and good man. Others and more prominent ministers have followed the old pioneer preachers, men of more learning, greater ability, and polished manners, but not more faithful, pious, or energetic than the old preachers who lifted up their voices in the wilderness to proclaim the tidings of salvation.



Kentucky: A History of the State, J. H. Battle, W. H. Perrin & G. C. Kniffin, 1885:

W. B. MILLER, Hancock County, was born in Rockbridge County, Va., March 15, 1815, to Joseph and Mary (Booker) Miller. The father was born in Virginia in 1793, his father, John Miller, being a native of Germany. The father was a millwright by trade, and was a soldier in the war of 1812. In 1822 he came to Kentucky, and settled in Shelby County, where he followed stilling for three years. He next moved to Daviess County, where he joined the Methodist Church and subsequently became a preacher. In 1860 he removed to Ohio County, where he died in 1874. The mother was also born in Rockbridge County, Va., in 1792, and died in this State in the spring of 1855. Our subject is the second of a family of nine children, of whom two are now living: Joseph S., in Ohio County, and William B. The latter began life for himself at the age of twenty-five at farming in Daviess County. In the winter of 1854 he moved to Hancock County and settled at Lewisport, where he remained three years. He then erected a mill in Hancock County, opposite Tell City on the Ohio, but remained there only one year. In 1876 he settled on his present farm, where he now owns about 108 acres. Mr. Miller was married January 11, 1841, to Miss Rosa E. daughter of Capt. Ben and Nancy (Graham) Duncan, natives of Nelson County. Mrs. Miller was born in Daviess County, Ky., November 5, 1824. To her have been born three children of whom two are now living: Nannie, wife of James Freeman, and Cynthia, wife of John A. Freeman. Mr. and Mrs. Miller are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Subject served as assessor in Daviess County three years; in 1861 and 1862 he served as sheriff of Hancock County, and from 1876 to 1880 he served as assessor.



Local Preachers in Old Times in Kentucky: Address Before the Historical Society of the Louisville Annual Conference of the M. E. Church, South, Delivered at Franklin, Kentucky in 1904, by Lucius P. Little, Nashville, TN & Dallas, TX, Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, Smith & Lamar, Agents, 1905, pp.14-16:

### III. An Old-Fashioned Preacher.

Joseph Miller — afterwards called Old Joe," or "Uncle Joe," yet always Joe— was of German ancestry; but of his origin nothing more is known. He removed from Shelby County to Daviess County in his young manhood, while the latter was still a wilderness. Farming, the building and operation of grist mills, and serving the Lord were his lifetime occupations. It is said that he spent a fair fortune erecting milldams and mills on North and South Panther creeks. Owing to their low-lying banks and muddy beds these streams were ill adapted for mill sites. By his labor and enterprise, however, he supplied a public need in his day, but it did not prove remunerative to him in the long run. His residence on South Panther, near Crane Pond, was, perhaps, in Ohio County, though not far from the line between it and Daviess. A monument to his memory is an important old highway in the southeastern part of the latter county, known to this day as the "Miller's Mill Road." His ministerial labors occurred in Daviess, Ohio, and McLean Counties. Dr. A. H. Redford speaks of his good work at a camp meeting at Pleasant Grove, and another at Noe [sic] Creek, in the year 1836. (Western Cavaliers, 193.)

He reared a numerous family of boys, who, grew to maturity, but were short-lived. He himself lived to a green old age, and died a few years after the close of the Civil War, strong in the faith to the end, he lived plainly and frugally, but was hospitable in his home. His homespun clothing was more comfortable than graceful. Far from violating the General Rules as to "costly apparel," starched collars and neckwear and Uncle Joe were strangers to each other. After all, however, there was nothing odd in his outer man, considering the day and region in which he lived and labored.

It is hard to describe him, lie was a composite and original type. There was in his rugged physical makeup a suggestion of one or two to the Grecian gods. He had the strength of Hercules and the voice of the Thunderer. Small, piercing eyes, under cavernous brows, a thin-lipped, firm-set mouth, a sharp, projecting nose and chin, a heavy jaw, a high development of head, and a wilderness of short, wild, iron-gray hair, half hiding what brow he had; short neck, round, thick shoulders, and a powerful frame – with it all he had a most benignant expression when in repose.

