

Mr. President, Members and Guests:

My daughter, Mrs. Torrance, and I have been asked to write a paper about Phin Miller and the times in which he lived.

I am not so fortunate as a minister, who, when conducting a church service, noticed his young son in the congregation with a pea shooter. He told his father: "I can keep them awake."

Benjamin Miller and a year later Levi Miller, his brother, came to Stockton in 1818. They were the first settlers of the town. Levi was Phin Miller's grandfather. Benjamin Miller built the first house in Stockton in 1818, three-quarters of a mile north of Dilanti.

When a young man, Mr. Phin Miller drew forty loads of gravel for the foundation of the Baptist Church, on the promise of a chance to usher at the dedication. When the day arrived, he came to the church dressed in a new suit. He was told he could not usher as he was not a member. He never forgot it, and he never did join the Baptist church.

In a small town like Stockton most of the social life centered around the churches. A woman of my generation, born and reared in Stockton, says, that unlike Gaul, which was divided into three parts, Stockton was divided into two parts; Those, who were Methodists, and those who were Baptists, and those who eventually went to the Old Cemetery, and those who went to the New Cemetery. I can find no record that Phin Miller ever joined either church, but he did finally go to rest in the Old Cemetery, where his grave, as well as that of his wife and son Isaac, may still be seen.

But perhaps I am getting the cart before the horse.

I should not mention Phin Miller's grave without first giving you a resume' of his life. He was born in Stockton, December 1, 1839, the son of Isaac Miller. He attended school at Stockton, Mayville, and Fredonia. He taught school from 1856 to 1865, was elected school commissioner in 1865, an office which he served for four years. He sold text books from 1869 to 1882. He was elected Supervisor of Stockton in 1885, and was Manager of the Railway Guide until 1888. He then became Editor of the Lockport Express for two years until 1890. He then went to work for the Lake Shore Railroad as Tax and Claim Agent from 1891 until he died, which was March 25, 19~~17~~¹⁷.

Mr. Miller resided at Stockton until 1887. He then moved to Buffalo. His father said he was a good worker who was at his best in driving oxen. He showed his skill at this at the Centennial Parade by driving a pair of oxen drawing a two-wheeled cart owned by my father, L. C. Warren. Their picture is in the history of the first Centennial at Westfield. Mr. Miller gave \$10,000 to this Historical Society which was very much appreciated. He also gave a history of the Chautauqua County schools for 100 years at a meeting of the Society in 19~~18~~⁰¹. Mr. Miller was a man of great ability who was very valuable to the county and could not do enough for his friends.

As a young man, I did not know much about Mr. Miller, so this paper may be a bit dry. This reminds me about a minister who said, after a long sermon: "I guess I better stop." A brother in the congregation said: "Go on, we are used to it," as I expect you are.

Since I have been reading about Phin Miller, and his interest in schools, I am reminded of an incident which happened in a district school I attended as a small boy. The incident was in regard to discipline which was some different than Mr. Miller's discussion about the same subject which will be mentioned later on in this paper.

In our district school, we had six boys who were full grown. The man teacher was afraid of these boys. He first started to strike one of the boys who did not mind with a long hard wood ruler, but the boy put up his hand and the ruler glanced off and made a large dent in the wainscoting. The teacher then went back to his desk and produced a revolver. There was a panic in the school. We thought he was going to shoot us. He held the gun until school closed, but did not shoot it. He said: "If any one tries to leave the room, I may use it." Of course all the scholars rushed hom and reported the incident to their families, and the incident broke up the school.

Mr. Miller was interested in politics in his adult life, almost as much as he was in schools. Political life in a small town often got very exciting. People were interested in trying to solve their political problems even as they are now. In a political campaign at Stockton the two parties called a meeting for the same night, and as there was only one public hall, one party had to have an outdoor meeting. There were two long torchlight processions of voters in uniform, speeches, intense feeling, and a great crowd. I was embarrassed because there were so few democrats in the parade.

In the same year, both parties erected tall Liberty poles. The defeated party discovered a large beet on top of their pole the morning after election.