All his life he was a devout Methodist, and for a great many years a local preacher. He pleased his congregations in the pulpit; was in request at revivals, and at a camp meeting was in all his glory. Dr. Redford classed him among the best local preachers he ever knew. (Western Cavaliers, p.193.) He was like a locomotive that was sidetracked – always had steam up ready to start any moment at a mile a minute. The practice of his religion to him was food and drink—the food of angels and the nectar of heaven. His critics and enemies might smile at his grammar and sneer at his oratory, but even these never questioned his sincerity, his vigorous and abiding faith, and the fruitfulness of his labors.

He sought neither riches nor fame, lie never concerned himself about what the world said of him, and yet he was not its enemy. A favorite text he often quoted told much: "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." And so he did, as all believed.

He was especially fond of his neighbor and contemporary, Rev. Hiram Kellam, and not less was Hiram fond of Old Joe. They had conducted many revivals together, and had much

religious experience in common. Mr. Kellam's house was a regular preaching place in a churchless neighborhood. A large room was used for religious services. On one occasion Uncle Joe happened at Mr. Kellam's, and arrangement was made for preaching. By "early candle-lighting" the congregation gathered, filling the house. The wintry weather was cold, and a roaring wood fire was in the broad, open fireplace. Brother Miller preached with "liberty and power," in more senses than one, he had the full sympathy of his audience, and the responsive "Amen" urged him to his highest effort. His excessive exertion, and the overheated room so far overcame him in the course of an hour, notwithstanding he took the precaution of removing his coat, that he turned to his host and said: " Hiram, exhort awhile till I step out and cool off." The exhortation followed, and soon the orator returned to his task, and closed his sermon quite as successfully as if no hiatus had occurred. That wonderful voice was unimpaired to old age. Loss of teeth and rapidity of utterance made him somewhat difficult to understand, but he preached and prayed and exhorted on an ascending key, and his hearers caught enough to be sure that he still proclaimed a free salvation.



1820 Shelby County, KY, p.20:

Joseph Miller	1 male 0-10	2 females 10-16
	1 male 16-26	1 female 16-26
	1 male 26-45	2 females 26-45

1830 Ohio County, KY census, p.191:

Joseph Miller	1 male 0-5	1 female 0-5
	1 male 5-10	1 female 5-10
	2 males 15-20	2 female 10-15
	1 male 30-40	1 female 30-40

1840 Daviess County, KY census:

Joseph Miller	1 male 5-10	1 female 15-20
	1 male 10-15	1 female 20-30
	1 male 15-20	1 female 40-50
	1 male 20-30	
	1 male 40-50	

1850 Ohio County, KY census, District II, p.103:

722	Miller, Joseph	57	m	milller	VA
	Mary	57	f		VA
	Joseph	21	m		KY
	Benjamin	18	m		KY
	Caloway, Frances H.	10	f		KY

Daviess County, KY Marriage Book E, page 105:

Rev. Joseph Miller to Mrs. Maranda West 19 September 1859, bond by Isaac Hudson.

1860 Ohio County, KY census, Hartford District, p.631:

307	Miller, Joseph, Sr.	66	m	D.D./ farmer	VA
	Maranda	44	f		KY
	Hannah E.	2	f		KY
	West, Sabra A.	5	f	boarder	KY

1870 Ohio County, KY census, Ellis District, p.439:

93	Miller, Joseph	78	m		VA
	Marinda	52	f		KY
	Annie M.	12	f		KY
	West, Sabra A.	15	f	adopted	KY

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Memorandum Book of George W. Taylor (1841-1914), of Bells Run, Ohio County, KY:

Elder Joseph Miller departed this life 26 May 1872 (see Kentucky Pioneer Genealogy and Records (McDowell Publications, Utica, KY, Vol. 4, No. 3, July 1982, p103)

Ohio County, KY Guardian Bond Book 5, page 97:

R. C. Barrett on 18 Dec 1877 was appointed guardian of Hannah M. Miller, orphan of Joseph Miller, deceased. [Note – Richard C. Barrett, married Sarah A. Hinton, 13 November 1855 Ohio County, KY, Sarah was a granddaughter of Rev. Joseph Miller.]

Ohio County, KY Circuit Court Suit #4531:

John C. Townsend versus Thomas Bryant, filed in 1882. Involving 129 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres on Panther Creek owned by Joseph Miller, deceased, "who was known as preacher Joe Miller". John C. Townsend served as the administrator of Miller's estate. On 19 November 1882 by a commissioner's deed the land was sold by the heirs to Charles W. Massie. On the deed Joseph Miller's heirs were listed as: Miranda Miller, Hannah M. Miller, Mary Wallace, J. P. Wallace, B. F. Wallace, Joseph Wallace, Adaline Wallace, Nancy J. Wallace, William Wallace, James Miller, William Miller, Martha Hinton, Guy Hinton, William Miller, Joseph S. Miller, Marion Hinton, Sally Barrett & Richard C. Barrett.



Rev. Joseph Miller was born 22 January 1794 Rockbridge County, Virginia. He came to Kentucky in the autumn of 1818 and first settled in Shelby County. About 1826 he moved to Daviess County and later he moved just across the county line into Ohio County, where he died on 26 May 1872. He married 1<sup>st</sup> Mary Booker circa 1813, she was born in Rockbridge County, VA and died in 1855. He married 2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs. Maranda (Hudson) West, 19 September 1859 Daviess County, KY. Maranda was born 1816-1820 Daviess County, KY and died after 1882; she married Romanta S. West (1805-1858), 7 January 1854 Daviess County, KY; by her first marriage she had a daughter, Sabra Ann West, who was born 27 January 1855 Daviess County, KY, married William G. Atchison, 8 September 1870 McLean County, KY, Sabra died 26 August 1932 Calhoun, McLean County, KY. Joseph Miller and his wife, Mary Booker, had 9 children; and his wife, Maranda Hudson, had one child, Hannah M. Miller

Children of Rev. Joseph Miller included:

1. John Miller, born c1813 Rockbridge County, VA; married Cynthia Hunt, 14 March 1837 Daviess County, KY; in 1850 lived Muhlenberg County, KY; died of consumption on 9 October 1859 Hancock County, KY; like his father he was a miller; a record of his death was recorded in the 1852-1861 vital statistics kept by the state of Kentucky.
2. William B. Miller, born 15 March 1815 Rockbridge County, VA; married Rosanna Eleanor Duncan, 11 January 1841 Daviess County, KY; died 13 December 1890 and was buried in the Lewisport Cemetery, Hancock County, KY.
3. Sarah Miller, born c1817; married John F. McCormick, 22 July 1845 Ohio County, KY; in 1850 lived Daviess County, KY; died 1850-1882.
4. Elizabeth Miller, born c1821 KY; married James M. Hinton, 8 October 1839 Daviess County, KY; in 1850 living in Daviess County, KY; died 1850-1882.
5. Cynthia M. Miller; married Thomas H. Hinton, 8 October 1839 Daviess County, KY; died 1839-1882.
6. James Q. Miller, born c1823 Ky; married Frances L. Dulin, 30 January 1849 Daviess County, KY; in 1865 he was living in Hancock County, KY; he was a Methodist minister; died 1882; buried Birmingham Cemetery, Briensburg, Marshall County, KY.
7. Jane Miller, born c1827 KY; married Finis Blackmon Wallace (1821-1862), 7 March 1844 Daviess County, KY; died 10 April 1865 Daviess County, KY.
8. Joseph S. Miller, born 27 March 1828 KY; married Catherine Barker (1834-1910), 22 September 1853 Daviess County, KY; died 18 September 1906; buried Wesley Chapel Cemetery, Ohio County, KY.
9. Benjamin Miller, born c1831; in 1850 living Ohio County, KY; he may be the Benjamin who married Frances McCormick, 23 October 1857 Daviess County, KY; died 1850-1882.
10. Hannah M. Miller, daughter of Joseph Miller & Maranda Hudson, born c1857 KY; died after 1882.