At a town meeting, after each long discussion a vote would be taken, and there would always be one negative vote, by the same man.

At another political meeting in the town hall, my father was chairman. The speaker did not arrive, so that my father was forced to make an impromptu speech. He said that Grant drew a large crowd like a circus. It made a heckler in the audience mad, and he jumped up and said. "That's a lie!" If my father's intentions were to stimulate a lively discussion, which I imagine was the case, he certainly succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. The meeting turned out to be a lot of fun, even if the real speaker of the evening didn't show up.

At another meeting the Chairman made an eloquent introduction of a man who, he said, was his life-long friend. At the end of his long eulogy, when he turned to the speaker, and was about to mention his name, he faltered and could not remember it.

At the campaign meetings, the spell-binders would tell us farmers it would be better for us to let the manufacturers get high prices while we sold butter for 15¢ a lb, and cheese at 8¢ a lb. Then, they said, we were supposed to let the manufacturer's money trickle down to us, while we wore shiny clothes.

We have mentioned before the importance of religion and churches in small communities. One lady at a prayer meeting said: "There are not many here to-night, but Thank God, there are more here than at the other churches."

After a very successful revival one winter the minister went away for a rest. It developed that he was better at saving the souls of his flock than he was in saving his own soul. It was discovered that he had been on a spree in Buffalo, while he was away for his so-called rest. A detective of the Lake Shore Railroad attending the funeral of Isaac Miller recognized the minister, and gave evidence as to his questionable activities. He was tried, convicted, and removed from the church.

Some of the great ideas promulgated in these times was the Chautauqua Institution. It became world famous and would take a long paper to describe. You may not have heard one small incident in regard to the building of Chautauqua. My uncle, Amos K. Warren was asked if he could build a grand hotel to be ready in sixty days for the opening of the season. The directors said it was impossible. My uncle said he thought it could be done, if they would furnish him with available money, without going through with a lot of red tape. The Hotel Atheneum was built in sixty days, in all its Victorian splendor, and was ready for the opening of the season. My uncle, having finished this assignment, then went on a tour speaking in large and small towns for the promotion of Chautauqua. It was felt by his family that his work for Chautauqua undermined his health, as he died two years later from a neglected carbuncle on the back of his neck, the poison from which spread through his system and caused his untimely death. One could wish that penicillin had been discovered in time to have saved his life.

The Grange was formed in Fredonia in April 16, 1878. The Town Picnic started in Stockton in 1892, and is still held there annually. The town picnic idea became popular and spread to a good many other towns.

The time in which Mr. Miller lived saw the beginning and almost the end of the trolley; the first good roads; the invention of the automobile; political equality for woman; the secret ballot, which was a great advancement, but confusing to the old voters.

I sometimes wonder if we are any happier now than in earlier times. In closing, I wish to quote parts of two addresses of Mr. Miller, which I think will give you an idea of his great ability:

The first quotations are taken from Mr. Miller's Centennial Address delivered at Stockton, August 18th, 1910.

In speaking of the population of the town, and I quote:
"Of the ~~1,789~~^{1,789} population, 1,750 were born in New England, or were of New England parentage. In the year 1857 Mr. Lucius Bump wrote a poem for me to read before the ladies' Sewing Society, of which Mrs. Jason Crissey - 'Aunt Roxanna' - was president. The title of the poem was 'New England.' I wish to repeat the first verse.

'The people of New England,
Of the good old Puritan stock.
They reared the church and school house
Amid the land of rock;
And o'er her barren Hill-tops,
Her mountains and her glens,
Where the land was poor and sterile,
They raised the best of men.'

'Certainly, the person that is of the opinion that this grand old town has not been for a hundred years, and is not now, 'on the map' will not be found among the descendants of the early proprietors.'

Later on in the same speech, he speaks again of the citizens of the town: 'The early proprietors as a class, more nearly than any other body or community of men and women ever known, practiced the principles of the Golden Rule in their relations one with another. Strong in personality they were weak by reason of their surroundings. Each realized to the fullest extent his condition. Brave and self-reliant, there were things that bravery and self-reliance, single-handed and alone, could not accomplish. He looked anxiously to his neighbor in his hour of need, and was every ready to respond. This condition made all men brothers so far as help and acts of kindness could make them. Standing alone; without the retarding influence of opinion, faith and belief; resting entirely on acts, good deeds performed unselfishly, the relations existing among and between the early proprietors was a practical object lesson of the sublime truth, 'the universal fatherhood of God is found in the universal brotherhood of man.'

Toward the end of his speech, Mr. Miller becomes quite oratorical, and once more I quote: 'In conclusion permit me to say: Stockton has been the home of a host of strong men and women. Strong in brain, intelligence, morals and noble deeds. They have performed their life work in a way and manner that has placed them within the sacred shrine of every self-respecting person's memory. Their sacrifices, made for the public good, have erected in our valleys and along our hillsides, to direct our foot-steps, clouds of smoke by day and pillars of fire by night, which will in the coming years, aid

us in following their examples of industry and right living.'

One, in all honesty, may have to admit that Mr. Miller was exercising some poetic license in this last paragraph. To hear it now, one would think he was describing not Stockton, but Pittsburgh. The clouds of smoke by day might be drifting from the basket factory or the cheese factory, and the pillars of fire by night might be those torchlight processions previously mentioned. At any rate, his speech was well-received. Citizens like to hear their town praised, even if ~~ixix~~ the facts are slightly exaggerated.

His eloquence really reached its ~~xpax~~ peak in his closing paragraph, and perhaps shows that even if Mr. Miller were not a church member, he at least had religious aspirations:

I quote once more: "Using the thought of America's greatest woodland poet; let us all so live, that when we join the unnumbered host hastening to our last rest, we go not like the slave to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, based on noble deed and generous impulses, approach our grave like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Since Mr. Miller's work in Education is one phase of his life for which he is best known, I have saved for my last quotation the conclusion to his paper prepared for the 'Centennial Committee' of the historical society of Chautauqua County. The paper is entitled 'Chautauqua County Schools and Education.'

'Finally! Let us avoid the day when the people neglect their duty to the common schools; when there shall be certificates of excellence secured without labor; when it shall be the fashion to misspell common words; when pupils are carried on a pillow to the top of the educational mountains; when boys and girls show signs of x

rotteness before ripeness. Let us dot our country with school-houses as the stars dot the heavens at night; let us place therein thoroughly competent and painstaking teachers. Let us box our educational compass; take our ~~reasoning~~^{reckoning}, and select a safe course for the future of our public schools, based upon the propositions: The strength and stability of our nation is derived from the morality and intelligence of the common people. The staircases of truth in morals, science and art, reaching from the darkness of earth to the sunlight of Heaven, are scaled by systematic industry and patient investigation.A hundred children are ruined by weak and superficial instruction where one is injured by thoroughness; ---Giants are not made by sympathy and tears. The sunlight of happiness is reached by a triumph over difficulties; by faith, hope and self-reliance. The brain that earns wisdom, is the only one to receive it.....In the majesty of power and amid the convulsions of nature the law was proclaimed by the Almighty. Authority, human or divine, will receive scant attention and observance from one who has failed to respect the authority of parent or teacher. Most scholars are obedient; a majority of citizens respect and obey the law. There are, there always will be, exceptions. These must be controlled, or virtue ends and a reign of terror begins. Should the teacher be asked to control without punishment when no other human power can? The philosophy of the physical and moral world teaches that it is an impossibility. Deserving, may the teachers of our schools during the coming century receive the protecting care of all that is pure and true. That their bended bows of promise may be thickly clustered with all that helps to make men and women

great and good, is the earnest prayer of the friends of education in Chautauqua County.'

We could probably have an interesting and lively discussion on Mr. Miller's ideas of education and the discipline of students. It might be quite revealing to get your ideas of how well our teachers are living up to Mr. Miller's standards, but I should like to leave with you the sound of Mr. Miller's oratory, rather than my own, so I shall now close, thanking you for your kind attention to the glimpses of the life of one man, and to the early incidents of Chautauqua County.

Archie J. Warren
Jamestown N.Y.
Sep 1st 1953
Streator N.Y.